20/20 VISION: SMART GROWTH FOR THE NEW YORK METROPOLITAN REGION

A Report Sponsored by the Revson Foundation and The CUNY Institute for Urban Systems

May 2003

CUNY Institute for Urban Systems
City College of New York
New York, NY 10031

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CHAPTER I. GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO 20/20 VISION: SMART GROWTH FOR THE NEW YORK METROPOLITAN AREA
I INTRODUCTION

Over the last few years “smart growth” has emerged as a potent force in states and metropolitan areas. State legislatures, alarmed at uncontrolled development, have enacted legislation designed to limit suburban sprawl, conserve open land and promote investment in older communities. Localities have adopted plans and regulations aimed at restraining and channeling growth. Private organizations, concerned with stemming the loss of open space, protecting the environment and creating balanced transportation, have embraced the principles of smart growth.

Although smart growth is often seen as a suburban movement, its proper setting is the metropolitan area. Unchecked suburban growth linked to declining central cities has led to chronic problems for both places. Suburban residents are distressed by congested highways, overcrowded schools, rising property taxes and vanishing open space. Central cities and inner suburbs are struggling with the burdens of fragile economies, concentrations of poor families, failing schools and inadequate municipal revenue.

Since land use controls, development decisions and most infrastructure are not federal responsibilities, the locus of smart growth planning occurs at state, metropolitan and local levels. Many states have adopted some form of legislation dealing with smart growth; Maryland is often cited as a leader. A number of metropolitan areas, such as Portland, Oregon and Minneapolis/St. Paul, have adopted smart growth controls.

In the New York metropolitan area, New Jersey, the most congested state in the nation, has the most widespread sprawl. On the other hand, it also has protective legislation and a State Development and Redevelopment Plan designating areas where growth should be directed or limited. The centerpiece of Governor McGreevey’s first State of the State address in January 2003 was a strong call for legislation to control suburban sprawl. The State also hosts an influential grassroots organization, New Jersey Future, concerned with smart growth. Neither Connecticut nor New York has legislation or effective private groups dealing with smart growth throughout the state.

With its extensive transit system and high-density development, the New York City – five boroughs - portion of the metropolitan area would hardly seem to be a strong candidate for smart growth planning. Although the City and the metropolitan area have greatly benefited from sweeping planning decisions made in the last century, at the start of the 21st century New York City faces a number of complicated and extremely important development issues that are strongly connected to the principles of smart growth.

One issue, made more imperative in the aftermath of the attack on September 11th, 2001, is the dispersion of economic activity from lower Manhattan. Another is the proper future of downtown Brooklyn, Jamaica, White Plains and similar
places as centers of regional activity and growth. How Staten Island, the City’s largest reserve of buildable land, is developed has strong implications for smart growth. Development of the City’s waterfront, exemplified by the possible rezoning and reuse of large sites in Brooklyn, should be seen in the context of smart growth planning. The Second Avenue subway, a direct rail link to JFK Airport, and commuter rail service along the Hudson River should be examined from the multiple perspectives of smart growth. A smart growth approach can yield tangible benefits to the City in the form of balanced transportation, integrated development and wise investment in infrastructure.

Even though smart growth has not yet been applied in an explicit and systematic manner in New York City, it is starting to shape some public decisions, such as rezoning and planning for part of Brooklyn’s waterfront. New York City also has an array of private organizations, including the Regional Plan Association, the Municipal Art Society and the Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance, that while not devoted to smart growth, see transportation, open space and other issues in a compatible framework.

The purpose of this pioneering study, generously supported by the Revson Foundation, is to focus the intelligence and outlook of smart growth on development in New York City. It is intended as an initial guide and a set of tools for smart growth in this extraordinarily complex and changing metropolis.

Chapter II of the report describes the major elements of smart growth and how they could be applied to development and planning in the City. Chapter III looks at a number of the legislative, regulatory, and fiscal tools that have been used to implement smart growth. Chapter IV presents two case studies of how smart growth could guide development in the City: in largely undeveloped Staten Island and a redeveloped downtown Jamaica. Chapter V discusses how smart growth can inform planning for transportation, economic development, and reuse of the City’s waterfront, and suggests a number of immediate steps that could be taken to make the principles of smart growth a reality in New York City.

Chapters VI and VII offer a wealth of practical information for applying smart growth in New York. Chapter VI is a compendium of national, regional and local organizations active in the field, citing their purpose, activities and how to contact them. Chapter VII is a comprehensive bibliography on smart growth. To facilitate research it is organized by general sources, information on issues and practices outside of the New York metropolitan region and pertinent references within the region.
CHAPTER II. ELEMENTS OF SMART GROWTH AND THEIR APPLICABILITY TO NEW YORK CITY
II ELEMENTS OF SMART GROWTH AND THEIR APPLICABILITY TO NEW YORK CITY

As the smart growth movement has become more widespread and accepted, it has come to rely upon a set of key elements or principles to achieve its aims. These elements are concerned with regulation, taxation, public finance, physical design and other aspects of development. They are advocated, to a greater or lesser degree, by interests concerned with smart growth; including suburban residents, environmentalists, business groups, elected officials, public agencies, and property developers. Their efficacy is shaped by factors that vary by region and locality; such as climate, demography, topography, the history of settlement as well as the structure of government and public policies. Principles and tools that may work in the New York area, for example, may not be appropriate in the fast-growing Atlanta or Denver regions.

In the April 2001 issue of Planning, Anthony Downs set forth 14 “elements” of smart growth. This is the most concise and complete summary of the principles of smart growth that the authors of this report have come across. This chapter briefly describes these 14 elements and illustrates how they could be applied to the New York region, and to New York City in particular. To a large extent, these elements are linked; progress on one (or more) will help achieve other elements. They represent an ideal and highly inclusive view of smart growth; regions that have acted on smart growth emphasize those elements that are appropriate to their setting and conditions.

Limit the Outward Extension of Growth

Limiting the outward extension of settlement is one of the most popular and most controversial elements advocated by those who want to halt or significantly slow down metropolitan growth. Understandably, attempts to limit growth have provoked a strong response among those interests which support unfettered growth, or want to merely lessen its most blatant adverse effects. Advocates of controlling growth through regional development boundaries or utility service districts, affirm that these limits will save open space, cut travel times, and reduce infrastructure costs by building at higher densities. Opponents believe that growth limits inappropriately intervene in the housing market and curtail consumer choices and that they will restrict the supply of lower-cost housing by preventing new subdivisions from being built on cheap land. Where growth limits have been used - in Portland, Oregon and Boulder, Colorado - they have been applied at a regional level. If growth limits are adopted by individual localities, sprawl will spread even further, by skipping over the restricted localities. Outside of the boundary, state regulations must be adopted to prevent new development from leap-frogging over it.

One place in New York City where limits on growth might work is on Staten Island. Since it is a sizable island under one jurisdiction and has a large amount
of undeveloped land, growth limits could be effective at the local level. The Staten Island Greenbelt might form part of a growth limit boundary. Growth limits would have to be supplemented by other actions, such as preserving open space, building at higher densities and, of course, creating a public consensus for regulating growth.

**Pay for Additional Infrastructure through Charges Imposed on New Development**

New development often requires additional infrastructure: roads, utilities, schools and other public investment. Many proponents of smart growth, especially those who want to limit growth, believe that any new development should pay the full costs of additional infrastructure through up-front payments, user fees and other exactions. Those who are not as strongly committed to limiting growth feel that existing residents, who will also benefit from the new facilities, should pay some of the costs. Others, concerned mainly with reviving inner urban areas, believe that maintaining the existing infrastructure should receive priority over building new facilities.

Reviving inner-city areas, such as downtown Jamaica in Queens, New York, may not necessarily require that public investment in roads, utilities, parking and other facilities be paid for by developers. Such investment upgrades existing infrastructure and recognizes that incentives must often be given to developers to improve marginal areas.

New development on Staten Island and on “brownfields” land, including large waterfront sites, will require significant investment in infrastructure. A reasonable public policy would be to adopt a cost sharing approach under which most of the infrastructure costs are imposed on the new development, with the balance paid by the wider public that will also benefit from the improvements.

**Increase the Use of Transit and Reduce Dependence on the Automobile**

This is one of the critical (and hardest to attain) elements of smart growth. However, if there is any place it can work it is in New York and the metropolitan region. Six out of ten trips to work in New York City are on public transit and the region has the most extensive rail and bus (and increasingly ferry) network in the nation. In many locales, residential densities are high enough to support rail transit as well as local and express bus services.

Several strategies commonly advocated for increasing transit use and reducing auto travel are applicable in New York. They include clustering new development around transit stations, building new transit lines and upgrading existing ones, and charging motorists for driving into the most congested portions of the region.
New development in both Jamaica and Staten Island (in the St. George area) will cluster high density commercial, residential and institutional activities in areas around transit hubs: rail, bus and ferry service on Staten Island; and commuter rail, subway and airport rail and bus transit in Jamaica. There is strong support for rail transit along the north shore of Staten Island. Completing the Second Avenue subway and extending the “7” train west of Times Square are critical components of the regional rail transit system and are essential for new high-density development. A central feature of the plan for rebuilding Lower Manhattan is to make it more accessible by rail, to improve subway and ferry service, and to construct a major transit interchange. Billions of dollars are being spent to upgrade and improve transit lines and stations, for instance Times Square and Grand Central Terminal, and for new and environmentally friendly buses.

Most new development in New York City, ranging from in-fill in Queens, to building on brownfields in Brooklyn, to the new campus for the City University on Governors Island, relies on the region’s unparalleled transit system. Even large new retailers, such as the Home Depot in East Harlem and the Fairway in Red Hook in Brooklyn, which will rely heavily on auto access, are also convenient to transit and are located on the edges of communities where increased auto travel will be least disruptive.

One tool that until recently seemed politically hazardous - tolls on the East River bridges - may now be acceptable. In the wake of the successful limitations on private auto travel into Manhattan imposed after September 11, as well as the City’s severe budget crisis, it may now be possible to introduce tolls on the bridges to regulate automobile travel and to raise revenues. Other practices, such as peak-hour pricing, already used on the Hudson River bridges, and greater use of express buses, can be used to favor transit and to restrain auto use.

Keeping transit dominant and suppressing automobile travel (or at least not increasing it) will require considerable public investment in rebuilt and new routes, rolling stock, stations and other facilities. New York City has no other choice if it is to sustain and make the most of its dense and efficient pattern of settlement and to prepare for the future.

**Promote Compact Mixed-Use Development**

Compact, mixed-use development, especially when combined with transit, is a fundamental tenet of smart growth. Such development makes it possible to preserve land, lower infrastructure costs, and to reduce and shorten vehicular trips. It encourages people to walk and bike and to be more physically active. It also offers consumers a wider range of housing types and residential settings in urban and suburban areas.
The evolving mixed-use development around the stations of the new Midtown Direct rail service in suburban New Jersey is an excellent example of how transit can promote smart growth. On Long Island, the large mixed-use community planned for the site of the Pilgrim Psychiatric Center offers an excellent chance to apply smart growth principles. Projects in such diverse cities as Mountain View, California; Atlanta, Georgia; and Chicago, Illinois demonstrate the benefits of compact, multi-use development clustered around transit stations.

In recent years, developments combining housing with retailing and other services have become more common in New York City. The project planned for the old Rheingold Brewery site in Bushwick in Brooklyn is a good example of mixed-use compact development on a reclaimed brownfield location. Staten Island, downtown Jamaica and other places also provide opportunities for such development.

Large waterfront sites in the City could be developed at higher densities for mixed residential, retailing and public services, in addition to leisure activities oriented to the water. To insure that New York City’s great shoreline is protected and enhanced, as has been done in other cities, will require concerted public and private action. Public agencies; private organizations, such as the Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance, environmental groups; local communities and other interests must play a central role in decisions regarding the City’s riverfront.

**Use Financial Incentives and Regulations to Direct Growth to Designated Areas**

A number of states, including neighboring New Jersey, have legislation that enables localities to channel growth into designated areas through planning and development controls, taxation or financial incentives. States have powers of regulation and taxation, not generally available to local governments that can contend with such conditions as traffic congestion, the loss of open space and the decline of older settlements.

Maryland is a leader in using public incentives to encourage investment in existing communities. For example, established localities receive priority for state school construction funds. As a result of this policy, in 2000, 80% of Maryland’s construction budget was allocated to schools in established settlements, compared to 38% in 1990. Businesses that locate or expand in designated growth areas are eligible for a job creation income tax credit. Households that buy homes near their workplace can receive cash incentives.

So far, New York State has not adopted financial incentives that would encourage localities to follow smart growth planning, nor enunciated smart growth policies for metropolitan areas. State incentives favoring investment in schools in New York City and other urban areas would benefit the City’s educational system. Property tax and financial incentives, such as favorable
mortgage terms (known as location-efficient mortgages) could encourage smart growth in designated areas.

**Share Fiscal Resources Among Localities**

This smart growth element seeks to equalize the fiscal position of individual localities within a region and to discourage them from employing land use policies to enlarge their tax bases. So far, only one large metropolitan area, the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul, has adopted this approach.

Older suburbs in a metropolitan region are often at a disadvantage, compared with central cites and newer suburbs, in attracting people, jobs and public investment. One response to this situation is the consortium that inner-ring suburbs in metropolitan Cleveland have formed to make favorable loans for rehabilitating housing and funding the clean-up of brownfield sites. A local example of the sharing of fiscal resources are the user fees and bond precedes which the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey invests in transportation improvements in both states. Older suburbs in Westchester and Nassau Counties could benefit from cooperation on issues of growth and resource sharing.

**Coordinate Planning and Land Use Decisions at the Regional Level**

Planning and land-use decisions are among the most jealously guarded prerogatives of local government. However, if the regionally-based elements of smart growth, like limits on growth or fiscal resource sharing, are to be effective, some form of regional coordination for land use and planning is required. As Downs points out in his article, such mechanisms have not been widely adopted, except in regions like Atlanta where suburban sprawl has precipitated a near-crisis in highway travel. The State of Georgia, through the Regional Transportation Authority, can overrule local transportation planning and land use decisions that would produce more sprawl and harm the environment.

Regional land use decision-making will entail a number of actions by New York State: creating inter-governmental structures, adopting requirements for local planning and State support for planning. Concurrent with efforts to awaken New York State to the need for regional development controls and incentives, New York City and other municipalities will continue making local land use and planning decisions. Major transportation and utility plans are, by federal mandate and necessity, already coordinated at the regional level. Within New York City, the activities of the City Planning Department as well as the planning functions of the Departments of Transportation, Environmental Protection and other agencies deal with the entire city. New York City already has workable community structures, namely Community Planning Boards, for incorporating the elements of smart growth into land use and planning decisions.
Adopt Faster and More Predictable Processes for Approving Development

Municipal reports on development and city-wide political campaigns regularly call for reforming New York City’s complex and protracted process for approving new construction. Developers contend that the unpredictability of the process and its slow pace unnecessarily inflate the cost of construction, thereby raising costs to consumers. Those opposed to specific projects and those who value public deliberation regard the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure and other safeguards as essential for protecting the public interest in development.

Streamlining the approval process, without compromising its protections, may make it easier for developers to accept other elements of smart growth, such as mixed-use development and new forms of urban design. For instance, Maryland’s Smart Growth Code has made it easier for developers to adopt smart growth practices, especially for rehabilitation. Cooperative action by city agencies, planning organizations, developers and other interests could resolve this significant administrative impediment to new development and yield wider benefits.

