

Activity 2: Toolbox for Growing Smarter – Page 1 (1/2)

“Smart Growth is development that serves the economy, community and the environment.” Smart growth provides solutions to concerns facing many communities. It makes it possible for communities to grow in ways that support economic development, jobs and yet achieve healthy lifestyles and clean environments. The following have been adapted from the Smart Growth Network and Thomas Hylton’s *Saving Pennsylvania*.

1. Mix Land Uses Create a character of the “old” neighborhoods by having people live, work, shop and socialize in neighborhoods. Allow for planning and zoning for livable communities and promote the concept as a choice for healthy living.

2. Take Advantage of Conservation Subdivision Design (CSD) Americans are consuming more land than ever before. The new house size grew from 1,725 square feet in 1993 to 1,928 square feet in 1999. An important part of smart growth is to encourage and celebrate the value of compact building design and leaving more land as undeveloped. CSD incorporates mixed-use housing (single-homes, townhouses, apartment buildings) into an area while ensuring at least 50 percent of the developable land is permanently protected and left as natural space. This may be in the form of a park, trail, orchard, woodlands, etc. Build houses close to streets typically from 60–80 feet across from one another on both sides of the street. This provides a feeling of an outdoor room to the public interface.

3. Create a Range of Housing Opportunities and Choices Housing choices should accommodate the housing needs of all residents. Some may want large back yards but alternatives should be available that are attractive and desirable, providing walkability, access to transit and public parks.

4. Create walkable neighborhoods In the past 50 years, development patterns led to increased reliance on automobiles and eliminating walkability. Walkable communities enhance mobility, reduce negative environmental consequences and support improved social interaction. Communities should provide and beautify walkways, bike lanes, sidewalks and crosswalks. Traffic-calming techniques such as speed bumps and narrower streets will slow down automobiles. There should be a center of the neighborhood that could be a square or memorable intersection. It could have a Post Office or Corner Store. It is recommended that the center of the neighborhood be within a five to ten minute walk for residents.

5. Foster Distinctive, Attractive Communities With a Strong Sense of Place Strip shopping centers and unattractive housing development do little to stimulate civic pride. Smart growth supports the idea that development should help create communities that are distinctive and unique. To create a community of distinction some ideas might be to plant trees along streets to create a canopy for the feeling of an outdoor room. Front porches serve as a transition element from the private to public realm. They create cozy space to relax and socialize. Create gardens on corners or in lots. Construct playgrounds. Enhance unique features such as street lights or historic buildings.

6. Preserve Open Space, Farmland, Natural Beauty and Critical Environmental Areas Communities that preserve open space are preserving critical environmental areas, providing recreation opportunities and improving places for enjoyment and beauty. PDR or purchased development rights offers a permanent solution for communities to preserve open space by having landowners sell the rights to develop land to a trust or government agency. Preservation programs are used to keep farmland protected. Green edges surrounding a community help shape neighborhoods.

7. Strengthen and Direct Development Toward Existing Communities “Fix it first.” Communities could develop priorities to fix up existing neighborhoods that already have streets, sewers, lighting and schools. Brownfields programs encourage development on sites that could previously have experienced environmental contamination. By encouraging development to occur close to existing development, communities can tap existing infrastructure and protect open space and save municipal tax dollars. Planning could decide boundaries for growth over time.

8. Provide A Variety Of Transportation Choices States are responsible for much of the transportation planning and investment. States could offer incentives to communities that ensure mixed transportation modes, funding a balance of pedestrian, auto, transit and bike transportation facilities. Provide an interesting network system of streets. Integrate lanes, alleys, streets and boulevards to promote street vistas. Move cars to the rear for parking and preserve the frontage streetscape. Lanes and alleys allow for vehicular access to rear garages.

9. Shops and Services Are Reachable The elementary school should be close enough so children can walk. Playgrounds should be near dwelling areas. Civic buildings and worship buildings are located centrally or where they are easily accessible. Shops, especially a convenience store and a corner restaurant are valuable to the neighborhood.

10. The neighborhood is organized to be self-governing People should feel confident to gather with others for the purpose of self government. They should decide on matters of maintenance, security and physical change.