

# Rural Smart Growth

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# What does “Smart Growth” mean?

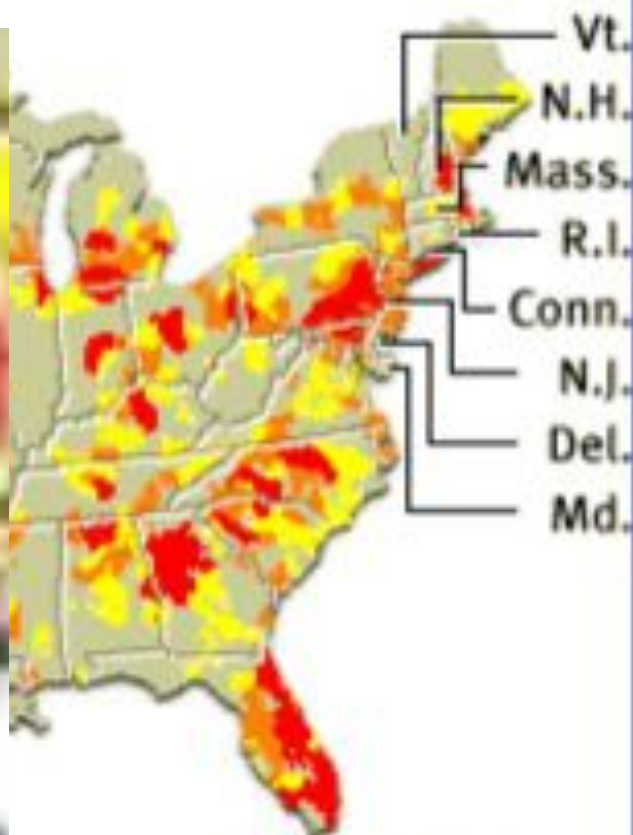
- Define ‘Smart’: Not dumb. Well-planned?  
Sustainable?
  - Truly a subjective term.
- Define ‘Growth’: Expansion in size, activity and/or viability.
  - Is growth the goal when sustainability is such a challenge?
  - Not linear, but subject to trends.

# What is Smart Growth?

- Mix land uses
- Take advantage of compact building design
- Create a range of housing opportunities and choices
- Create walkable neighborhoods
- Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place
- Provide a variety of transportation choices
- Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty, and critical environmental areas
- Strengthen and direct development towards existing communities
- Make development decisions predictable, fair, and cost-effective
- Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions

# Seeing **SPRAWL**

The federal Natural Resources Inventory tracks how much farm, forest and open space acreage gets developed.

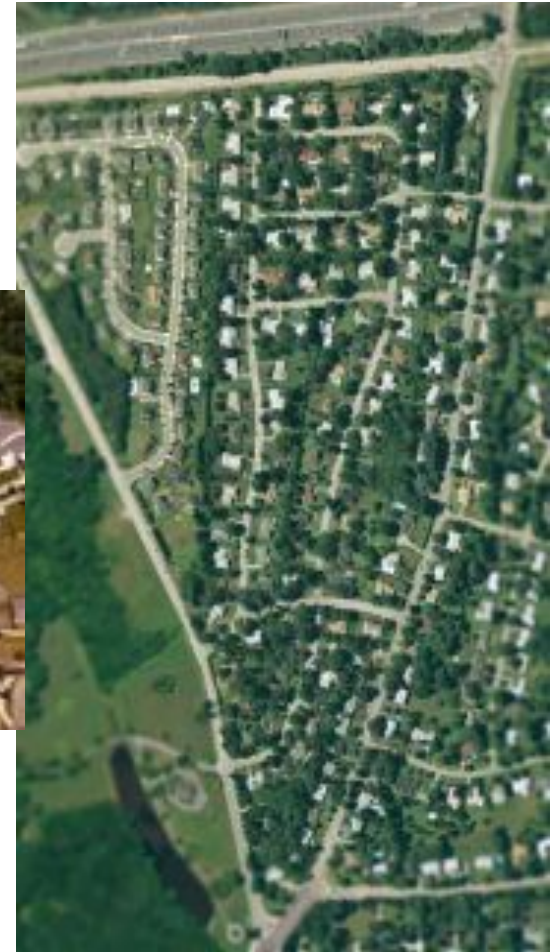


INCREASE IN DEVELOPED LAND  
(Thousands of acres within selected areas)

1992-1997



# Is there such a thing as Stupid Growth?





# Conventional Development Patterns

















# The Great Cul De Sac Conundrum

Virginia expects to relieve its strained infrastructure budget: through streets are more efficient and cheaper to maintain, and they take pressure off arterial roads that otherwise need to be widened. “It’s about connecting land-use and transportation planning and restricting wasteful and unplanned development.” —Virginia Gov. Kaine (2009)





# NY Smart Growth Numbers

- There are
  - 4,200 local governments in New York State,
  - more than 6,900 town special districts.
    - 34% of all special districts are in Erie (939), Onondaga (867) and Monroe (551).
    - 7 of the 9 counties in the New York City metropolitan area reported having more than 100 special districts each.
    - 25% of town revenue comes from special district assessments.
- For every \$1 in tax a resident pays, they ask for or receive \$1.25 in services
- Western NY is a net importer of tax dollars...at the tune of 1 billion dollars per year!