Develop Widespread Mixed-Income and Varied Types of Housing

The City’s high costs and chronic housing shortages make low and moderate income shelter a key element of smart growth in New York. Despite commitments by public agencies and community developers to affordable housing, the supply falls far short of the demand. A regional smart growth organization, Sustainable Long Island, has called for the use of several elements — tax incentives, use of brownfield sites, higher densities, downtown redevelopment and changes in land use regulations-- to produce more affordable housing.

Production of more affordable housing is strongly tied to other elements of smart growth. Higher densities will yield lower development costs and charges to consumers. Procedural reforms will lower costs and expand the supply of affordable housing. Regulatory changes could create more housing, by, for example, allowing larger single-family houses to be subdivided. Proponents of affordable housing as well as developers may find common ground in supporting mutually beneficial smart growth elements, such as higher densities, mixed uses and procedural reforms. Safeguards will be necessary to assure that the economic benefits of these measures accrue to affordable housing.

As shown in Atlanta, Denver and other cities, smart growth, with its mixed-uses and higher densities, offers opportunities for many different types of housing: row housing, apartments, working/living combinations, loft-type spaces and other arrangements.
Develop a Public/Private Consensus for Smart Growth

Smart growth is complicated and cuts across many interests. In many respects, reaching a public/private consensus on which elements are most applicable, what they consist of and how they fit together may be the most difficult part of establishing smart growth in New York City. There are hopeful signs that some level of consensus can be reached, or at least a framework for discussion established. Public agencies already cooperate routinely on regional matters, such as highway and rail transportation, water supply, and air quality. The public process for planning the replacement of a major highway, the Gowanus Expressway in Brooklyn, shows that it may be possible to reach consensus on key development issues. The Regional Plan Association’s latest plan for the metropolitan region, as well as its activities in key cities such as Stanford, CT, demonstrate that agreement is possible on vital issues, transportation is one, and that people are concerned about the future of the region.

Numerous groups in the region, as described in a later chapter, are involved in smart growth or closely associated issues, like affordable housing, waterfront development and open space. The recent forums on Imagining New York conducted by the Municipal Art Society show that citizens are seriously concerned about the region as well as their part of it and are willing to share and debate ideas about its future. If smart growth principles are to guide regional development, entrenched, and often parochial interests will have to work together. There are encouraging signs that this is beginning to happen.

Preserve Open Space and Environmental Quality

Preserving open space and environmental quality, including clean air and water, is one of the most appealing and unifying elements of smart growth. Groups that may disagree on other topics are more likely to agree on these objectives. Opportunities abound for preserving open space at various scales. They range from setting aside larger suburban tracts; to the “greening” of vacant and derelict inner-city land; as well as rescuing inland waterways, such as the Bronx River and the Gowanus Canal and the Hackensack River in New Jersey. In built-up areas existing open space must be maintained and made accessible.

In a region blessed with a long and varied shoreline, reclaiming waterfront land and making it available for public use should be a priority. Recent major undertakings, such as building a park along the Hudson River, plans for turning the Great Kills landfill into a large park, plus the work of the Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance in bringing shoreline communities together, show a deep concern for the City’s open areas and their recreational, ecological and social value. At a smaller scale, traffic medians and triangles in the City are being planted and communities are taking responsibility for local parks and gardens.
Enhancing the quality of the environment is important in our densely settled metropolitan region. The sufficiency and quality of the water supply; solid waste disposal and recycling; siting power plants; and the effect of highways on adjoining neighborhoods are among the major environmental issues facing New York City. The City’s vital upstate watershed is affected by conflicting pressures for limiting development and satisfying the needs of local communities for growth and economic activity.

Preserving open space and the environment is closely linked to other smart growth elements. The availability of land for open space as well as environmental quality will be reinforced by growth limits and compact development. Rebuilding inner-city areas will consume less land and reduce the adverse impact of vehicles and structures on the environment.

**Redevelop Inner-City Areas and In-Fill Sites**

Making optimum use of inner-city land and in-fill sites is imperative in a large, densely-built region. Redevelopment means building different types of housing on bypassed sites and brownfields in the five boroughs and the inner suburbs. It also entails investment and better transportation in the older commercial centers, such as the Hub in the South Bronx, downtown Jamaica, downtown Brooklyn and Journal Square in Jersey City. Waterfront development can return large and unique but now derelict properties to productive use. Inner-city redevelopment reinforces other activities, like replacing obsolete public housing and preserving historic districts and structures.

The interdependence between inner-city redevelopment and other smart growth elements is apparent. Smart growth redevelopment supports increased transit use, compact settlement, and open space. It will also require consensus on what and how to build and recognition of the economic, social and civic connections between the old and new parts of the urban scene.

**Facilitate New Forms of Urban Design**

This element has two facets: eliminating impediments to improved design and encouraging better design. Downs notes that:

> …existing zoning and subdivision rules often prevent mixed-use developments, block new multi-family housing, raise the costs of new single-family dwellings, make clustering high-density development around transit stops impossible and impede creation of pedestrian-friendly subdivisions.

As we show in the Staten Island study, subdivision regulations may require unnecessarily wide streets, which results in lower densities. On Staten Island,
along the waterfront, and in the suburbs, new controls can encourage more imaginative and sensible higher density designs that will preserve open space, produce affordable housing and encourage a sense of community. Reintroducing the efficient grid street system at the rebuilt World Trade Center, rather than recreating a superblock, will be a step in the direction of better urban design.

**Create a Stronger Sense of Community and a Recognition of Regional Interdependence**

This is probably the most elusive and yet one of the most important elements of smart growth. Without it, building consensus around smart growth, agreeing on policies and coordinating planning will be very difficult. Citizens need to accept responsibility for their neighborhoods and localities, while also recognizing their essential economic, social and physical ties to the wider region.
CHAPTER III. SMART GROWTH TOOLS
Introduction

Metropolitan New York has yet to realize a process for regional cooperation to promote smart growth. Many citizens are unaware of, or indifferent to, the issues of sprawl, even though the New York metropolitan area is highly suburbanized. The older, north-eastern region of the nation has its own very specific version of sprawl and attendant problems as distinct from the classic examples thereof in the west. The situation is best illustrated by metropolitan areas such as Baltimore, Hartford, Newark, Philadelphia and Providence but also New York City itself in which a severe split-level economy is reflected in affluent suburbs ever further out from the floundering urban core. (1) Strong well established systems of infrastructure already exist in these urban centers and yet still the New York metropolitan region keeps spreading further and further outward with it’s three states’ consumption of land exceeding almost five times it’s population growth over the last generation, hurting the region's landscape, economic viability and quality of life (2).

Comparisons between New York and western cities such as Los Angeles, Las Vegas and Salt Lake City are often made with the assumption that New York is an example of balanced development in every way that the latter are not. Yet in reality population densities (persons/sq.mi.) are almost the same when compared over the tri-state NY metro area and the Los Angeles metropolitan area (often considered the “worst” example of sprawl.) Even within the city, commuting time from the “outer boroughs” averages at 42.3 minutes for a 7.2-mile distance whereas residents of Los Angeles take about 26 minutes. Greater New York (two hour circle) now contains over 20 million people beset by problems related to sprawl that shape the destinies of center and periphery. (3)

Regional cooperation and planning have often proven to be thorny since few individual political units wish to yield their sovereignty. In a time of economic competitiveness, each job, each factor contributing to a job is considered good strategy for a political unit. A municipality’s smart growth efforts usually reflect a goal of promoting urban vitality through controlling growth beyond its boundaries, and this must largely happen via regulation at the state level. If smart growth legislation is being pursued by a large decaying city such as Rochester, NY, the surrounding regions will realize that smart growth efforts may well entail the siphoning back of businesses, residents and tax revenue that relocated to outlying regions in the post war era. The suburban regions may fear loosing related prosperity, unless they are convinced that development has created a host of problems as well, sprawl being the major example.

It would be of no service to merely offer a long list of “shoulds” for smart growth for whole regions, without offering details and examples of how this would actually be achieved at both the micro and macro levels. This chapter will look at various traditional methods both legislative and regulatory, including comprehensive plans, zoning, building codes, and taxation, but also new
variations, methods and ideas such as Cluster Zoning, Urban Growth Boundaries, Smart Codes, Regional Consolidation, Location Efficient Mortgages and The New Urbanism. The last thirty years has yielded some notable experiments that involve both local and regional planning in other states such as Minnesota, Indiana, Michigan, Wisconsin and California, in which regional tax and spending plans have stabilized struggling cities. In this chapter we hope to begin laying down a list of various options, whether regulatory, legislative, or incentives, that would provide a tangible means of achieving the goal of smart growth within the particular circumstances of the Metropolitan New York/Tri-State Region.

LEGISLATIVE AND REGULATORY

The need for legislative and regulatory methods for achieving smart growth has produced a body of helpful tools and literature in recent years. The American Planning Association (APA) has taken a strong stand in favor of smart growth and is on the board of Smart Growth America, a leading advocacy organization. The APA has produced the most valuable and complete compendium of smart growth legislation from every state in Growing Smart Legislative Guidebook: Model Statutes for Planning and the Management of Change, 2002 Edition (Stuart Meck, FAICP, Gen. Editor).

Land use planning and zoning regulations are the most common type of tool for implementing smart growth. Although sprawl must ultimately be contained and smart growth promoted through state legislation and local development is shaped by many national and global forces, individual cities and towns often retain a great deal of sovereignty in deciding how they want to guide future growth. The two main legal vehicles for this control are comprehensive plans and zoning ordinances.

The comprehensive plan, sometimes known as the general plan or master plan, is the basic, guiding document of the public regulatory process. Consistent with state statutes and court decisions, comprehensive plans may be optional or mandatory for local governments, advisory in nature of legally binding. The best growth management programs have a comprehensive plan as their cornerstone. The comprehensive plan outlines planning goals based on forecasted growth and provides a policy framework for implementing tools including zoning, capital and transportation improvement programs, design standards, and environmental protection. Examples of comprehensive plans attuned to smart growth are Berkley CA; Cambridge, Mass; Chicago, ILL; Chattanooga, Tenn.; Cleveland, OH; Lincoln, Nebraska; Portland, Oregon; and Seattle, WA. (4)

The more successful arrangements involve control over future development areas with the state authorizing a city to maintain zoning powers over development in an area larger than its current size. This is aided if state laws prohibit incorporation of municipalities within a certain distance of city limits.
without city consent and provide a relatively easy annexation procedure; and, through an intergovernmental agreement, many city and county functions are combined, including the departments of planning, health, employment, and human services. However in areas where adjacent areas for a great distance out of the city are already largely built up (as with New York City) these arrangements would need innovative modification.

**Zoning ordinances** are the most widely used form of land use regulation. The fundamental purpose of zoning is to separate incompatible uses of land. Zoning regulations include written requirements and standards defining the permitted uses of land and buildings, the height and size of buildings, the size of lots and yards around buildings, the supply of parking spaces, size and type of signs and fences, and other characteristics of development. Because traditional zoning is rather inflexible, a host of alternative zoning approaches have been formulated. Among the most popular are the following.

**Cluster zoning**: Minimum lot and yard sizes are reduced and the dwellings are grouped on one part of the site in order to preserve open space and/or natural features on the remainder of the site. For example, in the Hammocks, a residential development in Florida, single-family housing has been built under cluster zoning. This has enabled green spaces to be incorporated into neighborhoods and the creation of a splendid greenway system between the neighborhoods and the lakes. The Hammocks achieves an average net residential density of 11.5 units per acre, twice its gross density.

**Overlay zoning**: A zoning district, applied over one or more other districts, that contains additional provisions for special features or conditions, such as historic buildings, wetlands, steep slopes, and downtown residential uses. A good example of the use of overlay zoning is Arlington, Virginia’s General Land Use Plan, which was revised in the 1980s in order to direct high-density development toward Metro corridors. As the potential for increased land value and housing demand along those corridors posed the threat of displacement for long-time residents, the county created an affordable housing overlay district. Under this provision, in order to have a site rezoned for redevelopment at higher densities, builders were required to preserve housing that had traditionally been considered "affordable," or to replace it with new affordable housing in comparable locations.

**Incentive zoning**: These provisions encourage but do not require developers to provide certain amenities or qualities in their projects in return for identified benefits, such as increased density or rapid processing of applications. Incentives are often used in downtown areas to gain open space, special building features, or public art in connection with approved developments. In Bethesda Maryland’s business center, a combination of a zoning density incentive with a ceiling on potential development imposed by the area plan successfully generated a critical mass of projects around the Bethesda Metrorail station. Projects offering a high quality of construction and significant public amenities
would have priority for approval. Eight major office complexes, a hotel, open spaces, public art, and other community oriented facilities were developed under this successful pedestrian-oriented design criteria.

Inclusionary zoning: For municipalities whose comprehensive plans seek to encourage a broader range of housing options, zoning can play a valuable role in helping to implement plan policies. Some cities and towns are pursuing "inclusionary zoning" as a way to make sure that new development includes an affordability component. Inclusionary zoning ordinances often require developers to provide a certain percentage of affordable units in their projects. “Community Land Trusts,” discussed at the end of this chapter, through their skills and resources, can help for-profit developers meet such affordability requirements.

Other methods rooted in land use planning and zoning that have been used to advance smart growth include New Urbanism and urban growth boundaries.

“The New Urbanism” is a set of design principles that has become increasingly popular for correcting the poor planning associated with the post war era, particularly suburban sprawl. Although often thought of as a means for curing the ailments of sprawling outer suburbs, New Urbanism borrows many ideas from graceful older, smaller scale east coast cities. Many proponents believe that the techniques of New Urbanism should also be applied to inner ring suburbs and inner city settings. Basic principles for development, as codified by the Congress for New Urbanism (CNU) in 1993, are as follows:

- Complete, walkable neighborhood, normally of no more than 40 to 160 acres.
- Minimum density of five residential units per acre. A critical mass of residents in close proximity to daily services and activities; internal balance of housing, jobs and services; a complete, self-sufficient neighborhood requires many buildings housing a variety of daily activities.
- An identifiable neighborhood center serving as both a civic focus and an informal place of gathering for the community.
- Designated sites for civic buildings - schools, libraries, museums, assembly halls, places of worship, and day care centers- occupy the most prominent places and should be planned in coordination with public open spaces.
- A variety of public open spaces- natural and landscaped - for the use, benefit, and enjoyment of the entire community.
- A hierarchy of interconnected streets with different traffic characteristics for people and cars, pedestrians and bicyclists.

In the central city, New Urbanists have primarily responded to situations where there are large amounts of underutilized land; toxic sites, empty lots such as with the Down City Project in Providence Rhode Island designed by noted New Urbanist architect Elizabeth Platter Zyberk, http://www.providenceplan.org/. The most successful efforts in denser areas have been in inner ring/older suburbs.
This is exemplified by Cinderella City, on the site of a long abandoned postwar shopping center in the inner-ring Denver suburb of Englewood, Colorado. It has been redeveloped as a compact mixed-use development of retail, and residential units centered on a light rail station all within easy walking distance, http://www.communitylink.com/englewood/commerce.htm. In either case, New Urbanists emphasize rectifying what they see as failed urban renewal policies from the 1950’s and 1960’s. In another instance, the Chicago, ILL, Hope VI Program of the Department of Housing and Urban Development, or HUD, (http://www.calthorpe.com/) involved tearing down dilapidated high-rise public housing projects and replacing them with mid-rise townhouse-style units for households with a mixture of incomes. See http://www.hud.gov/offices/pih/programs/ph/hope6/index.cfm. However, the project was not without controversy due to the amount of displacement.

