

American Planning Association

Policy Guide on Smart Growth

MOTION TO ADOPT A DEFINITION OF SMART GROWTH

The American Planning Association and its Chapters adopt the following definition of Smart Growth:

Smart Growth is the planning, design, development and revitalization of communities to promote a sense of place, the preservation of natural and cultural resources, and the equitable distribution of the costs and benefits of development. Smart Growth enhances ecological integrity over the short and long term and improves quality of life by expanding the range of transportation, employment, and housing choices in the region in a fiscally responsible manner.

Compared to prevalent development practices, Smart Growth seeks to refocus a larger share of regional growth within central cities and inner suburbs. Simultaneously Smart Growth seeks to reduce the share of growth that occurs on newly urbanized land or in environmentally sensitive areas while making efficient infrastructure investments.

Core principles of Smart Growth include the following:

- A recognition that every level of government, federal, state, regional and local, plays an important role in adopting and implementing policies that support Smart Growth.
- A regional view of community developed through regional planning process and implementation. Smart Growth recognizes the interdependence of neighborhoods and municipalities in a metropolitan area and promotes balanced, integrated regional development.
- Integration of land use and transportation planning to provide increased transportation choice. Transportation planning should include alternatives to the automobile, such as public transportation, bicycles and walking. Development must be pedestrian friendly. Land use planning must support the success of non-automotive transportation modes.
- Efficient use of land and infrastructure. Efficient land use results from compact building, infill development and reducing the amount of land needed to satisfy street and parking standards. Efficient use of public and private infrastructure starts with creating neighborhoods that maximize the use of existing infrastructure. In areas of new growth, roads, sewers, water lines, schools and other infrastructure should be planned as part of overall growth and investment strategies. Regional cooperation for large infrastructure investments is required to avoid inefficiency and redundancy.
- A greater mix of uses and housing choices in neighborhoods and communities focused around human-scale, mixed use centers accessible by multiple transportation modes. Mixed-use developments include a housing, varied by type and prices, integrated with commercial development and places of employment. Human-scale design, compatibility with the existing urban context, and quality construction contribute to successful compact, mixed-use development and also promote privacy, safety, visual coherency and compatibility among uses and users.

- Protection of environmental and cultural resources: Smart Growth protects the natural processes that sustain life, preserves agricultural land, wildlife habitat, and cultural resources; integrates ecological system into the fabric of development; encourages innovative stormwater management; is less consumptive and more protective of natural resources; and ensures air quality and water quality and quantity for future generations.
- Planning processes and regulations at multiple levels that promote diversity, equity and Smart Growth principles. Local governments have long been principal stewards of land and infrastructure resources through their guidance of land-use policy. Smart Growth respects that tradition and recognizes the important leadership and partnership role that Federal and State governments play in the advancing Smart Growth principles among local governments.
- State and federal policy structure and programs that supports compact development and land conservation. Governmental programs and policies have in many cases contributed to the problem of sprawl. These policies and programs need to be re-examined and replaced with programs and policies that support Smart Growth, including cost effective incentive-based investment programs that target growth-related expenditures to locally designated areas.
- Increased citizen participation in all aspects of the planning process and at every level of government to ensure that planning outcomes are based in collective decision-making. We have been undergoing a profound demographic transformation. Responding to our ethnically diverse society is essential to our well being as a whole and to developing the social capital necessary for shaping thriving, vibrant neighborhoods and communities. We need to design comprehensive strategies to engage meaningful participation in planning processes, to find common ground for shared decision-making by all citizens, and to ensure community equity in the distribution of resources

Beyond these core principles, Smart Growth may vary from place to place and region to region. Specific Smart Growth practices that work in one region may not work in other regions.

THE SMART GROWTH ISSUE

At the beginning of this century, a heightened national concern over the social, environmental and fiscal quality of our communities arises from development practices that aggravate the decline of many urban communities and older suburbs, congest our streets and highways, accelerate the loss of natural resources and the deterioration of natural environment, and limit opportunities for the retention and creation of affordable housing. Often, these problems are simply and collectively labeled, “sprawl.” In response to these concerns, the Smart Growth movement has emerged.

