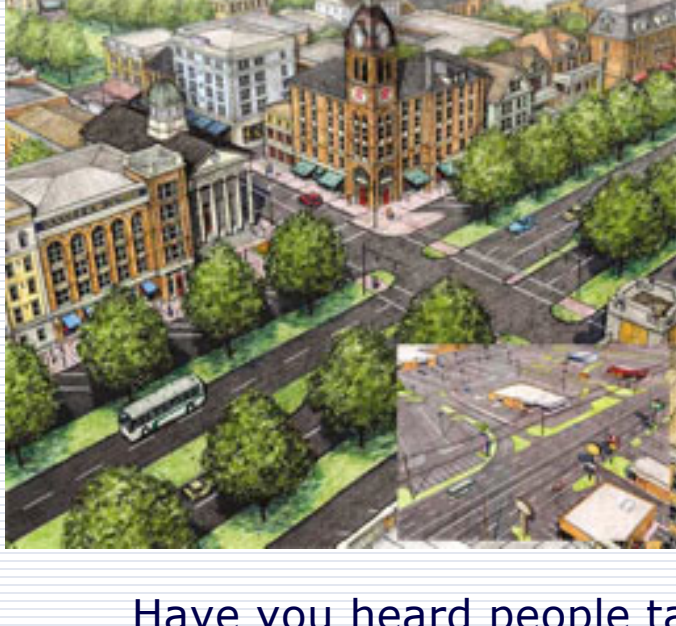


blueprintcarnegie.org > Reading Room

Reading Room



Have you heard people talking about *smartgrowth*, the *new urbanist* movement, *sustainable development*, *traditional neighborhood development*, *urban forests* and *transit-oriented development*? Did it all sound vaguely good, but you had reservations because you didn't know what they **mean**?

Well then, you're at the right place. Here is a curriculum in modern urban and suburban development.

The [National Neighborhood Coalition](#) says

...smart growth seeks the adoption of new policies and practices that, as a package, provide better housing, transportation, economic expansion, and environmental outcomes than do traditional approaches to development. Smart growth generally is that which invests time, attention, and resources in restoring community and vitality to center cities and older, inner suburbs. Smart growth in new developments is more town centered, transit and pedestrian oriented, and has a greater mix of housing, commercial, and retail uses. ...

SMART GROWTH PRINCIPLES

1. Mix land uses.
2. Take advantage of compact building design.
3. Create housing opportunities and choices for a range of household types, family sizes, and incomes.
4. Create walkable neighborhoods.
5. Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place.
6. Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty, historic buildings, and critical environmental areas.
7. Reinvest in and strengthen existing communities and achieve more balanced regional development.
8. Provide a variety of transportation choices.
9. Make development decisions predictable, fair, and cost-effective.
10. Encourage citizen and stakeholder participation in development decisions.

The documents below are in order of importance. (Based on the webmaster's entirely biased ideas.) Start at the beginning and keep reading until you've had your fill. There are only nine homework assignments right now, but in time, the list will grow. Some are long, with many graphics, but well worth the download bandwidth.

To explore a smartgrowth development using [Flash animation](#) and to whet your appetite for the main course below, check out the National Geographic [Virtual World: the New Suburb?](#)

Suggestions for other good readings? Please tell the [webmaster](#).

[1. Getting to Smart Growth: 100 policies for implementation.](#)

Mixing land uses—commercial, residential, recreational, educational, and others—in neighborhoods or places that are accessible by bike and foot can create vibrant and diverse communities. ... Improved environmental regulation and private sector innovation mean that many businesses are now cleaner than they were eighty years ago when zoning was first introduced to separate land uses, thereby eliminating much of the need for their strict separation from homes and schools. ... When homes are located within walking distance to grocery stores or quality employment centers, alternatives to driving--such as walking or biking--once again become viable, thereby enabling more Americans to take advantage of this convenient lifestyle. [...more](#)

[2. Getting to Smart Growth II: 100 more policies for implementation](#)

...the form-based code, a regulatory mechanism that sets requirements for building design and orientation without being constrained by listing permitted and nonpermitted uses. Form-based coding is founded on the idea that a community's physical form, rather than its land uses, is its most intrinsic and enduring characteristic. Arlington County, Virginia, has adopted a form-based code for redeveloping its Columbia Pike Corridor. [...more](#)

[3. Environmentalism and Smart Growth: Forging a New Consensus](#)

Do Well-Designed Suburbs Exist? The best examples of well-designed subdivisions are from developers associated with the "New Urbanism." A movement to design suburbs at a pedestrian, community-oriented scale, New Urbanism boasts successful projects in a number of states, and its principles are rippling through the broader development industry. ... *Transit-Oriented Development: The Cornerstone of a New Environmental Agenda*—The rise of transit-oriented development (TOD) is proving that a new development pattern can take hold. [...more](#)