The challenge is to see if the tenets of New Urbanism can be useful in inner city areas that do not have a lot of empty land. So far this has occurred on only a limited basis or in conceptual proposals. One proposal of note is Yankee Village, in the Bronx, New York City, proposed by New Urbanist architect John Massengale. The project would re-create a traditional mixed-use urban neighborhood of offices, shopping and housing between Yankee Stadium and the Harlem River. See http://www.massengale.com/pages/yankee1.htm.

Urban Growth Boundaries (UGB's) have been successfully used to contain future development by many localities, particularly in the west. Under the UGB concept, local governments estimate the amount of land needed for new business, housing, recreation, etc, for a period of time. They then draw a line around this land. New development can occur within the line but not outside it. UGB’s are typically set for twenty years; long enough to be effective but short enough to accommodate changes. The urban growth boundaries were one of the most significant reforms enacted by Oregon in its 1973 state-wide planning legislation. Each locality was required to adopt a UGB as part of its overall planning, a rule that helped Portland maintain its high quality of life over the next quarter-century. Urban growth boundaries have been credited with preserving 25 million acres of farmland and forests in Oregon. Some towns, such as Corvallis and Ashland, have decided to permanently freeze their boundaries. Today, each of Oregon’s 241 cities is now surrounded by a "UGB." Go to http://www.uoregon.edu/~pppm/landuse/UGB.html)

Building Codes

One of the 14 basic principles of smart growth is “adopting faster and more predictable processes for approving development”. The use of “Smart Codes for Smart Growth” rather than creating a new code, is increasingly gaining attention. So far Maryland and New Jersey are leading the way. Maryland: The Maryland Strategy Group recommended creating a definitive index to existing codes to accommodate new procedures. The index states
precisely which provisions of the existing codes apply to rehabilitation. As in a similar New Jersey system, code requirements increase gradually as the scope of work increases. Smaller projects trigger very few additional requirements. This enables property owners to accurately predict what they’ll be required to do, and it institutionalizes a more common sense approach. The Maryland “Smart Code” took effect on June 1,1997 (http://www.op.state.md.us/smartgrowth/smartcode/smartcode00.htm)

**New Jersey:** has been lauded for its new “Rehabilitation Subcode,” and, in 1997, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development approved the state’s use of a “Nationally Applicable Recommended Rehabilitation Provisions” (NARRP,) to guide the regulation of work in existing buildings. After just one year, total rehabilitation spending increased dramatically in the state’s largest cities. The New Jersey Department of Community Affairs estimated that the new Rehabilitation Subcode would save between 10 and 40 % of the cost of redeveloping old buildings (www.state.nj.us/dca/codes/rehab/rehab.htm). (6)

“Green” Manufacturing, Construction And “Deconstruction”

“Living Green” is not only applicable to rural environments. In fact, the future of “sustainability” and “smart growth” will depend largely on the ability of human beings to live at greater densities where infrastructure already exists, recycling , upgrading and expanding these systems as needed. In addition, construction of new buildings and structures, removal, reuse or recycling of the old, and manufacturing of environmentally sound building materials must be carried out in a manner that is integrated with all urban systems which must also operate on “green” principals. For example, if a “green building” stands in a parking lot full of SUV’s and far from public transportation, how good a job have we done in terms of creating an environmentally sound urban environment? Below is an initial examination of how to re-cast traditional urban systems in a more sustainable manner.

The construction industry and the manufacturing base that supports that industry has always been an important part of New York City’s economy. In the post 9/11 climate, the demand for new construction, especially in Lower Manhattan, will inevitably increase. However, what sets this demand apart from previous building cycles is that there is an overwhelming desire to build “green”; erecting structures that are at the very least energy efficient and employ recycled and recyclable materials, and which are built in thoughtful and sustainable means taking into consideration the economic, social and environmental effects of the structure. Building green will cut operating costs, improve the quality of the environment and create markets for new products and services that will spawn new industries and create healthy, stable jobs in New York City’s manufacturing sector.

The three main obstacles for green building are inertia, financing and access to materials.
The City, in collaboration with architects, builders, manufacturers, labor organizations and other private sector stakeholders, itself can play a major role in overcoming those three factors by doing the following:

1. **Adopt green design standards for all new City construction.**
2. **Establish an information clearinghouse on green technologies.**
3. **Expand Environmental Management System assistance.**
4. **Create a financial assistance package for manufacturers of green building products located or locating in New York City.**
5. **Preserve manufacturing space for green manufacturers.**
6. **Create a Labor/Management Committee to expedite construction and resolve conflicting requirements.**

There is a growing recognition that incorporating green technologies and products into the construction industry is inevitable. By the City leading the way in bringing suppliers closer to the increasing demand source, the financing of building green will be much more feasible. A green building initiative will support two major components of New York City’s economy, construction and manufacturing. It will increase jobs, specifically safe, healthier jobs, and set the stage for a City supported by efficient, non-polluting, sustainable buildings. Please see Chapter four Case Study Section for discussion of a possible application of these principles in the redevelopment of Downtown Jamaica (7).

**Regional Consolidation and Annexation**

Since it is often difficult for local jurisdictions to negotiate consolidation on their own, much of the responsibility for promoting regionalism falls to state governments. At least twelve states have instituted some system of regional planning and growth management, with Oregon, Maryland, Vermont, New Jersey, Florida and Washington State the most effective examples. The three most noted examples of regional government or annexation are the Portland, Oregon area, the greater Twin Cities area, Minnesota, and the expansion of Indianapolis, Indiana.

**Portland, Oregon:** *Metro Portland* is an elected regional government representing the area’s three counties. Formed in 1979, Metro was the country’s first regional government and a key reason that Portland has become one of the most attractive, livable cities in the nation. The impetus for the formation of Metro came from a far-sighted 1973 state law that required Oregon’s municipalities to develop comprehensive land-use plans and to establish "growth boundaries" around their perimeters. The state land use law gave Portland a fixed framework for channeling growth rather than halting it, as well as a way to avoid the pitfall of controlling sprawl in one place while it arises somewhere else.

**Indianapolis, Indiana,** was consolidated with surrounding Marion County in 1970, by then-mayor Richard Lugar. The new governmental entity annexed tens

The Minneapolis/St. Paul, Twin Cities region has the only significant metropolitan tax-base sharing experiment in the nation. Uniform regional pricing often leaves cities and older suburbs with the burden of subsidizing new infrastructure for developing suburbs without significant returns, as well as contributing to sprawl. Under the pioneering Minneapolis/St. Paul Regional Tax Sharing Plan, enacted by the Minnesota legislature in 1971, all 188 municipalities in the seven-county Twin Cities area must pool the tax burden. http://www.Vapreservation.org/Growth/idea.htm. The Metropolitan Council is the regional planning organization for the seven-county Twin Cities area. The Council runs the regional bus system, collects and treats wastewater, manages regional water resources, plans regional parks and administers funds that provide housing opportunities for low- and moderate-income individuals and families. The Council is appointed by the Minnesota Governor.http://www.metrocouncil.org/index.htm[6]

TAXATION AND FINANCIAL TOOLS

Site-Value Taxation levies a tax on real estate commensurate with its potential value, regardless of how it is developed. This method responds to the practice by which neighboring cities competitively develop predominantly expensive homes and commercial properties with low service needs, thereby limiting less costly housing and entry by families with lower incomes.

The $5,000 Homebuyer Credit Act, passed by the District of Columbia (D.C.) after a thirty year decline in population, has helped to replenish the city's population and, in turn, its taxpayer base. Unlike some other tax incentives, it applies to buyers in any D.C. neighborhood, not just economically distressed areas. The act offers a $5,000 tax credit incentive to first-time home buyers.

Regional Tax Sharing Plan. The best example is the Twin Cities plan noted above.

Reduce Or Eliminate Taxation On Buildings And Shift It To Land. This is done in more than a dozen cities. The two most prominent examples are Harrisburg and Pittsburgh, PA. After this method was adopted, construction boomed and the supply of rental housing increased. The land tax is five to six times the tax on buildings and improvements. Despite the devastating decline of the local steel industry, there has been a significant increase in downtown development and construction, in fact more than in nearby suburbs.
Locating Business Near Infrastructure: Maryland’s Job Creation Tax Credit. The state changed its tax code so that businesses that locate or expand in designated "growth areas" are eligible for a new job creation income tax credit. The Job Creation Tax Credit Act promotes job creation by providing income tax credits to business owners who create at least 25 jobs in Priority Funding Areas. The jobs must be full-time, permanent, and pay at least 150 percent of the minimum wage. The tax policy is also coupled with cash incentives for people who choose to buy homes near where they work.

Promoting Historic Preservation: Tax Incentives for Property Owners: Thirty-seven states offer tax incentives to encourage property owners to maintain and renovate old and historic buildings. Most programs fall into one of two categories:

- State enabling laws permitting municipalities to offer local property tax abatement;
- State income tax credits.

For example, Oregon provides for property tax abatement for residential and commercial properties. There is a 15-year freeze on pre-rehab value of historic properties listed on the National Register.


Tax incentives to protect farmland and farm production are widely used to maintain the economic viability of farming. The most important type of agricultural tax program, known as differential assessment, allows local officials to assess farmland at its value for agricultural use, rather than its fair market value, which is generally higher. http://www.farmlandinfo.org/fic/tas/tafs-dacb.html

Location-efficient Mortgages: The Center for Neighborhood Technology in Chicago, working with the Natural Resources Defense Council and Surface Transportation Policy Project, has developed a method that allows mortgagees to borrow more money to buy larger houses in the city, based on the actual cost savings of living near mass transit. Under their proposed “location-efficient mortgage,” borrowers would have access to an additional $54,000 to purchase a home. Fannie Mae, the Federal National Mortgage Association, has recently sanctioned a three- to five-year test of location-efficient mortgages in Chicago through four banks. http://locationefficiency.com and http://www.cnt.org/lem.
USING STATE FISCAL POLICIES TO DIRECT DEVELOPMENT

Some states use the distribution of funds for education, highways, and open space to direct development to designated areas. Maryland, a national leader in smart growth, employs a number of fiscal tools; among them the Priority Funding Areas program, to channel growth to selected locales. Established locales receive priority for state school construction funds. Businesses that move to or expand in designated districts are eligible for an income tax credit if they create new jobs; while financial incentives are available to workers who buy a home near their place of work.

New York State is investing in new parks and recreation facilities to help stimulate and sustain the rebuilding of inner-city areas, as exemplified by the new parks along the Hudson River and the Brooklyn waterfront. New Jersey’s Fix-It-First transit policy encourages development in existing settlements and the provision of adequate facilities to accommodate growth.

REGIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE CONNECTIONS

The common requirement that new development be connected to regional water supply and wastewater facilities gives localities some leverage over the location and character of the development. In some fast-growing areas, developers must demonstrate that a sufficient and long-term supply of water is available before they are permitted to build and that they will be able to connect to regional wastewater treatment plants.

COMMUNITY LAND TRUSTS (CLT’S)

There are essentially two types of land trusts: conservation trusts, which acquire and protect open space and agricultural land; and community land trusts (CLTs), which tend to focus more on housing and community development. The modern community land trust model was developed in the 1960s by community activists who conceived a democratically controlled institution that would hold land for the common good and make it available to individuals through long-term land leases. Most, if not all, CLT’s have in place “limited equity” policies and formulas that restrict the resale price of the housing in order to maintain its long-term affordability. These features of the community land trust model provide homeownership opportunities to people who might otherwise be left out of the market. Higher rates of homeownership help stabilize and strengthen communities. Urban CLT’s often deal with combating the negative effects of speculation and gentrification. Most community land trusts focus on increasing home ownership, which sometimes includes educating potential homebuyers on establishing credit, applying for a mortgage, and maintaining a home. A number of CLT’s have also acted as developers of special needs housing or group homes, rental housing, and even commercial space for lower income entrepreneurs. In municipalities
whose comprehensive plans seek to encourage a broader range of housing options, community land trusts can play a valuable role in helping to implement plan policies. As mentioned above, some cities and towns are pursuing “inclusionary zoning” as a way to make sure that new development includes an affordability component. Inclusionary zoning ordinances often require developers to provide a certain percentage of affordable units in their projects. Community land trusts, through their skills and resources, can help for-profit developers meet such affordability requirements.\(^{(10)}\)

**SOURCES**

1) For further information please see:


Kershaw, Sarah. ”A Bridge, and a Dividing Line; On One Side, the City, on the Other, Suburbia.” *The New York Times* (June 14, 2002).


2) For further information please see:


3) For further information please see please see the following four articles archived at [*Gotham Gazette*](http://www.gothamgazette.com/):

Marshall, Alex. “Sprawl”
http://www.gothamgazette.com/commentary/89.marshall.shtml

Fleming, Niko. “Smart Growth for New York”
http://www.gothamgazette.com/commentary/89.fleming.shtml

http://www.gothamgazette.com/demographics/apr.01.shtml

Markowitz, Michael. “New York and San Francisco” (28 October ’02)
http://www.gothamgazette.com/iotw/nyc.vs.sf/

4) Comprehensive Plans

Please see:

5) UGB’s

Statewide urban growth boundaries are now mandated in Oregon, Washington, and more recently in Tennessee. Localized UGB’s exist in over 15 California communities, Boulder, CO and Lexington, KY. Some important resources on Urban Growth Boundaries are: The Greenbelt Alliance’s very informative website (www.greenbelt.org), and their excellent manual, “Bound for Success,” describing how communities can adopt UGB’s. The Greenbelt Alliance has also prepared a special “Factsheet on Urban Growth Boundaries.” To find out more about both publications please go to the website listed above.

6) Smart Codes

Rapid replication is taking place as other states and local governments are pursuing their own versions of a rehabilitation code. Rhode Island formally adopted the Rhode Island Rehabilitation Code in February, 2002, and it went into full effect on May 1, 2002. To view please go to: http://www.rbfc.state.ri.us. New York State is taking an approach that could be replicated in a particularly easy and innovative fashion. The state is replacing its entire building code with the “International Codes,” oddly named because it is actually a national model code that will soon include a separate code for existing buildings. Please go to: New York Governor’s Office of Regulatory Reform: www.gorr.state.ny.us/gorr/ http://www.gorr.state.ny.us/gorr/qctf-rehab.htm. Smart codes also exist or are being developed in Minnesota, Kansas City, MO, Wichita KS, and Wilmington DE. HUD has also developed a model rehab code and guidelines, based on New Jersey’s code, for use by other states and interested parties. For more information please go to: http://www.liscnet.org/resources/2002/06/ neighborhoods_ 809.shtml

Other valuable sources re: “Smart Codes” include:

“Smart Growth America (SGA) Rehabilitation Codes,” http://www.smartgrowthamerica.com/RehabCodes.htm

International Codes Council  www.intlcode.org
7) "Green" Manufacturing, Construction and "Deconstruction" New York Industrial Retention Network (NYIRN), http://www.nyirn.org/

8) Regional Consolidation and Annexation

The value of regional governance has been demonstrated by cities that have already annexed suburbs or consolidated with county governments, such as: Nashville -- Davidson County, Tennessee; Lexington -- Fayette County, Kentucky; Jacksonville -- Duval County, Florida; Columbus -- Muscogee County, Georgia; Montgomery County, Maryland; Santa Fe, New Mexico. These and many other areas are seeking, to help prevent the unsightly sprawl in its beautiful desert region via annexation. Charlotte, North Carolina has expanded from 30 to 225 square miles, capturing 50 percent of the region's population growth, through annexation. Other metropolitan areas that are good candidates for such annexation, via consolidation or the formation of a regional entity are: Houston, Texas; Austin, Texas; Wash., D.C.; Seattle, Washington; Albuquerque, New Mexico. Regional consolidation of municipalities with their respective counties results in significant cost savings to the region and ensures integrated service delivery. Metropolitan areas that consolidate to form a regional entity can save millions of dollars in development costs, including transportation, water, parks and recreational facilities, public safety and education. The land development and economic growth potential is enhanced through coordinated development and provision of services.