Many organizations and individuals are now promoting Smart Growth. Over 60 public interest groups across the U.S. have joined together to form *Smart Growth America*, a coalition advocating better growth policies and practices. Groups ranging from the Urban Land Institute to the Sierra Club to National Association of Home Builders have released reports and sponsored forums on the topic. Many communities embrace specific aspects of Smart Growth, such as pedestrian- and transit-oriented development, controls on sprawl, compact mixed uses, and the protection of agricultural and environmental resources. Nevertheless, “growth management” that takes place only on a local level has sometimes resulted in exclusionary practices, increased housing costs, gentrification, and the creation of homogenous and increasingly economically segregated communities. Implementation of individual “growth management” practices by fragmented and competing local governments has also resulted in

pushing growth to the edge of regions, resulting in disinvestments in urban cores and increased public investment in outlying areas.

APA's 2000 Policy Guide on Planning for Sustainability noted that "Sustainability is the capability to equitably meet the vital human needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs by preserving and protecting the area's ecosystems and natural resources. The concept of sustainability describes a condition in which human use of natural resources, required for the continuation of life, is in balance with Nature's ability to replenish them."

The important work done in creating sustainability policy provides an opportunity to extend those policies to the arena of "Smart Growth." In response to this opportunity, APA embarked upon a yearlong process to craft this policy guide. The effort formally started at the 2001 Delegate Assembly in New Orleans where a survey, "Framing the Issue," was distributed to the participants and was later supplemented by input from APA chapters. The survey and a literature review showed that the concepts of "sprawl" and "sustainability" are intertwined throughout the Smart Growth dialogue. Sprawl, in all of its characterizations, is the antithesis of Smart Growth.

Smart Growth should not be limited to combating the symptoms of sprawl. Ecological and societal considerations should also be addressed. Planners have the tools at hand to create better communities. It is our professional and ethical responsibility to use these tools to produce results that are fair to all community members of the present and the future. Fairness requires that we reduce inequalities and that we narrow the gap of disparities in the distribution of resources. We recognize that planning decisions influence the social and economic well being of communities. Today, we must promote fairness in rebuilding inner city areas, in the development of suburban communities, and in the growth of small towns and rural areas.

The Smart Growth Policy Guide helps direct APA efforts to influence public policy to meet those challenges. This guidance can influence federal and state legislation that may provide financial assistance and incentives for states to reassess their planning statutes, update them, and to embark on meaningful implementation of community plans. Additionally, APA challenges the private sector, especially the real estate and lending communities, to join us in working to reverse the negative affects of the current predominant pattern of regional growth and to help us replace the policies that underlie that pattern with new policies that will lead to well-designed regional communities of lasting value. We ask them to join with us in the important educational and informational efforts that will be necessary to build support for Smart Growth with elected officials and policy makers, with members of their important constituencies, and with the larger public.

Finally, this policy guide should be consulted by localities and states reviewing the *GROWING SMART Legislative Guidebook*, a compendium of statutes for planning and the management of change, as they create proposals for regulatory reform as it pertains to planning and development.

SPECIFIC POLICY POSITIONS

This statement includes policies in five areas, most closely linked to Smart Growth in light of other policy documents created by the APA:

- Planning Structure, Process and Regulation
- Transportation and Land Use
- Regional Management and Fiscal Efficiency
- Social Equity and Community Building
- Environmental Protection and Land Conservation

Other adopted policy statements that bear on this topic are Sustainability (adopted in 2000), Agricultural Land Preservation (adopted on April 25, 1999), and Endangered Species and Habitat Protection (adopted on April 25, 1999) and policy statements currently under development or revision, including those for Water, Wetlands, and Waste Management.

PLANNING STRUCTURE, PROCESS AND REGULATION

- 1. The American Planning Association and its Chapters support requiring Federal agencies to include in their analyses of environmental impacts the effect of federal actions on urban growth and sprawl.**

Reason to Support the Specific Policy Motion: Federal policies and programs have a profound effect on local development patterns, yet local communities have little power in identifying, reviewing, or addressing federal actions and projects that may affect urban growth. Changing the National Environmental Policy Act to require Federal and State agencies to analyze the effects of proposed projects on urban growth and directing the Council on Environmental Quality to evaluate these reviews will give local communities an enhanced ability to respond to Federal actions.

- 2. The American Planning Association and its Chapters support the consolidation of local governmental units into jurisdictionally comprehensive areas.**

Reason to Support the Specific Policy Motion: Consolidation should be aggressively pursued where governmental fragmentation impedes Smart Growth decisions. Smart growth requires a higher degree of coordination than is possible under the fragmented patterns of local government prevalent in many states. At a minimum local public decisions on: new governmental unit creation, urban growth, capital infrastructure, services and maintenance should be subordinated to an intergovernmental planning process in order to minimize competition for positive tax additions.