# New York Continued...

- **Upstate New York led the nation in sprawl**
  - The total amount of urbanized land in Upstate grew by 30% between 1982 and 1997, while its population grew by only 2.6 percent, reducing the density of the built environment by 21 percent.
- **Central New York has no growth management strategy**
  - From 1982 to 1997, urbanized more than 100,000 acres even though it lost 6,500 residents, resulting in a 32% decline in development density (Brookings).

# Changing the Rules

- Federal
  - Air: emission reductions from smart growth can now be used for required air quality plans
  - Stormwater: state permit language recognizes the water quality benefits of specific smart growth land use strategies
- National Standard Setters
  - School siting: worked with partner organizations to remove “minimum acreage” requirements from national guidelines
  - Institute for Transportation Engineers: developed new guidelines supporting streets and roads that better support biking, walking, and transit

# New York Public Infrastructure Policy Act

- Enacted in August 2010
- requires state infrastructure funding to be consistent with smart growth principles, with priority given to existing infrastructure and projects which are consistent with local governments' plans for development.
- We're seeing this in CFA application requirements



# Land Bank Act

- In 2011, The NYS Land Banks Act was passed allowing for the creation of 10 land banks in NYS. The law allows tax foreclosing governmental units the option to create an entity with proven tools to deal with vacant and abandoned
- Land Banks have the ability to clear titles and forgive back taxes, expediting the process of bringing properties in New York back to market. Properties can be held and combined into larger tracts to make development more attractive for investors.
- Giving more control to local governments means that strategies can be tailored to meet the needs of communities with different conditions, needs and goals.

# Complete Streets Act

- Significant support from AARP, NYS Office of the Aging, etc.
- The NYS Office for the Aging has an initiative called *LivableNY*... “to advance the efforts of the State's communities to implement model housing, transit, and mobility alternatives, and to institute new and innovative building and community designs, energy ideas, and creative planning and zoning strategies.”
- Furthermore, “The products and activities of *Livable New York* are intended to help local leaders, residents, officials, and organizations come together to create neighborhoods that reflect the evolving needs and preferences of all their residents.”
- Local Complete Streets work in: Buffalo, Erie County, Alfred, Angelica, Cuba, Gowanda, Hinsdale, Kingston, Malone, Portville, Salamanca, Savannah, Syracuse, Fort Edward, Lake George and in Rochester.

# Town of Pittsford



This "best practice" involved Pittsford buying development right on key parcels of working farmland and open space remaining in the town. To justify the taxpayer-funded project, the Town did a fiscal impact analysis to show that preserving the land would save the taxpayers significant sums of money over time.



**3.72<sup>9</sup>** Unleaded  
Member Price

**3.79<sup>9</sup>** Non Member  
Unleaded Price



DISCOUNT  
CARD PRICE

Unleaded  
**3.72**



happy  
hour  
LARGE  
CHEESE  
OR  
GARLIC  
PIZZA  
**\$6.99**  
A.P. PM

























# What Does Smart Growth Mean for Small Communities?

- Economy, culture, transportation have changed
- Some communities growing rapidly; others are declining
- Fewer farms and farmers
- Loss of forest and other natural and productive lands
- Limited planning capacity
- Need economic diversity and an expanded set of options for where to live, where to work, and how to get around