A national trend is the consolidation of government functions, or the creation of a new government that encompasses several existing local governments. The benefits of regional consolidation include economies of scale, improved service delivery, and the potential for new revenue sources. The successful implementation of regional consolidation requires strong leadership, broad participation, and a clear vision for the future of the region. Regional consolidation can also provide an opportunity for the preservation of natural and cultural resources, as well as the protection of open space and farmland. The National Trust for Historic Preservation supports efforts to protect historic and cultural resources through regional governance.

Other valuable resources on Regional Consolidation and Annexation are:


Other resources for regional consolidation and annexation include:


9) Taxation And Financial Tools And Elimination Of Subsidies That Fuel Sprawl

Location-efficient Mortgages:
People who decide to live in the city generally find that, when applying for mortgages, banks do not consider it can be much cheaper to live near public transit and other amenities. These savings can be significant -- as much as $397 a month, according to the Natural Resources Defense Council. The Center for Neighborhood Technology has created two web pages that provide information on location-efficient mortgages. http://locationefficiency.com is used primarily by banks and prospective applicants in Chicago. It has an easy-to-use calculator to identify potential extra credit, which can be amortized using the new underwriting; http://www.cnt.org/lem provides an introductory article written by American Planning Association on Location Efficient Mortgages.

For information on Fannie Mae’s program please go to:
http://www.fanniemae.com


10) COMMUNITY LAND TRUSTS (CLT’S)
CHAPTER IV. CASE STUDIES OF THE APPLICATION OF THE ELEMENTS OF SMART GROWTH TO TWO COMMUNITIES IN NEW YORK CITY
GENERAL INTRODUCTION

In order to understand how the principles of smart growth could be applied in New York City, case studies were conducted in two very different settings: Staten Island and downtown Jamaica, Queens, NYC.

Staten Island is New York City’s largest, most suburban, least developed, but fastest growing borough. Between 1970 and 2000, the number of housing units rose by 84%, from 89,236 to 163,933, compared to a 10% rise in the city as a whole. Despite its startling recent growth, Staten Island still has large amounts of vacant land and opportunities for significant new residential and commercial development. Therefore, the smart growth debate centers on such issues as imposing geographical limits on growth; promoting compact mixed-use development; preserving open space and creating a consensus for smart growth.

Many residents of Staten Island would like to see its threatened open space and lightly-settled areas preserved. However, accomplishing this will entail building at higher densities around existing centers, which counters the borough’s traditional pattern of free-standing, single-family housing. Improving public transportation and reducing traffic congestion also means changing development patterns and travel habits. The central issue on Staten Island is the depth of popular and political support for new forms of development and who will benefit from and pay for them.

While Staten Island shows how the elements of smart growth can be applied to new development on largely open land, downtown Jamaica illustrates how they can be used to redevelop and revive an older urban center. Although Jamaica has declined as a retail and business crossroads over the last half-century, it is still an important and expanding hub for local and regional transportation as well as government services and higher education. Key smart growth issues are: how can compact, mixed-use development be inserted into an existing physical pattern; how can major transportation facilities strengthen development; and how the infrastructure required for new development should be financed and what public incentives may be needed to produce this development. Creating urban design of a high quality and achieving consensus around smart growth elements and how to implement them are also paramount issues. A development strategy for downtown Jamaica oriented to smart growth would also be relevant to the City’s other older commercial centers.

The case studies describe the background and issues related to development; how the elements of smart growth could be applied to each setting; and the immediate steps that should be taken to advance a smart growth agenda.
FIRST CASE STUDY: STATEN ISLAND

“My rallying cry is not anti-development, it’s smart development.”
- Staten Island’s North Shore City Councilmember Michael McMahon

Introduction

In 1898, with the adoption of a new charter, the Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan, Queens and Staten Island were united into the metropolis of Greater New York. Although some ferry service was available earlier, the Staten Island Ferry became a municipal service in 1905, providing transportation from the St. George Terminal to Manhattan’s Whitehall Terminal 5.2 miles away. However, the island remained largely rural throughout the first part of the 20th century. In 1948 the Fresh Kills landfill was opened, and in the post-war years the island became increasingly populated. In 1964 the Verrazano Narrows Bridge was built, connecting Staten Island to Brooklyn, and since 1970, the population of the borough has increased by 50%, and housing units have jumped by more than 80%.

This case study will focus on Staten Island as a part of New York City that has seen rapid increases in development and population in recent years, but that retains a good deal of open space and vacant land. For many years, the Fresh Kills landfill was the political issue on Staten Island. Now that the landfill is closed, other topics related to smart growth, such as development, transportation, and open space preservation, have gained prominence among residents and officials of the borough, resulting in a great deal of activity in these realms. The tension between ongoing development and efforts to preserve the borough’s existing neighborhoods, character, and open space, is currently a major factor in local politics. Staten Islanders and their elected officials are now facing a number of decisions that will have a huge impact on the character of the borough for years to come. The application of certain smart growth principles could be of great benefit to the borough now and in the future.

Background

For the last half-century, Staten Island has experienced dramatic growth. Since 1950, the population of the borough increased 132%, dwarfing the population growth of the second fastest growing borough, Queens, which had an increase of 43%. And from 1970 to 2000, the number of housing units in Staten Island increased from 89,236 to 163,993. During this same period, the growth in housing in New York City overall was just 9.7%, compared to 83% for Staten Island. In the 1990s, Staten Island’s growth rate of 17.1% was higher than any other borough, and its population rose to 443,728 by the year 2000. Even compared with other fast-growing boroughs such as the Bronx and Queens (10.7% and 14.2%, respectively) Staten Island has experienced enormous growth in the past decade. And as the borough that is often cited for its
suburban character, Staten Island’s growth rate far surpasses that of New York City suburbs such as Westchester (5.6%) and Nassau (3.6%) counties.(7)

The New York City Department of City Planning has linked this heavy migration to an increase in the number of new housing units in the borough,(8) and many Staten Islanders are clearly convinced of the connection, as evidenced by frequent community protests against new development of almost any sort. In contrast to the obvious wishes of many of the borough’s current residents, the island’s supply of relatively affordable, available land makes it very attractive to developers and potential residents alike. But many borough residents and their elected officials believe that the influx of new residents has strained community resources such as schools, and exacerbated existing problems, notably traffic congestion.

There is good reason to be concerned about traffic, since borough residents now have an average commute of 43.9 minutes one way, which according to the group “Right of Way” is the longest average commute of any county in the nation.(9) Since Staten Island averages 1.7 cars per household, many argue that increased traffic and development go hand in hand, with each new housing unit likely to bring another car or two into the borough. In contrast to Manhattan, where only 23% of households own a car, the rate in Staten Island is 80%. The number of cars and subsequent shortage of parking have prompted measures like a bill recently passed by the City Council that requires roads in private developments to be as wide as city streets, in order to relieve parking congestion and perhaps reduce the density of new developments. (10) But while they may contribute to the quality of life in the borough, such measures do not address an underlying problem: a lack of convenient, accessible public transportation alternatives. For example, bus service, never as fast or extensive as many residents would prefer (an assessment that Mayor Michael Bloomberg agrees with), (11) has been cut in recent months. (12) Some residents and borough officials have recently begun advocating for the revival of the North Shore Railroad as a passenger service train, which many say would go a long way towards relieving congestion on the roads. (13) And ferry service remains an irritant for many islanders, with service only once an hour during late nights and on the weekends. North Shore City Councilman Michael McMahon has just introduced legislation to require the Department of Transportation to run ferries at least every 30 minutes around the clock on both weekends and weekdays, in contrast to the current schedule in which a ferry runs only once hourly between 12:30 a.m. and 6:00 a.m. on weekdays, and 7:00 p.m. and 11:00 a.m. on weekends. (14)

New development, clearly linked in the public’s mind with crowding on the road, is also publicly associated with stresses on other municipal services. While organizations such as the Staten Island Economic Development Corporation may proclaim the fact that “Staten Island contains 70% of New York City’s remaining undeveloped, manufacturing-zoned real estate,” (15) to entice new companies to the area, actually getting new buildings approved is another matter. In recent months, Staten Island community boards and area residents have opposed
development of a shopping mall in Charleston, urging instead that the city-owned land be used for schools, parks, police precincts, or other municipal services; (16) a proposal to build two mid-rise buildings, one an office complex and the other a mix of apartment, retail and residential space, on land adjacent to the waterfront on the corner of Edgewater Street and Sylvaton Terrace; (17) a plan to build townhouses and duplexes on 20 industrially zoned acres in Travis after an effort to build a warehouse on the same site was defeated; (18) and a housing complex sponsored by the Girls and Boys Town of America. (19)

Attached housing is a major issue in Staten Island. Opponents of new housing developments generally cite the strain on area roads, schools, sewers and other infrastructure in their calls to lessen or halt new housing developments; opposition to multi-family housing units in neighborhoods that were previously dominated by single-family homes is particularly strong. (20) Many borough residents are concerned about the practice of razing historic single-family homes to make room for housing developments, setting the stage for a battle with developers and homeowners who want to be able to sell their homes and lots to the highest bidder. (21) Others cite environmental concerns, with opponents of multi-family housing claiming that new developments are often built on the island’s wetlands, causing flooding problems. Many, such as Mid-Island City Councilman James Oddo, call for a "top-to-bottom re-zoning of Staten Island" to address these issues. (22)

In the midst of these development debates, often involving elected officials, developers, housing advocates, and longtime residents, are differences of opinion on how to manage and preserve the borough’s many open spaces and parklands. This type of disagreement is epitomized by an ongoing court battle over the fate of the South Shore’s Bloomingdale Park, which pits Borough President James Molinaro and supporters against the Protectors of Pine Oak Woods, a community group that opposes building a 12-acre sports facility in the wooded area. (23)

**Elected Officials and Public Agencies**

In response to these very public debates, there are currently many ongoing efforts in the areas of planning, development and preservation in Staten Island. At the local governmental level, Borough President James Molinaro, formerly a deputy borough president under Guy Molinari, seems likely to press forward with many of Molinari’s programs. Relevant events during Molinari’s tenure include undertaking a comprehensive rezoning study for Staten Island, and the closing of the Fresh Kills landfill.

According to a report from the former borough president’s office, the rezoning study was undertaken to “address the immediate issue of protecting the character of Staten Island’s established residential neighborhoods while permitting opportunities for growth and revitalization at a level that is sustainable
by and consistent with existing infrastructure, public facilities and services.” Manufacturing and commercial areas were not included in the study, which was the largest undertaken in New York City in four decades. The study was conceived as a response to “what was viewed by many to be out-of-context over-development.” There appears to have been significant “down-zoning” on the island in recent years in response to these concerns, and Frank Chaney, the Planning Director in the Borough President’s Office, confirms that “down-zoning to preserve neighborhood character and reduce density” is currently the borough’s biggest planning priority. Mr. Chaney hopes that a reduction in traffic congestion will accompany reductions in density. Borough President Molinaro has just submitted the second of the study’s six parts, a request to rezone more than 5,700 lots in North Shore and Mid-Island communities. The borough president’s staff estimates that, if approved, this rezoning would reduce future developments in the area by about 25%.

The Fresh Kills Landfill was closed in the spring of 2001 after 53 years of operation, although some operations such as composting and methane gas collection continue. The Department of City Planning’s “Fresh Kills Landfill to Landscape” competition was designed to “attract the best talent, worldwide, to generate ideas and innovative designs that meet the needs of the City’s communities, and that respond to the natural and constructed history of the site.” Douglass Brooks, director of the Staten Island office of the Department of City Planning, lauds the Fresh Kills project as one of the few really long-term planning projects in New York City, and one that will substantially increase Staten Island’s already impressive supply of parkland and open space. Mr. Chaney, however, says that Fresh Kills is a lower priority than other planning projects because so much time must elapse before many parts of the site can be opened to public use. And although there have recently been calls to consider reopening Fresh Kills in order to save the city millions of dollars in trash exportation fees, elected officials from Councilmember Michael McMahon to Mayor Bloomberg to Governor George Pataki have rejected this option. Borough President Molinaro has also recently written about the necessity of keeping Fresh Kills closed, in spite of economic pressures on the city to reduce the cost of transporting waste out of state.

The Department of City Planning, working with the Borough President’s Office, has targeted other areas for development; notably, the St. George/ferry terminal area, which already has a new stadium and will soon have a lighthouse museum as well. Director Chaney lauds this opportunity for the St. George area to “make a transition from the previous industrial shoreline to something new,” and Director Brooks says he is confident that the St. George area, in particular, is well able to handle any new traffic from the revitalization. Also in the planning stages for the Department of City Planning are corporate parks on the west shore, which will include a hotel and convention center; and further retail development on the southern end of the island.

Another organization involved in borough planning efforts is the Staten Island Economic Development Corporation, which was funded by the Mayor’s Office
under Mayor Rudy Giuliani to develop a master plan for the Bay Street area of the North Shore. The plan calls for mixed-use development and the creation of new parks and open space in the area, among other things.

The Department of City Planning, along with the Department of Parks and Recreation, is also involved in developing the Greenway system, which develops bikeways and pedestrian paths throughout the borough. (33) Director Brooks says that in spite of some areas of sprawl in Staten Island, the Department has had notable success in setting aside areas that don’t get developed, and in ongoing sensitivity to the environment. He cites “small victories,” such as convincing a developer in South Richmond to give 5 acres of a 17-acre development to the city for preservation and use as a pedestrian walkway, that contribute to the livability and environmental health of the borough in the long run.