- 3. The American Planning Association and its Chapters affirm the leadership role of the States in fostering long-term, smart growth decisions while recognizing that land use regulatory decisions are traditionally a local government responsibility.**

Reason to Support the Specific Policy Motion: State programs, policies, and enabling decisions have a profound affect on local planning and decision-making. States have the ability to require local governments to foster more sensible, planned growth through the revision of planning and police power enabling legislation and by facilitating increased communication between state departments and local governments and among local governments within a region.

4. **The American Planning Association and its Chapters support State guidance and incentives to local governments on the elements to be addressed in comprehensive plans based on Smart Growth principles. The elements should include land use, transportation, infrastructure, housing, economic development and natural resources, ecological systems and cultural preservation.**

Reason to Support the Specific Policy Motion: Local governments should be required to make land use decisions within a State-wide procedural and policy framework, consistent with a long-term vision and early and on-going public involvement. State governments must help local governments by establishing reasonable ground rules for planning requirements, assisting and funding small local governments and rural areas, funding small town and rural planning, and providing leadership on inter-jurisdictional issues.

5. **American Planning Association and its Chapters support the creation of enabling legislation that mandates adoption of a defined comprehensive plan and capital improvement plan as a condition of imposition of zoning regulations by local government.**

Reason to Support the Specific Policy Motion: Zoning decisions without reference to a competent comprehensive plan has contributed to excessive regulation, requests for special treatment and public disdain for the process. The “Zoning Game” becomes a continual battleground of false hopes and micro management which developers and courts are impatient with. Zoning should enhance the predictability for residents, investors and builders. Ad hoc decisions by communities threaten that predictability.

6. **The American Planning Association and its Chapters support requirements mandating that all actions of local government, including but not limited to land use plans and the provision of infrastructure, be consistent with local government Comprehensive Plans based on Smart Growth principles.**

Reason to Support the Specific Policy Motion: Consistency among comprehensive planning, land use regulation, and capital improvements planning and implementation are at the heart of Smart Growth. Inconsistencies in these areas undermine public confidence in planning and in planners.

7. **The American Planning Association and its Chapters affirm effective comprehensive planning based on Smart Growth principles as the means to reduce the uncertainty related to land use and development investments by making and relying on decisions about the intensity, the density, and the character of development and the level of public services to be provided.**

Reason to Support the Specific Policy Motion: Landowners should be treated fairly, oppressive regulations must be fixed, and uncertainty in the development process must be minimized. Effective comprehensive planning, implemented through consistent regulations and policies, remains the most effective means of accomplishing fair treatment in development regulation within a framework of collective, community-wide decision-making.

8. **The American Planning Association and its Chapters support regulations that require new urban growth to be coordinated with the provision of urban infrastructure and especially with existing infrastructure systems.**

Reason to Support the Specific Policy Motion: The benefits of locating new urban growth to existing urban areas and adjacent areas will help preserve farmland, increase overall densities and the utilization of existing infrastructure systems, and reduce public infrastructure costs by confining development to areas contiguous to existing systems. Tools like the Purchase and Transfer of Development Rights and Land

Banking are available to mitigate the effects on landowners outside of these areas who seek to convert properties to urban uses.

9. The American Planning Association and its Chapters support the provision of a central advanced planning information systems for decisions makers at all levels and to the public by coordinated State and Federal internet systems.

Reason to Support the Specific Policy Motion: Both unavailability and fragmentation of basic data including GIS maps, technical studies, water resource information, permitting activity, and demographic data, and other information sources requires repetitive studies and increases the time required for informing decisions. In addition the information should be made available to the public through a well-maintained web data system in order to assist citizen participation.

TRANSPORTATION AND LAND USE

- 1. The American Planning Association and its Chapters support planning policies, legislation and practices that target transportation investments to correct system deficiencies identified through regular performance monitoring of all modes of the transportation system.**

Reason to Support the Specific Policy Motion: Efficient use of transportation funds entails using them to maximize the operational efficiency of the transportation system.

Transportation investments made without regard to existing system deficiencies:

- result in sprawling, unplanned development; and
- allow existing transportation problems to grow worse.

