

SMART GROWTH DEFINED

Smart Growth is an established approach to land use and development that strives to create communities that are environmentally responsible, economically viable and well-designed. It provides a framework for decision-making about how and where a community will grow. In the mid 1990s a wide variety of national organizations in the United States came together and looked at how development could be done to address many of the issues facing municipalities today such as infrastructure costs, congestion and increasing time spent in cars, environmental issues and other quality of life concerns. Together these organizations developed ten principles for Smart Growth:

Mix of compatible land uses close to each other – mixing compatible uses such as housing, retail, business and recreational opportunities creates vibrant and diverse communities.

Compact building design – maximize the use of land used for development helps provide environmental benefits and opportunities for more transportation alternatives.

Housing choices - quality housing for all family types, life stages and income levels.

Walkable neighbourhoods – ensure land use and community design enhance and support pedestrian-friendly environments.

Transportation choices – ensure a variety of transportation alternatives are available including walking, cycling, skateboarding or transit, reducing the number of vehicle trips.

Sense of place – create a unique identity through the design of a community which fosters civic pride.

New development focused in existing communities – encourage investment in existing infrastructure, such as roads, utilities and schools.

Preserve natural and agricultural areas - natural landscape features are preserved and enhanced.

Community involvement – encourage involvement of stakeholders early in the process.

Predictable development decisions – government regulation and investment helps shape development. Decisions need to be timely, cost-effective and predictable.

REFERENCES:

Smart Growth Network, International City/County Management Association. *Getting to Smart Growth: 100 policies for implementation.* 2002.

Smart Growth Network, International City/County Management Association and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. *This is Smart Growth.* 2003.

TO READ:

Smart Growth BC is a non-governmental organization that promotes fiscally, socially and environmentally responsible land use and development, based on 10 Smart Growth Principles.

Find it at:

<http://www.smartgrowth.bc.ca/Default.aspx?tabid=133>

TO WATCH:

Smart Growth Begins at the Local Level reviews some of the growth and development issues facing areas in Washington, DC, many of which are applicable to St. Albert. It then looks at the principles of Smart Growth and how they can address many of them. About 20 minutes.

Find it at:

http://www.mwcog.org/planning/planning/smartgrowth/video_broadband.asp

TO DISCUSS:

To discuss this week's topic, article or video, join our Smart Growth St. Albert Fan page on Facebook.

For additional links visit:

www.stalbert.ca/smart-growth

Send comments to:

smartgrowth@st-albert.net

PLACES TO SEE:

Markham, Ontario has a large concentration of new neighbourhoods planned based on Smart Growth. It is considered one of Ontario's nicest looking suburban cities. As a result, demand and housing prices are both high in the new neighbourhoods.

Residential development in the area has been very successful. The challenge, since its beginning in 1994, has been in encouraging commercial and business development. Last year, Markham broke ground on their Town Centre development which should encourage more development to complement the residential.