An ambitious plan to preserve and manage the island’s open space is the Masterplan Report for the Greenbelt, developed by The New York City Department of Parks and Recreation in conjunction with the Greenbelt Conservancy, Inc. The Masterplan Report “illustrates the results of two years of analysis, discussion and revisions to develop a plan responsive to the Greenbelt’s natural character while providing additional facilities to support community needs.” The Masterplan proposes a number of specific programs, including enlarging the greenbelt, controlling vehicular access to the area’s interior, and developing new wildlife and vegetative management and educational programs. (34)

And finally, the Department of Environmental Protection’s (DEP) Storm Water and Sanitary Drainage Management Plan for South Richmond, commonly known as the Blue Belt system, has been lauded for its environmental effects as well as its cost-effective management of the area’s storm water. The Blue Belt uses existing streams, sometimes in conjunction with conventional storm sewers, to “provide natural drainage corridors for storm water conveyance.” (35) The system’s Best Management Practices are facilities such as sand filters or constructed wetlands that reduce storm water velocity, provide flood control, filter the water, and settle sediment. The Blue Belt is an unusual project in that it is by all accounts effective, environmentally sensitive, and popular with local residents. (36)

At the district level, Staten Island has three City Councilmembers who seem to be attuned to their constituents’ concerns about over-development, transportation, and open space. Councilmembers Michael McMahon (district 49, North Shore, Democrat), James Oddo (district 50, Mid-Island, Republican), and Andrew Lanza (district 51, South Shore, Republican), all of whom campaigned to one degree or another on the theme of reiniging in development in the borough, will have the opportunity to influence many smart growth-related issues due to their recent appointments to certain Council committees. Councilmembers McMahon and Lanza are both panel members of the Land Use Committee, and Lanza also has a seat on the Transportation committee. Councilman McMahon was also recently named Chairman of the City Council’s Sanitation and Solid Waste Management Committee, which will oversee the city’s refuse export plan,
and not incidentally, ensure that Fresh Kills landfill remains closed.\(^{(37)}\)
Councilman Oddo, the minority leader, is an ex-officio member of all committees and thus able to cast votes as well.

Councilman Lanza has stated a goal of improving mass transit on the island\(^{(38)}\) and he campaigned with promises to support downzoning and other development-oriented issues in the district.\(^{(39)}\) Similarly, Councilman McMahon pledged to work for “smart growth” in a speech before the Building Industry Association of New York City, Inc. Stating that “My rallying cry is not anti-development, it’s smart development,” McMahon pledged to look out for the interests of Staten Islanders in his position on the Land Use panel.\(^{(40)}\) And Councilman Oddo has espoused the need for “top-to-bottom re-zoning” to curb over-development.\(^{(41)}\)

Local and Community Groups

Many local, regional, and national groups are working on issues related to smart growth in Staten Island.

- Founded in May of 2000, Staten Island Future (SIF) is a relatively new group focusing on land use, traffic and transportation. According to member Elaine Croteau, more than 70,000 borough residents live and work on the island, while only 54,000 commute to Manhattan, and many of these non-commuters are not served by public transportation options such as bus lines that are largely geared towards the ferry area. SIF is currently studying traffic in Staten Island in the hopes of learning where people live and work, in order to eventually implement locally sensible solutions. Ms. Croteau says that the group believes that the borough lacks the infrastructure to handle the rapid development occurring on the island, and, while not anti-development, is aligned with popular local opinion that opposes tearing down existing single-family houses and replacing them with multiple smaller units.

- The Tri-State Transportation Campaign is a regional group advocating traffic-reducing measures such as a bus-only lane on the Gowanus Expressway, more buses and depot space added to Staten Island’s express bus fleet, and a “long-term transit plan for Staten Island, built around light rail or guided-bus technology.”\(^{(42)}\)

- Protectors of Pine Oak Woods, Staten Island’s Land Conservation Organization, is actively pursuing a number of conservation-related goals. The group has staged legal challenges to the City’s plan to construct sports facilities in the wetlands of Bloomingdale Park\(^{(43)}\) and is also working to defeat plans to widen Rockland Avenue, which runs through the Greenbelt.\(^{(44)}\)

- The Trust for Public Land and the New York Audubon Society have collaborated on the research and publication of *An Islanded Nature*, a study
that reviews open space issues in western Staten Island and is “intended to serve as a resource for land use planning in the borough.” (45)

- Other groups, such as the Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance and the Waterfront Park Coalition (a project of the New York Conservation Education Fund), are working on issues related to waterfront development and land preservation throughout the region. The Natural Resources Protective Association has issued a comprehensive New York City Waterfront Plan which gives specific recommendations for several areas of the Staten Island waterfront, including “establishment of a management and research program, continued acquisition of sensitive ecosystems … and development of additional land use controls within” the Harbor Herons Complex in the industrial northwest corner of Staten Island. (46)

Conclusions

A number of Anthony Downs’s “Potential ‘Smart Growth’ Elements” (47) are applicable in Staten Island, although some of these solutions would undoubtedly provoke controversy in the borough. Following are synopses of the smart growth elements that seem most likely to be most effective in Staten Island:

1. “Limiting outward extension of growth:” This solution might help to reduce average commuting times and traffic congestion in the borough, and could also help with efforts to preserve remaining open space. However, limiting the outward extension of growth implies accepting new growth in areas that are already somewhat developed, especially those areas that are near to public transportation hubs. Such development could be planned to take advantage of smart growth-friendly tools such as "location efficient" mortgages, which allow buyers who use public transportation to qualify for larger home loans, with the assumption that the money saved on car payments and maintenance can be put toward home ownership. nevertheless, in some areas of the island there is likely to be significant opposition to such higher-density development.

2. “Reducing transport auto dependence:” New or improved forms of public transportation could decrease commuting times, traffic congestion, and possibly pollution, and improve residents’ quality of life. Although not easy to bring about, the fulfillment of this goal might subsequently change borough residents’ minds about the acceptability of some new developments in the borough. But like limiting the outward extension of growth, such a solution could require more high-density housing in some areas, such as public transportation hubs, in order to be effective.

3. “Promoting compact, mixed-used development:” This is undoubtedly one of the most controversial elements of smart growth as far as many Staten Island
residents are concerned. In fact, there is a concerted effort in the borough to down-zone a number of areas to lessen housing density in specific areas. However, less than 1% of the borough’s lots are currently a mix of residential and commercial use, and only 2-7% of the lots in the three borough districts contain multi-family residences, compared to 30-42% of lots with 1-2 family residences. While there are some very good reasons for down-zoning in certain areas, such as the inability of current roads, sewers, schools and other municipal services to handle an increase in population, some parts of the borough might be well-suited for this option. One possibility is the St. George ferry terminal area, where new tourist-oriented development already has the backing of many locally elected officials, and presumably local residents as well.

4. “Adopting faster and more certain development permission processes:” As Downs notes, “pro-growth advocates strongly support this strategy,” and may be willing to compromise in other areas if they can ensure speedier permission processes. Currently the development process seems fairly arduous in Staten Island, with community opposition impeding or preventing a number of recent proposed projects.

5. “Developing a consensus-building process:” Downs confirms that this is not an easy element to achieve, since it requires collaboration between numerous public and private agencies and groups, as well as input from individual community members. This may be an area where further work by CUNY and Citizens Union could truly benefit the borough.

6. “Preserving open space and environment:” Although many borough residents would probably support this goal in general, disagreements may arise in specific cases, such as the current legal battle over whether Bloomingdale Park should be preserved as it is, or developed into a recreational area. Even so, the people of Staten Island obviously treasure their parklands and open spaces, which comprise from 9-15% of the three borough districts, and this is an area where strong, diverse coalitions might be formed.

7. “Creating a stronger sense of community:” Downs calls this the “most abstract and difficult to measure element” but also notes that many believe it is “vital” in achieving other goals of smart growth. Notably, he also pairs this enhanced sense of community with “a greater recognition of regional interdependence and solidarity.” Although perhaps hard to achieve and measure, it is a worthy goal that, if attained, could greatly benefit both Staten Island and New York City as a whole.

First Steps

A great deal of activity is already happening in Staten Island in the areas of development, transportation, and open space preservation, and the borough’s
assets include abundant open space, natural resources, and an energetic citizenry. Certain parts of Staten Island such as the South Shore, which experienced 20% population growth and more than 27% increase in housing units in the years from 1990 to 2000, yet still has 24% vacant land,\(^{(52)}\) seem like especially good candidates for the effective implementation of smart growth elements. But Staten Island, where residents once voted to secede from New York City, differs from the rest of the city in many ways and thus seems likely to approach challenges related to smart growth with its own unique perspective.\(^{(53)}\)

One problem (not confined to Staten Island) is a lack of coordination among the people and organizations working on smart growth-oriented issues in the borough. As Douglass Brooks of the Department of City Planning notes, “Planning is highly decentralized,” even among New York City departments and agencies, and greater collaboration among these entities as well as local community groups could greatly improve outcomes related to traffic, congestion, lack of access to public transportation, and other smart growth-related issues in Staten Island. Just recently, a coalition consisting of local environmental groups, with the support of some elected officials, has been working to transfer 50 acres of wetlands to the Department of Environmental Protection in order to protect it from development. Councilman James Oddo, who is involved in this effort, has requested input from the Department of Environmental Protection, Citywide Administrative Services, Parks and Recreation, City Planning and the Office of Management and Budget.\(^{(54)}\) This project, involving both community groups and multiple public agencies, bodes well for the future of Staten Island but also highlights the complexity of planning and conservation in New York City. Increased efforts towards this kind of collaborative effort would be helpful in Staten Island, as well as other areas of New York City. A smart growth effort led jointly by CUNY and Citizens Union could assist in developing the type of consensus-building process that Downs discusses in his article.

Another issue is that migration and development are happening so quickly on Staten Island that residents may sometimes feel cornered into simply protesting new developments, and may not have the time or opportunity to engage in more active planning for the borough as a whole. This is not to imply that the borough is simply reactive – groups such as the Greenbelt Conservancy, Protectors of Pine Oak Woods, and Staten Island Future have taken steps to advance their own agendas, and public agencies are actively working towards many planning goals, both long-term and short-term. However, many stories in the local press attest to a sense of siege among borough residents as they try to fend off, again and again, what they see as objectionable developments. An advocacy effort to help residents gain a sense of ownership over the planning of their communities could be valuable to the borough in the coming decades and beyond. Such an effort could be focused on the smart growth element aimed at creating a stronger sense of community, as well as a greater recognition of regional interdependence, for Staten Island residents.
Finally, many borough residents may be somewhat leery of what they believe is a smart growth emphasis on multi-family housing or mixed-use developments, which are perceived to go against the grain of Staten Island’s traditional neighborhoods and single family homes. As Staten Island Future’s Elaine Croteau says, smart growth should not be a “one size fits all” proposition, but should be a matter of implementing “locally sensible solutions.” However, there may be some areas of the island where a consensus could be built for higher-density residences. One candidate is the St. George ferry area, where there is some local support for recent renovations such as the new stadium, and where residential and tourist-oriented development might be seen as a boon to the borough’s economy rather than an insult to its established character. But because there is the perception in Staten Island that it is important to protect the borough’s non-urban areas from over-development, any smart growth effort should also seek to work with island residents to explore how public transportation can better serve the area’s current widespread population, including those neighborhoods that consist of single-family houses on large lots.

An effective education and advocacy program could help Staten Island residents and elected officials devise strategies for improving local and regional coordination; provide the opportunity to actively plan for growth and discuss issues before they become crises; and provide expert assistance to help customize smart growth principles to the particular needs of the borough. Following are some forms that such a program might take:

1. **Development of a Smart Growth handbook tailored towards Staten Island**: Geared towards elected officials and community leaders, this handbook would include an overview of smart growth principles and a discussion of how selected elements could be implemented to benefit the borough. The handbook could also include comprehensive listings and contact information for the people and groups currently working in related areas in the borough, city, and region.

2. **Informational Forums for elected officials and community leaders**: Structured forums with smart growth consultants would give Staten Island’s leaders an opportunity to consider how smart growth principles can best work for the borough. For example, roundtables could be convened to discuss what types of new residential or commercial developments would best fit into the island’s existing communities without straining infrastructure, or to explore strategies for effectively coordinating the development of new public transportation alternatives at the regional level.

3. **Community Conversations**: Because community ownership is critical in successful smart growth ventures, this advocacy program could include at least one Community Conversation that would bring together elected officials and community leaders with borough residents in a structured forum. With the help of a coordinator, the community members would plan the focus of
such a meeting. A successful Community Conversation could set the stage for future meetings and greater collaboration among many different community groups who otherwise might have little opportunity to discuss these issues. Although one conversation would suffice for the short term, up to three meetings would be best, since issues of development, transportation and open space preservation vary in importance in different parts of the borough.

Rapid growth, ample open space and vacant land, and a widespread awareness of problems caused by poorly planned development combine to make Staten Island well-positioned to gain from the implementation of smart growth elements in the years ahead.

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SECOND CASE STUDY: DOWNTOWN JAMAICA

“It's also incumbent on us to find alternative space in the five boroughs for corporations wanting to decentralize.”

-Daniel Doctoroff, New York City Deputy Mayor for Economic Development (1)

“With Jamaica Center, the area will not only be able to recapture the entertainment activity, but retail sales and jobs Jamaica has lost to suburban malls over the decades.”

-F. Carlisle Towery, Executive Director, Greater Jamaica Development Corporation. (2)

Introduction

At least until the first half of the 20th century, downtown Jamaica, Queens, was a major transportation hub and the center of business, entertainment and commerce for most of the Borough of Queens and parts of Brooklyn and Nassau County. Jamaica, like many other regional centers, is a cohesive community, as it was once a separate municipality. But over the last four decades, the district has declined as new regional shopping malls and business centers, particularly in suburban Long Island, have siphoned off much of Jamaica's retail activity.

While most economic development in New York City takes place in either the traditional central business districts of Manhattan, along major streets or in lower density areas, such as in Staten Island, redevelopment of downtown Jamaica would exemplify the planned rebuilding of a “regional center” with a clear emphasis on increasing densities around existing infrastructure. Other centers that could be rebuilt in a similar way include Flushing, Queens; the HUB and Fordham areas in the Bronx and the St. George area of Staten Island. With necessary and significant private, public or mixed investment in site acquisition and extending and maintaining new and modernized infrastructure, downtown Jamaica could be successfully revived.

This case study looks at how key smart growth principles could be applied to a redeveloped downtown Jamaica. Since smart growth policy emerged in suburban and ex-urban areas, applying it to developed urban areas must take into account different conditions and redefine solutions used elsewhere.

Background

As the geographic center of Queens and one of the oldest settlements in the borough, downtown Jamaica has been an important commercial and
transportation center for more than 150 years. It has a rich cultural history and has been a hub for the Long Island Railroad (LIRR) since the early 19th century.

The Sutphin Boulevard railroad station, opened in 1913, and followed by the "El" in 1918, and the subway in 1937, triggered enormous commercial and residential growth. By 1925 the section of Jamaica Avenue from 160th to 168th Street had the highest assessed valuation in the county.

Jamaica has experienced major demographic changes since World War II. Descendants of earlier residents moved eastward to the new suburbs. African-Americans moved into South Jamaica after World War II, followed in the '70s and '80s by Guyanese, Colombians, Salvadorans, Haitians and Chinese. From 1960 to 2000, the population achieved a higher level of education, with most people now completing high school and some graduating from college, earning graduate or professional degrees, as indicated in Data Chart 3.

The area has the greatest ethnic diversity in all of Queens, but is also, paradoxically both one of the poorest and wealthiest neighborhoods in the borough. Data Chart 2, shows a disparity in 1990 median household income ranging from $5,360 to $39,330. This disparity has implications for plans for redevelopment. There is concern that much of the current population could be priced out of the Jamaica economy if most housing is at market rate.

As illustrated by Data Charts 1 and 2, while New York City’s population increased between 1960 and 2000 by 226,334, and the population of Queens increased during that period by 19,116, the Greater Jamaica population decreased between 1970 and 2000 by 180,300. However, the downtown Jamaica population increased between 1960 and 1990 by 19,116 and such an increase in population in the downtown area may well signify a resurgent confidence in the area.