A key component of Smart Growth involves the regular performance monitoring of all modes of transportation. Such monitoring allows for the identification of system deficiencies and their causes, so that transportation investments may be targeted to infrastructure improvements that mitigate the causes of identified deficiencies.

- 2. The American Planning Association and its Chapters support planning and funding policies that provide for increased mode choice.**

Reason to Support the Specific Policy Motion: The use of transit and non-auto transportation is a key component in addressing transportation problems in the United States. Land use policies that focus on low-density development can contribute to the urban sprawl that smart growth efforts seek to change. Transit use can be successful provided that policies developed by local, regional and state government consider how these policies encourage transit use.

From a funding perspective, potential investments should be judged on criteria that are free of modal bias. Unbiased criteria will demonstrate to decision makers the sound investment of transit in addressing transportation problems in this country. The provision of mode choices offers economical transportation alternatives at low infrastructure cost, and improves transportation efficiency by reducing vehicle miles traveled, infrastructure maintenance and the expense of roadway expansion.

In addition to increasing mode choice, APA supports incentives for transit ridership and car-pooling, including employer tax credit and employee tax-exempt fringe benefits, and the expansion of those incentives to include bicyclists and telecommuters.

- 3. The American Planning Association and its Chapters encourage all public organizations to develop policies and plans to encourage all new development, and especially public and community facilities, in areas that are supported by a balanced multimodal transportation network.**

Reason to Support the Specific Policy Motion: Locating public facilities in areas supported by transit and promotes wider use and can create greater employment opportunities. Both of these results strengthen the ability of public agencies to serve the public and have positive economic impacts on the community.

4. The American Planning Association and its Chapters support changes to roadway design standards that promote and support the use of transit, walking, and biking.

Reason to Support the Specific Policy Motion: The design of a roadway or intersection can either enhance or discourage multi-modal activity. Roadway design should consider connectivity, accessibility, function, and speed as it relates to mode choice and opportunity. By establishing functional classifications for roadways in the context of a multi-modal system, the design, access, connectivity, and speed can be planned and implemented to focus on efficiency and opportunity. Factored into the design of roadways and intersections should be access management policies that maximize the efficiency of the transportation system from a multi-modal perspective, rather than just a roadway standpoint.

5. The American Planning Association and its Chapters support the development and maintenance of regional and statewide multi-modal transportation plans.

Reason to Support the Specific Policy Motion: Regional and statewide transportation plans are needed to guide the improvement and expansion of the transportation system in a consistent, logical, and economically and functionally efficient manner. These plans should be multi-modal, covering all significant modes of both people and goods movement, recognizing both public and private sector needs. Transportation planning efforts should also be mutually supportive at all levels of planning to ensure efficiency and continuity of the system. These plans should form the basis for transportation investment decisions at the regional and state level.

6. The American Planning Association and its Chapters support that provide for the use of roadway facilities by nonmotorized modes.

Reason to Support the Specific Policy Motion: Smart Growth policies should provide for transportation options other than the automobile. By planning for pedestrian and bicycle travel *at the beginning of the roadway design / reconstruction process*, roadway engineers can efficiently provide modal choices to the traveling public while still providing for automobile operations.

7. The American Planning Association and its Chapters support policies and plans that place connectivity and trip distribution as high priorities in the development of multi-modal transportation systems.

Reason to Support the Specific Policy Motion: The efficiency of a community's transportation system is an objective of Smart Growth policy. This efficiency is enhanced when there is consistent and adequate street connectivity. Proper street connectivity has proven to reduce vehicle miles traveled, increase non-motorized trips and support transit use. These impacts can also have a positive affect on air quality and offer health benefits to our citizens.

8. The American Planning Association and its Chapters promote increased transportation choice and mobility to and from work, home, and school, especially the less advantaged.

Reason to Support the Specific Policy: Advocating for equity requires public investment in infrastructure that reduces the need for long commutes for everyone and reduces transit dependency for disadvantaged and disabled persons. By locating support facilities near transit nodes, work related side trips might be consolidated. Planners should promote land use patterns that enable multi-modal options and should ensure that infrastructure for non-automotive transportation modes are treated equitably in the planning process. A variety of citizen involvement methods is required to increase transportation access opportunities for low income and other less advantaged persons in order to advance their own solutions

and to set priorities for their transportation needs. The end results will be transit systems that better serve low-income communities and build work-housing linkage strategies.