# Preserving Community Character

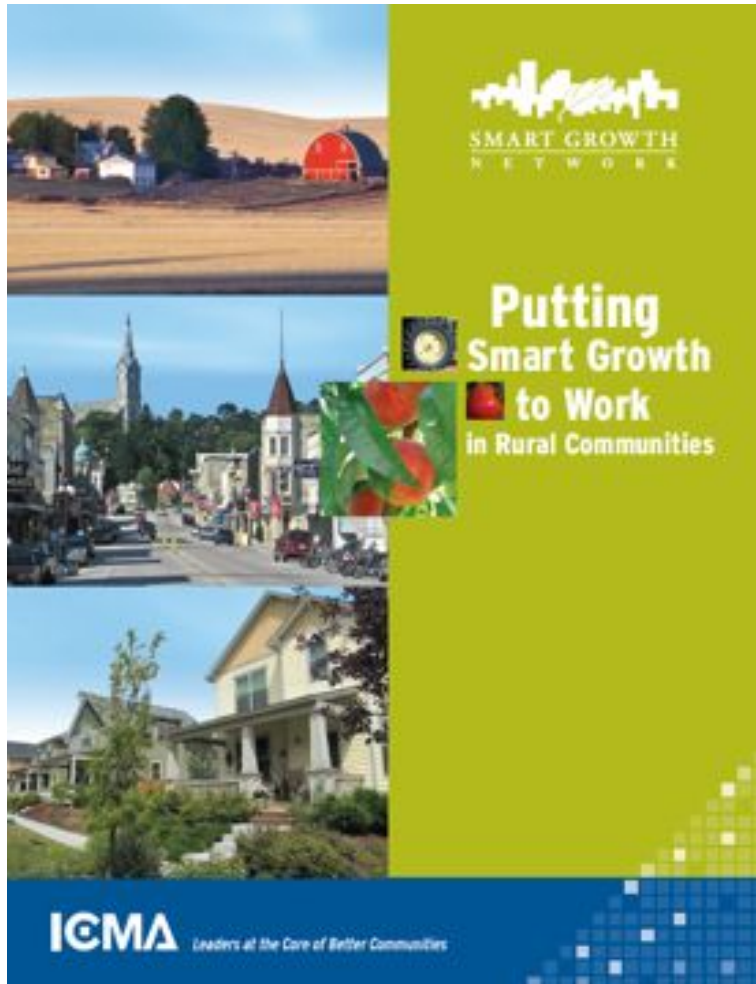




# Preserving Community Character?



# *Putting Smart Growth to Work in Rural Communities*



- Lays out a framework for rural communities and small towns seeking to implement smart growth
- Set of tools, case studies, and resources

# Three Broad Goals

1. Support the rural landscape
2. Help existing places thrive
3. Create great new places





# 1. Support the Rural Landscape

- Create an economic climate that enhances the viability of working lands and conserves natural lands is the first step
- Strategies, tools, and policies that support this goal include:
  - Right to farm policies
  - Agricultural zoning
  - Renewable energy development



## 2. Help Existing Places Thrive



- Take care of assets and investments such as downtowns, Main streets, existing infrastructure, and places that the community values
- Strategies, tools, and policies that support this goal include
  - Fix-it-first policies
  - Rehabilitating existing structures, e.g., schools
  - Incentives to encourage infill and brownfield redevelopment
  - Updated zoning ordinances and development codes that support compact, walkable development

### 3. Create Great New Places

- Build vibrant, enduring neighborhoods and communities that people, especially young people, don't want to leave
- Strategies, tools, and policies that support this goal include
  - Community visioning and planning alignment
  - Designating growth areas and areas for preservation
  - Recognizing developers that build great places



# EPA's Office of Sustainable Communities

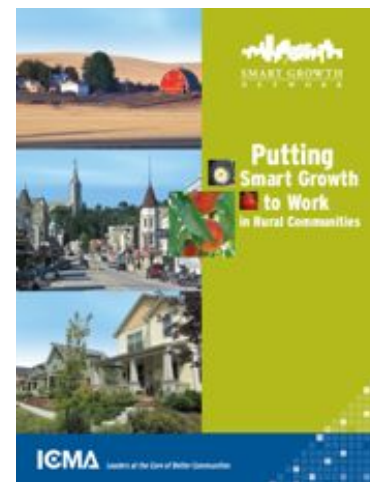
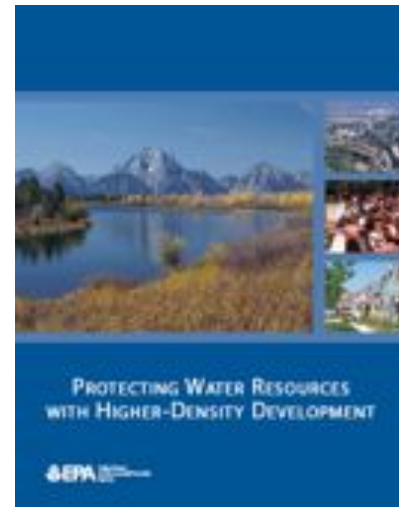
- Smart growth approaches help EPA achieve its mission to protect human health and the environment – where and how we build impacts our land, air, and water resources
- What do they do
  - Education and outreach
    - *change the conversation*
  - Tools and technical assistance
    - *help the willing*
  - Research and policy analysis
    - *change the rules*
- Who do they work with
  - Other EPA offices – Air, Water, Brownfields, Environmental Justice, Regions
  - Other federal partners (DOT, HUD, FEMA, CDC, USDA, NOAA)
  - All stakeholders in the growth and development process





# Changing the Conversation

- Created and sustain the Smart Growth Network
  - National coalition that defines and advances smart growth practices
  - 42 partner organizations
- Tools to address widespread problems
  - For example, *Essential Smart Growth Fixes for Urban and Suburban Zoning Codes*
- [www.smartgrowth.org](http://www.smartgrowth.org)





# Further information

- <http://www.sustainablecommunities.gov/>
- [www.epa.gov/smartgrowth](http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth)
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