For more than two decades, New York has responded to the movement of businesses out of the city by trying to create satellite office districts in downtown Brooklyn and Long Island City, hoping that the incentives offered to these businesses would be sufficiently competitive to retain revenue and jobs within the city. In turn the regional centers have sought to capitalize on the need for affordable office space. A question remains as to whether centers like Jamaica that are more distant from Manhattan can attract the larger businesses that have relocated closer to Manhattan’s CBD’s, such as downtown Brooklyn and the New Jersey side of the Hudson River, or would it be preferable to concentrate on smaller businesses displaced from traditional centers or pursue another strategy altogether. The post 9/11 dispersal of many businesses makes these questions all the more critical as New York City seeks to offer decentralizing companies alternatives within city boundaries.
Major Assets For Redevelopment

For firms that are decentralizing, or smaller businesses searching for space in New York City, the regional centers can have decided advantages in the form of existing infrastructure, reasonable rents, an abundant and skilled labor force, and varied services. With proper upgrading, these centers could support a multiplicity of uses and offer many opportunities for smart growth.

Downtown Jamaica, bounded by primary arterials, to the West the Van Wyck Expressway and to the north the Grand Central Parkway, and Liberty and 179th Streets, has many assets forming a cohesive foundation for redevelopment. Chief among these are: excellent public transportation linkages, a diverse and accessible labor force, a large collection of public services and institutions, a sense of place, an ability to support a mix of commerce and housing, an active manufacturing base, and an established planning process for redevelopment.

Local Development: One of the most significant results of the planning process to date is the “Vision for Jamaica Center,” an inclusive proposal by the Greater Jamaica Development Corporation (GJDC) for redeveloping downtown Jamaica by rebuilding its inner core around a central multi-modal transportation hub, and modernizing and reusing existing infrastructure. The GJDC itself has been one of Jamaica’s major strengths for close to 40 years, and many of the assets noted below would not have been possible without its continuous efforts. (12) (See Map One, which outlines the area served by the GJDC.)

Two main groups took part in the GJDC’s planning process that led to the recent “Vision for Jamaica Center.” These groups offered recommendations at workshops and presentations and reviewed draft documents. Public participation was conducted via a Community Advisory Committee, which included representatives of local Community Board 12, voluntary organizations, businesses, and local institutions. A Steering Committee comprised of public agencies and local elected officials helped coordinate proposals for on transportation and land use. The GJDC’s proposal, “Vision for Jamaica Center,” was selected from four alternative planning concepts. (13)

A recent development that is particularly encouraging is that The Industrial and Technology Assistance Corporation (ITAC), with the support of the Region 2 office of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, has created The NYWa$teMatch program to foster environmentally sound economic development through innovative waste reduction and resource recovery strategies, and is particularly focusing these efforts in a special project to promote building “Deconstruction” and “Green Building” to the developers, architects, and contractors of the JFK Corporate Square/Downtown Jamaica redevelopment project.

The programs process is equally encouraging in that it includes as participants New York City businesses, nonprofit organizations and government agencies. NY Wa$teMatch is Queens, and New York in general. The purpose of the project is to demonstrate the benefits of environmentally sound resources needed to incorporate these practices into development projects. NY Wa$teMatch manages
a citywide materials exchange, provides technical assistance with waste reduction and environmentally preferable purchasing, and conducts research and development projects, and these services will be offered to downtown Jamaica.

The project has four main goals:

The first goal is to encourage the developers of JFK Corporate Square to incorporate building deconstruction and the U.S. Green Building Council’s LEED standards into their plans for JFK Corporate Square.

Second, NY Wa$teMatch will provide nonprofit housing agencies and general and demolition contractors with training in how to develop deconstruction services.

Third, NY Wa$teMatch will coordinate overall efforts to promote deconstruction and green building to various sectors of New York’s real estate industry.

Currently, Astoria Residents Reclaiming Our World (ARROW) is opening a building materials reuse and education center in Long Island City. ARROW will take used building materials from residents and small contractors. Materials will be accepted as donations, and a tax deduction for the value of the materials can be provided to the donor. The materials will sell for between 5-80% of retail price, depending upon their condition and other considerations. The types of materials that will be accepted include sinks, doors, windows, lumber, and cabinets.

Public Transportation: As a major regional transportation hub, downtown Jamaica is well poised to serve large and small businesses and institutions. The hub combines the E, J, Z and F-subway lines; the third busiest commuter railroad station in the New York Metropolitan area (and the nation), the largest bus hub (20 bus routes) on Long Island and the headquarters of the Long Island Railroad (LIRR). Greater Jamaica is connected to Union Turnpike, the Van Wyck Expressway, numerous major city boulevards, and has excellent transit access from Nassau and Suffolk counties and convenient reverse-peak commutation from Manhattan, Brooklyn and other parts of Queens.

Currently 3.6 million workers can reach the Jamaica station area by public transportation within an hour. The LIRR station will gain significantly in importance with the completion in 2011 of the 20-minute connection to Grand Central Terminal known as East Side Access. This improvement will add an estimated 326,000 workers to Jamaica's labor pool. The Air Train (scheduled for completion in 2003) linking the LIRR station at Jamaica to JFK airport via an 8-minute ride, will make Jamaica much more attractive to airport-related businesses that do not need to be right at the airport and make JFK’s 35,000 jobs more accessible to Jamaica’s residents. It is anticipated that these transportation improvements will spawn new stores, entertainment and hotels to serve the thousands of passengers passing through Jamaica each day.
Labor Force: Jamaica has a significant and talented labor pool, which could serve many businesses. More than 40% of its ethnically-diverse population holds white-collar jobs and many residents are recent immigrants with international ties that are increasingly essential for a city at the heart of the global economy. As illustrated in Data Chart 3, while the amount of education achieved by residents of Jamaica varies greatly among Census Tracts, from 1960 to 2000 more of the population of Downtown Jamaica had graduated from high school, some achieving college, graduate, or professional degrees, making Jamaica a promising location for many businesses to locate and find a pool of qualified employees.

The 35,000 potential commuters to airport jobs, the large labor force increases created by the new transportation improvements, and the residents who are already employed in and outside of Jamaica are a major resource for businesses in and near Jamaica.

Public Services and Institutions: Over the last 35 years, many public services and institutions have moved to or expanded in downtown Jamaica, attracted by its excellent transportation connections and central location. As a result, Jamaica is not only stronger and more stable, but has emerged as a regional hub for public services and institutions. At the federal level, the area is home to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration’s (FDA) Northeast regional headquarters (see below under York College) and the regional Social Security office for six northeast states. At the State level, downtown Jamaica hosts the NY State Division of Disability and the NY State Department of Labor. The area is home to three major New York City agencies: the Department of Probation, the Department of Health and the main branch of the Queens Public Library System. Courthouses in downtown Jamaica serve city, state and federal jurisdictions. (22)

Many non-profit organizations are situated in downtown Jamaica as well, including: the Jamaica Business Resource Center, Jamaica Neighborhood Housing Services, Jamaica One Stop Job Service Center and Jamaica Business Improvement District. (23)

The Downtown Committee: A sign of Jamaica’s success as a center of institutions and services that work together, the Downtown Committee is an active group representing local businesses and institutions that seek to improve Jamaica as an efficient and hospitable place for working, living and visiting, and to promote a favorable public image. (24)

CUNY/York College: Established in 1966, today serving 6,500 students plus faculty and staff, York College has been indispensable to the economic and social advancement of the surrounding community. As former college president Charles Kidd said, “We have to educate the community to make the people able to take advantage of the many job opportunities out there, and we have to do it at a low tuition cost.” The colleges’ proximity to transportation and Jamaica’s other institutions makes it a valuable resource for new and relocated businesses. To supplement its community mission, York College maintains close ties with many social, religious, governmental and business agencies, and operates
satellite programs that include: the FDA’s Northeast Field Office and Regional Laboratory on the college campus (the largest of its kind in the country conducting laboratory and pure research); and the Queens Public Television studio (QPTV) at the disposal of the Southeast Queens community. The college maintains a 1,500-seat auditorium and 185-seat theater and other meeting rooms available for the neighborhood’s use. (26)

To help residents of Southeast Queens gain the skills they need to capitalize on its enhanced proximity to airport-related jobs, CUNY/York College has inaugurated the CUNY Aviation Institute in collaboration with the CUNY Institute for Urban Systems (CIUS). (27) With a grant from the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, the Aviation Institute, will provide an intensive four-year baccalaureate program. As JFK Airport cannot accommodate aviation related businesses, the Aviation Institute will strive to attract them to downtown Jamaica; much as some engineering schools have created a nearby critical mass of technology and research related businesses. The city can aid these efforts with Special District / Special Use zoning that would give such businesses priority.

Commercial Activity: Opened in April, 2002, the new One Jamaica Center is a retailing and movie center that seeks to recreate middle class shopping and entertainment activity that fled downtown Jamaica several decades ago. As this $82 million effort follows three failed attempts to develop the two-acre city-owned site, the community is cautiously optimistic. Ten tenants have leased 80% of the space; including the national retailers The Gap and Walgreens. A 15-screen, 3,200-seat movie complex occupies the third floor. The complex sits atop the Jamaica Center subway station and has underground parking for 400 cars. (28)

Jamaica’s small shops are a thriving business sector. It is hoped that the new development will induce them to stay open in the evening and to cater to the increased visitor traffic. Although many of downtown Jamaica’s business are small and offer limited employment, they might be able to expand with the help of incentive programs. For instance, the Greater Jamaica Development Corporation’s Capital Access Program (29) offers special loans to "nearly bankable" small businesses, usually in cooperation with banks. The GJDC also operates a Revolving Loan Fund. (30)

The Jamaica Business Resource Center, the nation’s first federally-sponsored "one-stop capital shop" offers research and planning services, technical assistance, and training in the fundamentals of business management, and assists clients in obtaining loans to start and expand of small businesses. (31)

Industrial Activity: The region still has one of New York City’s more significant manufacturing and industrial centers. Under a contract with the Economic Development Corporation, the GJDC operates the City-sponsored Jamaica In-Place Industrial Park, which contains an estimated 4,000 to 5,000 jobs. The GJDC monitors and reports to the City on needs and conditions in the area and recommends improvements. Planning and economic development assistance is provided to tenants and business and property owners in the Park. (32)
Empire Zone (EZ): One of the most important assets of downtown Jamaica is the South Jamaica Empire Zone one of the first such zones in New York State. The GJDC administers the South Jamaica Empire Zone and the State and utility companies provide economic incentives to businesses locating and investing there. (33)

Housing: Lower and moderate-income apartments predominate in the downtown Jamaica area. However, the GJDC is planning two apartment buildings that will provide 180 units – the first market-rate housing to be built in downtown Jamaica in 40 years. (34) Rents will be set at the maximum allowed by the New York City Housing Development Corporation, which is helping to finance the project. Apartments will be marketed to professional workers at Jamaica Hospital, the Social Security Administration, and York College. Many consider the development a sign of increased stability and an important incentive for retaining the area’s white-collar workers. However, others are concerned that local residents will not be able to afford the new housing.

Neighborhood Housing Services of Jamaica (NHS): Since 1974, NHS has created approximately 500 new low and moderate-income housing units in greater Jamaica. NHS also increases and protects existing investments by facilitating the purchase and rehabilitation of housing and mixed-used properties. The New York Department of City Planning is currently looking at the possibility of rezoning 415 blocks near the terminal area, much of it Industrial sites that contain brownfields. (35) This could yield a perfect opportunity for the NHS in tandem with the GJDC to develop more affordable housing.

Established Planning Process: The groundwork for a participatory planning process for redeveloping downtown Jamaica has been firmly set and to date two prominent efforts have emerged: the GJDC’s “Vision for Jamaica Center,” and the establishment of the CUNY Aviation Center as a business magnet at CUNY/York College. With a primary focus on redeveloping the inner core and recycling and modernizing existing infrastructure, both these efforts could help to both foster the district’s revitalization and help manage the greater area’s outward expansion along principles of smart growth.

Issues in Redevelopment

Several key issues are associated with redeveloping downtown Jamaica as an urban regional center in a smart growth context. They are: the viability and extension of the local infrastructure; making maximum use of Jamaica’s public transportation; creating appropriate development; the quality of urban design; and allocating the public and private costs of development.

“Viability and extension of infrastructure.” The very features that give downtown Jamaica the physical framework for a revived regional center are also the source of limitations. Precisely because Jamaica is an older center, significant investment in site acquisition and maintaining and extending its infrastructure
would be essential for redevelopment. The ability of Jamaica’s aging infrastructure to support significantly increased densities must be examined in terms of the potential for expanding the capacities of water, sewer, electric lines and street systems and the need for additional public facilities, such as schools. Many smart growth proponents advocate front-loading infrastructure costs onto the developer; but in an urban setting where infrastructure already exists and development in blighted inner city areas involves financial risk, this approach may not work.

The capacity of the street network and the shortage of parking are major issues in redeveloping downtown Jamaica. The area’s infrastructure system, particularly its narrow street network, created before the advent of the automobile, is already crowded beyond capacity. The GJDC estimates that there is a current deficit of 500 parking spaces and that downtown Jamaica would need 2,000 new parking spaces, at an estimated cost of $32 million, to accommodate proposed redevelopment. (36)

“Because we have great development going on we’ve lost a lot of parking,” said Janet Barkan, Director of the Jamaica Business Improvement District. “All the hard work of the past 20 to 25 years will be almost for naught.” GJDC director, Carlye Towery adds, “We are losing revenue to Nassau County because we don’t have adequate, affordable off-street parking.” Yvonne Reddick, district manager of Community Board 12, which includes Jamaica, confirms that Jamaica residents have told her that they often drive to the Green Acres and Roosevelt Field malls in Long Island rather than to nearby Jamaica to make sure they will find parking or to avoid paying high prices at private garages. (37) In response, local merchants have formed the Jamaica Parking Coalition and are now seeking to require each new project to provide off-street parking. Similarly, the GJDC has formed “Jamaica First” to plan and facilitate a comprehensive public parking system. Jamaica First will acquire and develop a number of parking terminals throughout Jamaica Center. (38) The GJDC’s calls for widening and lengthening some streets and new parking garages. A serious question remains as to whether these improvements will adequately serve the dramatic increase in traffic that will accompany redevelopment.

“Making Maximum Use of Public Transportation:” Jamaica’s greatest strength, and a cornerstone of smart growth development, is its superb public transportation system. New development must maximize the value of this system. Downtown Jamaica is a major hub for subways, buses and commuter railroads. Completion of East Side Access and Air Link will greatly enhance its advantages as a mass transit hub. Despite the fact that the area’s commuters are less dependent on the auto than in neighboring regions, traffic densities will inevitably increase with more development. A significant portion of residents will have to be weaned away from 50 years of automobile dependency. Increasing transit use can also help decrease air pollution, although building at higher densities will add to pollution.
Although the data below are 10 years old, they are a comprehensive source of information about worker commutation to Jamaica, and the Nassau Hub, Hauppauge, and Manhasset, areas on Long Island that Jamaica “competes” with. This compilation indicates that despite its parking problems, Jamaica still has by far the lowest auto and the highest transit use. Fewer than half of the workers going to Jamaica drive alone, while over one-third use transit. Carpooling is higher for commuters to Jamaica, while over 90% of the workers commuting to Hauppauge and Manhasset use a car to go to and from work. For every 1,000 jobs added in Jamaica, only about 545 auto trips, with the resulting congestion and pollution, would be added to existing traffic. By comparison, the other locations would add considerably more traffic, producing greater environmental damage.