REGIONAL MANAGEMENT AND FISCAL EFFICIENCY

- 1. American Planning Association and its Chapters support planning policies, practices, and legislation that promotes major structural reform among State, Metropolitan and Regional institutions and accomplishes multi-jurisdictional decision-making and problem solving or replaces it with regional growth management powers.**

Reason to Support the Specific Policy Motion: Most major growth related problems are regional, not local, in nature. Given the fragmented nature of local governance, individual community success at implementing Smart Growth is likely to shift development to other parts of the region. States have the opportunity to pass modern enabling legislation that promotes Smart Growth planning and development at the regional level.

- 2. The American Planning Association and its Chapters affirm Regional and Metropolitan Planning as the foundations of fiscally efficient governance and encourage states to modernize their statutes to enable regional decision-making.**

Reason to Support the Specific Policy Motion:

- Natural processes exceed municipal boundaries.
- Regional plans are needed to coordinate local land use decisions and to integrate local decision making with planning that necessarily crosses municipal boundaries. Transportation corridors, watersheds, air sheds, economic regions and neighborhoods are often more appropriate and desirable geographies for planning than the boundaries of political jurisdictions.
- Given prevalent patterns of development, where jobs are often far from home, affordable housing and public transportation can be addressed effectively only at the regional level. These efforts can simultaneously promote equity by making affordable housing available throughout the metropolitan area and, by supporting economic development, make a labor force available throughout the region.
- Municipal Planning Organizations (MPOs), Councils of Government (COGs) and Regional Councils are well established throughout the country, and these organizations can provide effective leadership at the regional level. At the same time, other regional organizations should serve important roles in the face of new challenges and opportunities. Federal, state, and local decision-makers should strengthen and work closely with these organizations.

- 3. The American Planning Association and its Chapters support federal and state requirements for co-operative planning among local governments in areas where impacts are regional.**

Reason to Support the Specific Policy Motion: Many states have laws that prohibit or inhibit joint planning and/or decision making by local governments, as well as other entities that make planning/development decisions. Similarly, many local governments have laws, policies, or customs designed to protect local citizens that serve to inhibit cooperation across municipal boundaries. Such barriers must be removed or surmounted in order to facilitate collaboration among local entities.

4. The American Planning Association and its Chapters support the creation of a wide variety of regional planning, policy formation, and government models.

Reason to Support the Specific Policy Motion: Customs, politics, laws, natural conditions, and other factors vary from state to state and region to region. In addition, problems to be addressed vary from region to region. Therefore, each region must develop its own approach to problem solving and planning that involves the public, private and non-profit sectors. In some areas, this may take a major change in perspective and culture, but such changes are beneficial -- and necessary for the results that Smart Growth aims to achieve.

5. The American Planning Association and its Chapters affirm that land conservation and fiscal efficiency are major benefits of regional planning.

Reason to Support the Specific Policy Motion: Efficient use of land resources is a hallmark of Smart Growth. Compact building forms and infill development help support more cost effective public and private infrastructure than does low-density development at the fringe of our urban areas. Smart growth means creating neighborhoods where more people use existing services, such as water lines and sewers, roads, emergency services, and schools. Inefficient land use places a financial strain on communities trying to provide for the construction and maintenance of infrastructure. Regional cooperation can promote efficient use of infrastructure and help avoid duplication of these very expensive investments.

6. The American Planning Association and its Chapters support requirements of local government to fully use existing infrastructure before committing to build more and requiring new development to either pay for the facilities and services it requires or be consciously subsidized based on an open determination of positive fiscal impact on the taxpayer as opposed to the taxing body.

Reason to Support the Specific Policy Motion: The adoption of policies that increase the number of residents in urban cores or establish minimum densities for new urban development help ensure that existing infrastructure is fully utilized and that the public is not burdened with the cost of paying for inefficiency. Responsible stewardship over public funds requires that provision of public subsidies be a matter of policy adopted after a public debate of the issue.

SOCIAL EQUITY AND COMMUNITY BUILDING

- 1. The American Planning Association and its chapters supports a sustained and focused initiative in federal public policy to reverse the general decline of neighborhoods and the trend toward isolated, concentrated poverty through revisions to the federal tax code, federal housing initiatives, local "fair share housing" policies, and regional tax base sharing strategies in order to reduce the disparities among localities. We call for the elimination of regulatory barriers that increase the cost of housing without resulting in significant enhancements to the health, safety, or welfare of inhabitants.**

Reason to Support the Specific Policy Motion: Both rural poverty areas and the cores of central cities are in a trajectory of long-term decline as a result of the migration of labor and capital. According to the Fannie Mae's The Housing Policy Debate (1997), most central cities and downtowns are becoming increasingly irrelevant to the future of metropolitan economies, despite signs that population losses have slowed and individual neighborhoods and cities have turned around. Central city vitality remains at the core of smart growth outcomes. In the absence of major structural reform of regional and metropolitan governance, improvement is possible over time if public policy initiatives and programs are focused on the objective of reversing central city disinvestment.