[4. Revitalizing our Small Cities & Boroughs Through Elimination of Barriers to Development: 10,000 Friends of Pennsylvania](#)

The Department of Community and Economic Development has regional offices and a range of programs to support local communities. For example, DCED funds the Main Street Program to expand the capacity for economic development in downtowns. The statewide program provides funding to establish local staff dedicated to downtown revitalization and the management of downtown revitalization efforts. The Downtown Reinvestment component uses business district strategies to support commercial related projects in downtown or neighborhood districts. [...more](#)

[5. The Link Between Growth Management And Housing Affordability: The Academic Evidence \(Brookings Institution\)](#)

This report is a comprehensive review of the academic literature on the role of growth management on affordable housing. In short, the report finds that: 1. Market demand, not land constraints, is the primary determinant of housing prices. The strength of the housing market is the single most importance influence on housing prices whether growth management programs are present or not. The effects of growth management policies on housing prices are much more complicated to isolate because of the variations in policy styles and implementation, the structure of local housing markets, the patterns of land ownership, and the stringency of other local regulations. Even research on the effects of urban growth boundaries (UGBs), focused largely on Portland, Oregon, suggests that UGBs can affect land values, but their effects on housing affordability remain in dispute. [...more](#)

[6. Smart Growth for Neighborhoods: Affordable Housing and Regional Vision: National Neighborhood Coalition](#)

Multi-family housing is particularly important to smart growth strategies. Nearly a third of all households are renters, and the number of people who rent by choice is increasing (National Multifamily Housing Council, 2001). The Multifamily Housing Council points out that apartment developments are compatible with smart growth goals by reducing traffic, contributing to a community's economic vitality, and decreasing local infrastructure costs. Pendall says multi-family housing is an important part of the smart growth equation for communities of color since it tends to be rented and that nationally only 45 percent of black and Hispanic residents own their homes compared to nearly 70 percent of non-Hispanic whites (Pendall, 2000). An adequate supply of attached housing is important as well, since it tends to be rented and, when sold, to be more affordable than detached housing. [...more](#)

[7. Investing in a Better Future: The Fiscal and Competitive Advantages of Smarter Growth Development](#)

Benefits Suburbs also benefit from investment in healthy urban cores. Finally, studies suggest that to the extent these smarter development patterns foster equity in regions by improving center-city incomes and vitality, they will also enhance the economic well-being of the suburbs as well as the city. City income growth has been shown to increase suburban income, house prices, and population. Reduced city poverty rates have also been associated with metropolitan income growth. Smart growth rarely means no growth; instead, it entails accommodating growth in a way that maximizes its benefits and reduces as much as possible its frequent negative side effects. More specifically, smart growth refers to an overall set of broad goals and policies designed to counteract sprawl. These usually include: (1) limiting outward expansion; (2) encouraging higher density development; (3) encouraging mixed-use zoning as distinct from fully segregating land uses; (4) reducing travel by private vehicles; (5) revitalizing older areas; and (6) preserving open space. Promoting more affordable housing may or may not be an explicit goal of smart growth programs. [...more](#)

[8. Promoting Regional Equity: A Framing Paper](#)

Inclusionary zoning distributes affordable housing throughout a region's jurisdictions. It is a regulatory strategy that requires or encourages that a percentage of housing units in new residential developments be made available for lowand moderate-income households, thus fostering mixed-income communities. "Pioneered in Montgomery County, Maryland through a 1974 ordinance, inclusionary zoning has been utilized successfully in communities throughout the country. Most effective in communities that are already growing, inclusionary zoning requires or encourages developers to contribute to affordable housing stock in exchange for benefits, such as zoning variances, development rights, and other permits. [...more](#)

[9. The "Design Bicycleist": Federal Highway Administration Report FHWA-RD-92-073](#)

Nearly 100 million people in the United States own bicycles. The Bicycle Federation of America estimates that fewer than 5 percent would qualify as experienced or highly skilled bicyclists. Since the policy goal is to accommodate existing bicyclists and encourage increased bicycle use, there will be more novice riders than advanced bicyclists using the highway system. Therefore, any roadway treatments intended to accommodate bicycle use must address the needs of both experienced and less experienced riders. One solution to this challenge is to develop the concept of a "design cyclist" and adopt a classification system for bicycle users such as the following: **Group A - Advanced Bicyclists:** These are experienced riders who can operate under most traffic conditions. **Group B - Basic Bicyclists:** These are casual or new adult and teenage riders who are less confident of their ability to operate in traffic without special provisions for bicycles. **Group C - Children:** These are pre-teen riders whose roadway use is initially monitored by parents. Eventually they are accorded independent access to the system. [...more](#)