Primary Mode to Work to Four Locations on Long Island

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job Concentration</th>
<th>% Auto Driver</th>
<th>% Carpool</th>
<th>% Transit</th>
<th>% Other</th>
<th>Autos per 1,000 jobs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jamaica</td>
<td>48.7</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>34.0</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>544</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nassau Hub</td>
<td>65.3</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>698</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hauppauge</td>
<td>85.4</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>905</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manhasset</td>
<td>82.5</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>869</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: US Census, 1990

“Appropriate development:” The issue of appropriate development includes the mix and density of building and providing housing for a range of income levels. The “downtown booms” that occurred in places such as Stamford, CT, White Plains in Westchester County, NY, and the Nassau Hub over the last 30 years were commercial successes at the expense of maintaining other desirable qualities. These downtowns are characterized by sterile glass boxes with no sense of place or community, no collective “eye on the street,” and nothing to make them an exciting “point of destination.” Stamford and Nassau have conceded this problem, and retained the Regional Plan Association to draw up new master plans based on principles of smart growth. White Plains may soon follow suit. (39) Jamaica can learn from the mistakes of other centers and create a viable mix used community based upon the principles of smart growth.

A proper balance of housing and commercial spaces would greatly improve the chances for successful redevelopment of downtown Jamaica. The GJDC plan proposes building on 15 sites along the LIRR embankment, of which only two are for housing. A hotel to be built over the LIRR terminal could add to activity during non business hours, but would not likely rectify the imbalance. (40) A higher
percentage of residential space should be the backbone of a safe, successful and vibrant central Jamaica.

Appropriate development must also include housing for various income levels. Historically, redevelopment, or “urban renewal”, has not been very successful in balancing economic levels, usually yielding districts devoted to one economic class or the other. As noted, the GJDC is currently planning to build 180 apartments, the first market rate housing in downtown Jamaica in 40 years. Although this housing is needed by the area’s growing white-collar labor force, there is concern that it will initiate a trend that will price people out of the market. GJDC president Carlisle Towery has spoken positively about the fact that the New residential units will be adjacent to commercial projects, noting that in European cities, “the diversity is what makes those cities lively and thriving.” However, this housing is limited to two of the fifteen sites in the GJDC plan and a question remains as to whether more housing will lead to diversity.

“The Quality of Urban Design:” There are many critical issues about the aesthetic and social quality of new development, its relation to existing development, and the connection between safety and design. The GJDC’s proposal to incorporate public art murals along the railroad embankments is admirable. However, it does not contend with the larger issues of safety and security.

Of particular concern are the areas south of the LIRR terminal and the embankment, where there are empty lots (many of them brownfields) on the side streets and along Liberty Avenue across from the York College campus. The buildings of York College are recessed from the street and do not interact with the community nor foster active street life. This adds to the desolate feeling of the derelict spaces across Liberty Avenue, creating an unappealing and unsafe corridor along the periphery of the redevelopment area.

Conclusions:

A number of smart growth elements are applicable to redeveloping downtown Jamaica. They are: limiting the outward extension of growth; increasing transit use and reducing auto dependency; financial incentives for growth areas; promoting compact, mixed use development; creating mixed-income and varied types of housing; developing a public-private consensus; encouraging new forms of urban design; and creating a stronger sense of community.

1. “Limiting outward extension of growth:” This basic principle of smart growth, translated to a redeveloped downtown Jamaica, aims to redirect growth into the downtown Jamaica section of New York City, where substantial infrastructure systems already exist. This in turn would help to reduce commutation times and traffic congestion in the greater Jamaica area. However, since limiting the outward extension of growth will produce higher densities, the infrastructure must be able to accommodate the growth. To
address the adequacy of infrastructure, Jamaica might follow the successful examples set by Minneapolis/Saint Paul and set firm guidelines for growth through an approved, multi-stage, comprehensive management plan. (43)

2. “Increasing transit use:” Jamaica’s outstanding asset as a regional center is its superb network of transit lines and connections. Development decisions should strengthen this asset by increasing the use of transit to and within Jamaica and decreasing reliance on the automobile. Greater use of transit can decrease commutation times, traffic congestion, and air and noise pollution and improve residents’ quality of life. The higher densities associated with increased transit use will require an expanded and modernized infrastructure system. Part of this system might be a series of parking garages around the periphery of downtown and an electric bus system serving the area. (44)

3. “Promoting compact, mixed-use development:” Learning from the experiences of places such as Stamford, CT, White Plains, NY, and the Nassau Hub on Long Island, the inner ring suburb of New Rochelle, NY, (similar in size and character to Jamaica) has consciously chosen a “residentially based” downtown redevelopment plan which includes commercial components but gives priority to creating a “24/7 community” with an innovative mixture of land uses, income levels and public amenities. (45)

Downtown Jamaica has all the ingredients for a similar form of development: a multi-modal transportation terminal, major sources of employment, an active commercial core, a nearby residential neighborhood, and land for new building.

4. “Financial incentives for growth areas:” A variety of taxation methods could promote more equitable development. Among those that already exist or could be created by New York State are: Locating Business Near Infrastructure: Job Creation Tax Credit which helps businesses that locate or expand in designated "growth areas" with adequate infrastructure by providing a new income tax credit for job creation.

- The Job Creation Tax Credit Act provides income tax credits to business that creates at least 25 jobs in Priority Funding Areas. The jobs must be full-time, permanent, and pay at least 150 percent of the minimum wage. This tax policy can be coupled with cash incentives for people who buy homes near their workplaces. (46)

- Brownfields Tax Incentive, Taxpayer Relief Act of 1997 (expanded in 2000) helps redevelopment and addresses environmental concerns by promoting the cleanup and reuse of brownfield sites through tax incentives. The 1997 Act seeks to spur the cleanup and redevelopment of brownfields in distressed urban and rural areas. (47)
5. “Creating mixed income and varied types of housing:” A number of tools can be used to accommodate a wider range of incomes and create more varied housing in Jamaica.

- New market rate housing, such as the GJDC is building, will enable Jamaica’s white-collar workers to live in the area. As Jamaica becomes more attractive there may be other opportunities for similar housing as part of a balanced plan.

- Location-efficient mortgages or similar programs based on using new capital to resettle cities. Programs using mortgages to finance city homes are based on the actual cost savings of living near mass transit. This program was pioneered by the Center for Neighborhood Technology and other groups.\(^{(48)}\)

- Homebuyer Credit Act. $5,000 grants have been used in the District of Columbia and other localities to encourage inner city home ownership, increase population densities and thus yield a greater tax base.\(^{(49)}\)

- These methods have not been specifically targeted to low-income households nor do they give them a protective advantage. It should be noted that there is tension between proponents of smart growth and housing advocates, who accuse the former of promulgating policies that result in inner city “gentrification” and the displacement of low-income residents. A few methods can address this situation.

- Inclusion of Affordable Housing in Market Rate Developments has become the customary and increasingly sole method for providing affordable housing in New York. In order to qualify for state financing, projects must reserve at least 20% of the units as affordable or low-income housing.

- Overlay Zoning promotes high-density development in Metro corridors, as redevelopment in much of downtown Jamaica would be. Increased land values and housing demand along those corridors, although perhaps threatening long-time residents, could help produce a healthy mix.\(^{(50)}\) Another version of this method is Inclusionary zoning. For municipalities whose comprehensive plans seek to encourage a broader range of housing options, zoning can play a valuable role in helping to implement plan policies. Some cities and towns are pursuing "inclusionary zoning" as a way to make sure that new development includes an affordability component. Inclusionary zoning ordinances often require developers to provide a certain percentage of affordable units in their projects. “Community Land Trusts,” discussed later in this chapter, through their skills and resources, can help for-profit developers meet such affordability requirements.
6. “Developing a consensus-building process.” Some steps have already been taken in this regard by the GJDC and local groups, and this may be an area where further work by CIUS and Citizens Union could truly benefit the borough. See “First Steps” at end.

7. “Encouraging new forms of urban design:” A comprehensive plan covering more than the LIRR terminal would help prevent the central redeveloped area of Jamaica from being an island, not part of the greater community, and indeed not a community at all. In such a process, a task force of community stakeholders and the developer would first set specific planning goals and then decide how to direct growth patterns based on forecasted growth. Relying upon known conditions, the task force would set a policy framework drawing upon implementation tools such as zoning, capital and transportation improvement programs, protection of the natural environment and most importantly, setting innovative and strong design guidelines so that these objectives can be realized.

Current areas that could be best realized through an innovative design policy are:

- **Promoting safety via smart design:** This is paramount along the length of the LIRR embankment and surrounding areas. Although the GJDC’s proposal for shops in the main tunnel of the embankment under the new LIRR terminal is a good start, other tunnels and the safety of the area in general should be addressed. The GJDC, as part of brownfield cleanup measures, is examining commercial uses for areas south of the terminal, such as “big box stores.” While this may bring more foot traffic during the day and might prove economically beneficial to the area, it is not likely that such measures will adequately consider the problem on a 24/7 basis.

- **Partnerships to create affordable housing:** If adequate site cleanup could be secured, perhaps CUNY/York College could partner with the GJDC and Neighborhood Housing Services or some other group to develop affordable housing on the side of Liberty Avenue opposite from the campus. Although this housing could not be reserved for students and faculty, it might well increase the availability of housing choices for them and create a safer neighborhood as well. Various types of infill housing on other nearby sites should be explored in tandem by the GJDC, CUNY, and Neighborhood Housing Services of Jamaica.

- **Another innovation that should not be over-ruled is “Community Land Trusts” (CLTs)** There are essentially two types of land trusts: conservation trusts, which acquire and protect open space and agricultural land; and community land trusts (CLTs), which tend to focus more on housing and community development. The modern community land trust model was developed in the 1960s by community activists who conceived a
democratically controlled institution that would hold land for the common
good and make it available to individuals through long-term land leases. Most, if not all, CLTs have in place "limited equity" policies and formulas that restrict the resale price of the housing in order to maintain its long-term affordability. These features of the community land trust model provide homeownership opportunities to people who might otherwise be left out of the market. Higher rates of homeownership help stabilize and strengthen communities. Urban CLTs often deal with combating the negative effects of speculation and gentrification. Most community land trusts focus on increasing home ownership, which sometimes includes educating potential homebuyers on establishing credit, applying for a mortgage, and maintaining a home. A number of CLTs have also acted as developers of special needs housing or group homes, rental housing, and even commercial space for lower income entrepreneurs. In municipalities whose comprehensive plans seek to encourage a broader range of housing options, community land trusts can play a valuable role in helping to implement plan policies. As mentioned above, some cities and towns are pursuing "inclusionary zoning" as a way to make sure that new development includes an affordability component. Inclusionary zoning ordinances often require developers to provide a certain percentage of affordable units in their projects. Community land trusts, through their skills and resources, can help for-profit developers meet such affordability requirements.

As mentioned, it is very encouraging that The Industrial and Technology Assistance Corporation’s (ITAC), NY Wa$teMatch program with the support of the Region 2 office of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, is coordinating a project to promote building “Deconstruction” and “Green Building” to the developers, architects, and contractors of the JFK Corporate Square/Downtown Jamaica Redevelopment project. Equally encouraging is the process which includes New York City businesses, nonprofit organizations and government agencies and New York in general.

What sets current building demands apart from previous building cycles is an overwhelming desire to build “green”; erecting structures that are at the very least energy efficient and employ recycled and recyclable materials, as well as more environmentally sound materials (preferably manufactured locally) which are built in thoughtful and sustainable means taking into consideration the economic, social and environmental effects of the structure. Building green will cut operating costs, improve the quality of the environment and create markets for new products and services that will spawn new industries and create healthy, stable jobs in New York City’s manufacturing sector.
Every effort should be made to foster environmentally sound economic development through innovative waste reduction and resource recovery strategies. The purpose of the project is to demonstrate the benefits of environmentally sound resources needed to incorporate these practices into development projects.

8. “Adopting Faster And More Predictable Processes For Approving Development” One of the 14 basic principles of smart growth is “adopting faster and more predictable processes for approving development”. The use of “Smart Codes for Smart Growth” rather than creating a new code, is increasingly gaining attention. Until recently, Maryland and New Jersey had been the leading the way, but New York State has recently adopted similar measures in the form of the “International Codes”

9. “Creating a stronger sense of community:” Development of 15 parcels at greater densities than the community is used to could disrupt its physical and social fabric. The first step towards ensuring a sense of community is to increase the residential component and to carefully consider the scale, timing and citing of new building.

Institutional responsibility and actions are critical in creating a sense of community. Any entity that oversees the planning process must make a strong effort to bring the broadest spectrum of residents and businesses (of all economic ranges,) to the table from the very beginning. However, this is not just a matter of a process that could build more cohesion among stakeholders regarding community decision-making. Actual facts on the ground will be just as important. It is already clear that the local community wants more in the way of affordable housing, not just the new market-rate housing that is being planned. Likewise, a much higher level and even dispersal of new residences throughout the areas of proposed development not only makes for better safety but for a more cohesive community.

Community discussions about the creation of mixed use development with affordable housing, as a cornerstone should be facilitated from the beginning of the planning process. This requires a commitment to such ideals by public and private entities from the outset.

First Steps

The groundwork for the process that led to the selection of the preferred GJDC plan shows that downtown Jamaica may be able to go much further in achieving consensus. A smart growth effort could advance a consensus-building process.

Migration and demographic change may be happening so quickly in Jamaica that residents feel pressed into protesting new development, rather than having the time and opportunity to engage in active planning for the community.
An effective education and advocacy program could help Jamaica’s residents and elected officials devise strategies for improving local and regional coordination; provide the opportunity to plan for growth and face issues before they become crises; and provide expert assistance to help shape smart growth principles to the particular needs of the area. This program could take the following forms.

1. A Smart Growth education charrette involving all parties should be held before any further action is taken. The purpose would not be so much a plan, but to make all stakeholders and residents aware of the principles and benefits of Smart Growth and how it could apply to Jamaica and to get them thinking along these lines.

This initial information session should be followed by;

2. Community Conversations encouraging community “ownership,” which is critical to successful smart growth ventures. Because redevelopment may raise serious fears about displacement among low-income residents and small businesses, this program should bring together elected officials, community leaders, public agencies and/or private developers and the public at large within an organized forum.

3. Informational Forums for elected officials, community leaders and development agencies and groups involved in downtown Jamaica which would go much further than the initial charrette in giving downtown Jamaica’s leadership an opportunity to consider how smart growth principles might best be applied to their neighborhood.

4. A Smart Growth primer or handbook tailored to downtown Jamaica should document changes over the last 40 years, and describe current variables and possible development scenarios geared to smart growth. It would review smart growth principles and elements that could be implemented or retrofitted to downtown Jamaica, and contain comprehensive listings and contact information of people and groups currently working in the field. It would be geared towards elected officials, community leaders, and the general public (thus must use a language understandable to all) to ensure a true process based on consensus.
SOURCES


5. Other centers that could be rebuilt in a similar way include:

Queens/Flushing

Buglione, Nick. “Queens Forging a New Flushing: First Steps In Transforming A Town.” *Queens Tribune* Vol. 31, No. 2. (Jan. 11-17, 2001)


The Bronx HUB

“The Bronx Center:” A Report to Bronx Borough President Fernando Ferrer from the Bronx Center Steering Committee.” *Bronx Center Steering Committee*. May, 1993.