- 2. The American Planning Association and its Chapters support increased social, economic, and racial equity in urban and rural areas and expanded choice and opportunity for all persons. The American Planning Association and its Chapters recognize a special responsibility to plan for the needs of politically and economically disadvantaged groups or person**

Reason to Support the Specific Policy Motion: Sprawl has aggravated the racial and economic segregation of America's communities by limiting housing choices, transportation choices, and job access. The spatial distribution of jobs in a region, along with adequate transportation options between work and home, and sufficient housing choice for workers at all levels of compensation, is key to attaining the goals of social, economic, and racial equity. Smart Growth also ensures that communities within a region have equitable access to open, natural areas and community facilities providing recreation opportunities and a range of social services; and, that no single community is burdened with hosting undesirable but necessary community uses (such as correctional facilities and solid waste facilities).

- 3. The American Planning Association and its Chapters support federal and state requirements that produce mixed income neighborhoods as the foundation for healthy regions, including requirements for the provision of affordable housing in all new-growth areas.**

Reason to Support the Specific Policy: Affordable housing should be coordinated regionally to limit concentrations of poverty. Growth strategies must specify provisions for production and maintenance of affordable housing through affirmative measures such as exclusionary zoning practices (zoning that includes a variety of housing types for a variety of income levels) that are applied equally and regionally. Advancement of equity means developing a varied housing stock and planning for stable, mixed income neighborhoods.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND LAND CONSERVATION

- 1. The American Planning Association and its Chapters encourage public, private, and non-profit cooperation to achieve a new level of partnership for addressing the need for ecological integrity over the short- and long- term.**

Reasons to Support the Specific Policy: Environmental protection and land conservation have often been seen as the role of the public sector. However, private property decisions often have equal or greater adverse affect on the environment and the land than government action does. An atmosphere of cooperation and collaboration is needed to improve ecological integrity. A sense of stewardship or “caring for the earth” needs to become the basis for all planning.

- 2. The American Planning Association and Chapters support land and coastal conservation programs by the federal, state and local governments**

Reasons to Support the Specific Policy: Funding assistance in the preservation of open areas at the federal, state and local levels, including funding for wildlife habitat, keyand the conservation of natural places is key and profoundly affects implementation of smart growth policies. The APA seeks to maintain the Federal government’s role as a leader and a partner through the provision of resources to local governments.

- 3. The American Planning Association and Chapters support programs that replace price subsidies for agricultural commodities with land and incentives, and they call for increasing the net funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund for the purposes for which the fund was originally established.**

Reasons to Support the Specific Policy: Funding assistance in the preservation of ecological systems at the federal, state and local levels, including funding for wildlife habitat, urban parks, and historic preservation profoundly affects implementation of smart growth policies. APA seeks to maintain the Federal Government’s role as a leader and a partner through the provision of resources to local governments.

- 4. The American Planning Association and Chapters support requirements to incorporate biodiversity planning into planning process. The biodiversity plan should use best available science to assess natural resources and determine areas of environmental vitality as the first step to land use planning and the implementation of “green infrastructure:” interconnected networks of natural lands, natural areas and wild life habitat, waterways, native species and ecological processes. Green infrastructure maintains clean air and water; reduces habitat fragmentation, pollution, and other threats to biodiversity; and improves the quality of life for people.**

Reasons to Support the Specific Policy: Protection of natural systems and habitat is critical to the support of human populations. As a result, it is critical that biodiversity planning be included in the early stages of land use planning. This should include the identification of natural vegetation, wetland communities, arid lands, and disturbed land cover; and an inventory and assessment of federally (and state) listed endangered and threatened plant and animal species, rare and endemic species, umbrella and indicator species, species that are commercially important in the state, their habitat, including food source, denning and nursery areas, and migratory routes; and changes in their population and habitat, to the extent such

information is available. State agencies should provide assistance to local governments, the non-profit and private sectors, in the collection and analysis of natural communities and species inventory, mapping, etc., in the development of biodiversity plans. Local entities can then supplement this information with local knowledge, and use the combined information to designate green infrastructure.