**Fordham Area /Bronx**

“Fordham Plaza Area: A Planning Framework.” Department of City Planning. (July 1991)

**St. George Area/Staten Island.**


6. Ibid 3.
7. Ibid 3.
8. Ibid 3.


10. Please See:


11. Please See:


12. Please See:


15. Zupan, Jeffrey..“Jamaica: Transportation Center of the Universe.” *Greater Jamaica Development Corporation*, July 2000

16. “East Side Access Project.” *Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) and the Long Island Rail Road (LIRR)*. To view plans for the project please go to the MTA webpage devoted to East Side Access at: http://www.mta.nyc.ny.us/planning/esas/index.html
17. Ibid 15.

18. Please See: http://www.panynj.gov/airtrain/


20. Ibid. 15.

21. Ibid. 13


23. Many non-profit organizations are situated in downtown Jamaica as well:

- Jamaica Business Resource Center http://www.jbrc.org/FrameSet/FrameSet.html
- Jamaica One Stop Job Service Center http://www.cwe.org/html/programs/p_joneStop.htm
- Jamaica Business Improvement District www.jfkcorporatesquare.com


25. Uzo, Akujuo. “York College: Making The Grade In A Growing Southeast Queens.” The PRESS of Southeast Queens

26. CUNY/York College: http://www.york.cuny.edu/


28. Ibid. 2.


32. Jamaica In-Place Industrial Park, http://gjdc.org/businessservices.html

Please Also See:


38. Please See:
- Jamaica First, http://gjdc.org/projectsprograms.html

39. Please See:

“Nassau Hub Feasibility Study” (a work in progress.). Regional Plan Association (RPA) and Long Island Regional Planning Board (LIRPB.) To learn more please go to: http://www.rpa.org/centers/NASSAU.html

“Stamford Conn. Master Plan” (In progress). Regional Plan Association (RPA) and Abeles Phillips Preiss & Shapiro, Inc. (APPS). To learn more please go to: http://www.rpa.org/centers/stamfordmasterplan.html

40. Ibid. 13


42. Ibid 34

43. The Metropolitan Council is the regional planning agency serving the Twin Cities seven-county metropolitan area, [http://www.metrocouncil.org/index.htm](http://www.metrocouncil.org/index.htm)

44. Part of this system might be a series of parking garages around the periphery of downtown and an electric bus system serving the area. For more information on this issue please go to:

   Andersson, Christian. “106 Different Charging Strategy Hybrid Electric Busses,” [http://evs18.tu-berlin.de/Abstracts/Summary-Aud/5c/Andersson -204-3-5C.pdf](http://evs18.tu-berlin.de/Abstracts/Summary-Aud/5c/Andersson -204-3-5C.pdf)


   Hawai’i Electric Vehicle Demonstration Project (HEVDP), [http://www.htdc.org/hevdp/](http://www.htdc.org/hevdp/)


45. Please See:


   Please also see:


   City of New Rochelle Department of Planning and Development. has produced a Power Point Presentation, “Avalon on the Sound,” which also illustrates the best aspects of their new plan. For Information Please contact:

   Department of Development


47. Brownfields Tax Incentive Taxpayer Relief Act Of 2000, [http://www.cdphe.state.co.us/hm/bftaxinc.pdf](http://www.cdphe.state.co.us/hm/bftaxinc.pdf)

48. The *Center for Neighborhood Technology* has created two web pages that provide information on *location-efficient mortgages*:

http://locationefficiency.com is used primarily by banks and prospective applicants in Chicago. It has an easy to use calculator to identify potential extra credit which can be amortized using the new underwriting.

http://www.cnt.org/ provides an introductory article written by American Planning Association on Location Efficient Mortgages.

For information on Fannie Mae’s location-efficient mortgage program please go to: [http://www.fanniemae.com](http://www.fanniemae.com)


Chart 1 Comparative Census Data for New York City and Borough of Queens from 1960-2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>NYC –Wide Area = 303 Sq M</th>
<th>Queens Area =109 SqM</th>
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<td><strong>Population</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1960</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Unemployment Rate</strong></td>
<td>5.14%</td>
<td>4.17%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Med. H.H. Income</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1960</td>
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<td>$9,799</td>
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<td>1970</td>
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<tr>
<td>1990</td>
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<tr>
<td>Less than 9th grade</td>
<td>42.64%</td>
<td>33.58%</td>
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<tr>
<td>9th to 12th grade, no diploma</td>
<td>19.93%</td>
<td>19.51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school graduate (includes equivalency)</td>
<td>22.10%</td>
<td>28.29%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>7.10%</td>
<td>8.02%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Associate degree</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Bachelor's degree</td>
<td>8.23%</td>
<td>10.61%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Graduate or professional degree</td>
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Data for downtown Jamaica is broken down by census tracts. The Census Tracts that make up “downtown Jamaica” are: 208, 212, 214, 236, 238, 240, 244, 246, 410, 442, 446.0, 446.1, 460, 462, 468

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<td>18.37%</td>
<td>28.13%</td>
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<td>34.07%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>3.24%</td>
<td>3.34%</td>
<td>2.83%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>38.01%</td>
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<td>18.96%</td>
<td>22.37%</td>
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<tr>
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MAP ONE: GJDC REDEVELOPMENT AREA
MAP 2: JAMAICA EMPIRE ZONE

JAMAICA ENTERPRISE COMMUNITY
TARGET AREA
MAP 3: CENSUS TRACTS FOR DOWNTOWN JAMAICA
The Census Tracts that make up “downtown Jamaica” are:
208, 212, 214, 236, 238, 240, 244, 246, 410, 442, 446.0, 446.1, 460, 462, 468
MAPS 4 and 5 QUEENS DISTRICT 12
MAP 6: QUEENS DISTRICT 12 ALONE AND IN COLOR
MAP 7. QUEENS DISTRICT 12 and NEIGHBORING DISTRICTS (COLOR)
MAP 8: ALL QUEENS COMMUNITY DISTRICTS
MAPS 9 and 10: QUEENS WITHIN CONTEXT OF NEW YORK CITY
CHAPTER V. CONCLUSIONS: PRIORITIES FOR SMART GROWTH DEVELOPMENT IN NEW YORK
Combining information from the previous chapters, this chapter briefly reviews several current opportunities for implementing smart growth in New York City. It then outlines several immediate steps that can be taken to advance this inclusive approach to development.

**Priorities for Smart Growth**

Even though New York City is mature and highly developed, a number of major development issues – among them reconcentrating economic activity, improving transportation, and reclaiming the waterfront – can be viewed from the multiple perspectives of smart growth. Resolving them in the context of smart growth offers significant benefits to the city.

**Reconcentrating Economic Activity**

Impelled by technological change and economic and cultural forces, businesses have been migrating from Manhattan and other centers of the metropolitan region since the middle of the 20th century. The events of September 11, 2001 accelerated this trend by making security an important consideration, especially for financial services clustered in lower Manhattan.

Existing satellite centers are uniquely positioned to capture businesses leaving the older centers and to attract new growth, consistent with smart growth principles. Commenting on this situation, the Regional Plan Association recently observed that:

> Alone among the large metropolitan regions, we have this network of satellite employment centers that are all linked together – and to the core – by a modern transit system and highway system.

Directing economic activity into the city’s regional business centers is a municipal priority. In an interview in December 2001, the Chair of the City Planning Commission stated that:

> Strengthening the regional business districts is a priority of this administration. In the context of 9/11, it is not only important to strengthen Lower Manhattan but also to ready other places for growth. In Long Island City, for instance, we have to do some image changing and increase residential density. In downtown Brooklyn, we want to rezone so we have more developable sites-there are almost none there now. In Jamaica we will also rezone for higher density in order to capitalize upon the area’s seven-minute proximity to the airport, since AirTrain, the new transit connection will open in 2003.
Good transportation connections and usable sites are probably the most critical factors in attracting economic activity to the city’s regional centers. Downtown Jamaica, downtown Brooklyn, Long Island City and Atlantic Terminal in Brooklyn are well-served by transit and have good roadway access as well. The Mayor’s office recently announced that the city would spend $100 million over the next 10 years on infrastructure improvements in downtown Brooklyn to stimulate new commercial and residential development. The Bank of New York’s decision to move 1,500 jobs to the large new mixed-use complex at Atlantic terminal makes optimum use of the advantages of regional centers in the context of smart growth.

The creation of higher density mixed-use “transit villages” around railroad stations in suburban New Jersey and Westchester demonstrates the value of smart growth as an organizing force. Land use regulations and tax policies are increasingly being used in suburban locations to achieve smart growth.

New York City is endowed with a number of regional centers with a strong potential for attracting and structuring new development. These centers generally have strong and varied transportation connections, nearby pools of workers and particular histories and situations. Development guided by smart growth can enhance transit, achieve compact and mixed building, reuse prime inner-city land, improve environmental quality and encourage new forms of urban design.

**Improving Transportation**

Smart growth invariably relies upon transportation connections, especially transit, or transit combined with roadways. Transit improvements can reduce reliance upon the automobile support compact, higher-density development, lessen congestion, and enhance environmental health. Although the city and the region have an extensive and balanced transit network, the lack of sustained investment over the last half-century, is undermining its value and ability to sustain growth. Crowded trains and buses, unreliable performance, and delays and other inconveniences discourage the use of transit and contribute to the relocation of people and businesses.

The value of transit to smart growth depends, of course, upon location and the form of development; semi-suburban Staten Island and outer Queens depend more on the automobile than Brooklyn Heights and the East Side of Manhattan. A few principles for improving transportation consistent with smart growth can be stated:

**Transit:** Within the metropolitan region transit should be accessible in terms of both location and price. As the case study notes, Staten Island needs better rail and bus service if it is to develop in an optimal manner. Smart growth in the borough would entail transit-oriented design at higher densities and with a mixture of uses, with bus routes
woven into new neighborhoods. Throughout the five boroughs, transit capacity and reliability need to be upgraded.

**Auto Use:** Dependence on the automobile should be discouraged in the city. This can be accomplished through such measures as charging for auto travel, especially at peak hours, tolls on the East River bridges; regulating the availability and cost of on and off-street parking; and basing registration fees upon vehicle horsepower and weight. Limits on the use if the automobile must be linked with improved transit. The number of vehicles on the streets can be reduced by opening markets to a variety of for-hire arrangements and shared transportation.

**Land Use:** As in Toronto, new development should be linked to the transit system. Urban growth should be at a sufficient scale, density, and mix so that residents can walk to daily destinations. Impact fees should be imposed on development that encourages excessive auto use.

**Information:** Modern technology enables information on the performance of the transit system to be available at real time through PDAs, mobile telephones, and computers. Travelers can base their decisions upon actual conditions at the time they wish to travel.

Improvements to transportation can take several forms:

- **High capital:** Building a busway, covering a highway, extending transit, creating easily accessible area-wide information systems.
- **Low capital:** Building a bikeway, creating a pedestrian way
- **Operational:** Reprogramming traffic signals, establishing new pairs of one-way streets, designating truck routes
- **Regulatory:** Establishing roadway and parking policies to support optimal use, setting policies for tolls and user charges.

**Reclaiming the Waterfront**

One of New York City’s unsurpassed, and too often neglected treasures is its shoreline. Some major stretches have already been recaptured for parks and residences, while others are being enhanced and opened to the public, such as along the Hudson River and around the Brooklyn Bridge. Many miles of waterfront are still given over to the remnants of the city’s maritime and industrial past – derelict piers, empty warehouses, old factories, and unused land. Even though much of the waterfront is in dismal condition, developers are buying well-located properties with the expectation that zoning changes and a favorable
housing market will enable them to develop individual projects. If rebuilding of the waterfront proceeds privately and piecemeal, the public interest in the form of recreation, shared facilities and significant access will be denied.

Rebuilding the waterfront in accordance with smart growth principles can produce significant benefits for the city. One of the best places to apply smart growth is the two-mile stretch along the Brooklyn side of the East River between the Navy Yard and Newtown Creek. The area is now largely derelict and abandoned and zoned for manufacturing. However, with its thrilling views of Manhattan, wide sweep and superb location, it has enormous potential for sizable private and public development. Other sections of the city’s 578 miles of shoreline are also appropriate for planned and diverse new development.

Consistent with the Mayor’s inaugural commitment “to bring new life to our waterfront”, and in response to strong economic and civic forces, the City Planning Commission has proposed rezoning land in this portion of the Brooklyn waterfront for mixed-use and residential building incorporating public access. Development in accordance with an overall plan can advance constructive smart growth. Inner-city brownfield and in-fill sites will be put to productive use. Compact, mixed-use development will be at a sufficient scale to encourage creative urban design and to absorb a large share of the cost of building the required new infrastructure. Connections to the transit network will permit auto dependence to be reduced. Varied and affordable housing can be required in the rezoning and facilitated through tax incentives and public financing. A significant and strategic length of the city’s incomparable waterfront will be preserved and made available to the wider public. Lastly, there is a chance to create a sense of community and a shared life in an emergent part of the city.

Immediate Steps for Implementing Smart Growth

Although development in accordance with smart growth is by necessity an incremental and prolonged process, a number of immediate steps can be taken to integrate smart growth into the city’s development framework and to set the stage for further progress. Two broad types of action are suggested: extending the downtown Jamaica and Staten Island case studies and viewing the three development priorities from a smart growth perspective.

In each case a primer or handbook should be prepared illustrating how relevant smart growth elements can be applied to a distinctive situation. The handbook will show how various tools, such as physical design and development, regulation, and financial mechanisms can be used to advance smart growth.

Concurrently, forums and roundtables will be held for community organizations, elected officials, agencies responsible for development, and other constituencies. At these events, information will be presented showing how smart growth has worked in similar regional centers and less developed areas and the resulting
public and private benefits. In the case of Staten Island, the emphasis will be on how higher density development could be inserted into existing communities and unbuilt land, open space preserved and improved public transportation integrated into growth. Discussion in Jamaica would focus on making optimal use of transit, concentrating jobs, retaining existing businesses and residents and upgrading infrastructure. Community conversations will bring together officials, leaders and residents to look at the elements and value of smart growth and how to create a local consensus for it.

Reclaiming the Brooklyn waterfront illustrates how smart growth can be applied to one of New York City’s major development opportunities. As the rezoning that is now being considered by the Planning Commission will set the development parameters for the area, the first step is to determine the scope and nature of the rezoning in terms of location, permissible uses and densities. Approved and pending plans for new construction and conversions in the rezoned and nearby areas will be examined for their relation to the new land use controls. The major task will be to design a plan for the rezoned and adjacent districts that reflects the elements of smart growth.

Such a plan will define specific opportunities for dense, mixed-use development and its connections to present and proposed transit; land for open space, recreation and direct public access to the waterfront; as well as necessary infrastructure improvements. New forms of urban design will be created for this significant part of the city. The development program will include a variety of housing types at a range of cost levels. Infrastructure costs will be reasonably allocated to private and public budgets. Fair and workable procedures for involving present and new interests in decisions will be designed and tangible environmental benefits gauged. Most important, the public and private gains from developing this part of the waterfront in accordance with smart growth will be critically examined.