- 5. The American Planning Association and its Chapters support national, state and local policies that encourage the use of native plants, buffers, xeriscaping (water-smart landscaping), conservation performance standards, agriculture zoning, and other innovative land use regulations and practices that minimize impervious surface, preserve blocks of uninterrupted natural areas, minimize the use of water necessary for maintenance, and reduce the amount of stormwater runoff on public and private lands.**

Reason to Support the Specific Policy: Land use regulations that minimize impervious surface and preserve blocks of uninterrupted natural areas, and techniques that minimize water use reduce the amount of polluted runoff, improve the habitat value of open space, natural areas and wild life habitat and can improve the water quality and quantity of nearby water bodies. Open space zoning and conservation subdivision design are redundant.

- 6. The American Planning Association and its Chap support state agencies' providing assistance to local governments in the collection and analysis of natural communities and species inventory and mapping in the development of a biodiversity and green infrastructure. Local governments can then supplement this information with local knowledge, and use the combined information to designate green infrastructure policies and strategies.**

Reasons to Support Specific Policy: Many local governments do not have the staff or technological resources to inventory and map biodiversity resources for their community. If the state provides the data it will be easier for local governments to augment state information with local knowledge. The municipality benefits by getting the information necessary to write a strong plan, and the state benefits by enhancing the protection of natural resources through partnerships with local governments.

- 7. The American Planning Association and its Chapters support planning strategies, design standards and incentive programs that minimize habitat fragmentation, preserve the integrity of the natural ecosystems, protect air and water quality, and conserve water quantity while encouraging the use of renewable resources, innovative storm water management that consumes less land and protects natural resources, and infill and brownfield development.**

Reason to Support Specific Policy: Smart growth should not only deal with the location of development, but must also minimize any negative effects such development has on the natural ecosystem. Innovative storm water management practices are available that minimize land consumption and protect natural resources, while providing greater flood-control greenways.

- 8. The American Planning Association and its Chapters support federal and state agencies' providing assistance and incentives to local governments to collect and analyze information on natural communities in order to plan for biodiversity and green infrastructure. Local governments can then supplement this information with local knowledge, and use the combined information to designate green infrastructure policies and strategies.**

Reasons to Support Specific Policy: Many local governments do not have the staff or technological resources to inventory and map biodiversity resources for their community. If the state provides the data it will be easier for local governments to augment state information with local knowledge. The municipality benefits by getting the information necessary to write a strong plan, and the state benefits by enhancing the protection of natural resources through partnerships with local governments

POLICY OUTCOMES***In the area of planning process and regulation:***

- Well designed enduring communities that are sustainable in the near and the long term.
- The slowing of low-density sprawl and a reversal in the dispersion of housing and jobs into single-use, land consumptive development patterns.
- The creation of new urban settlements within planned urban growth areas, or in planned new urban areas, containing nodes of high-density development that include higher density housing, the majority of community facilities and jobs, and that are connected by transit.
- The adoption of statewide comprehensive land use and infrastructure planning goals that guide local government planning.
- Development decisions that is predictable, fair and fiscally responsible.
- The adoption of policies which make economic development incentives subject to a complete fiscal impact study to determine who will pay and who will be benefited will restore public confidence.

In the area of transportation and land use:

- A major shift from single-occupancy automotive transit to travel by bus, fixed-rail systems, walking and bicycling in existing settlements and new urban-growth areas.

In the area of regional management and fiscal efficiency:

- The improved long-term viability of regions and their constituent local governments.
- A shift in the control over regional infrastructure planning and development from fragmented and uncoordinated local governments to regional bodies empowered by states to exercise this function.

In the areas of social equity and community building:

- A reversal in the centralization of poverty in urban cores and first-ring suburbs.
- Elimination of regulatory barriers that obstruct the construction of affordable housing.
- Decreased racial and economic segregation through regulations requiring affordable housing in all new-growth areas.

In the areas of environmental protection and land conservation:

- Improvements in air and water quality and in the preservation of natural areas and wild life habitat.

- The provision of green infrastructure (an interconnected network of natural lands, natural areas and wild life habitat, and waterways) in existing settlements and new urban growth areas.
- A slowing in the conversion rate of agricultural and non-urbanized land to urban-type land uses.