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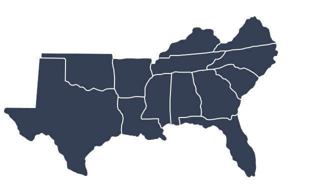
Meeting the Challenges of the Rural South through Land-Grant Research and Outreach Education

This Issue:



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Rural Development and Urban Sprawl: Converging Interests or Opposing Sides?

ERIC A. SCORSONE
University of Kentucky

The connection between rural economic and population growth and urban sprawl is complicated. On one side, urban sprawl is typically defined as urban and metropolitan regions spilling over into the surrounding countryside. While this results in "rural growth," it is often seen as coming at the expense of higher infrastructure costs, loss of farmland and open space, traffic congestion, the decline of traditional downtown areas and increased travel distances. At the same time, some rural residents and leaders see urban sprawl as the inevitable and proper increase in prosperity in formerly downtrodden or marginalized rural communities.

The Benefits and Costs of Urban Sprawl in Rural Communities

Research has shown that many "formerly rural" communities, the suburbs and exurban cities of many American metro regions, have the strongest local economies [1]. Isserman [1] points out that it is in fact the "formerly rural counties" in the United States, those that were transformed over the last 50 years from rural (adjacent to metro area) counties to urban and suburban communities, that have had the strongest economic and population growth. In some places, urban sprawl has produced many economic benefits and attracted many people to these "formerly rural" communities.

The counter argument is that urban sprawl has also produced many detrimental side effects. Long traffic lines, skyrocketing housing prices, infrastructure strain, higher taxes and a litany of other problems. Further, urban sprawl is seen as a drain on the population base and fiscal capacity of many inner city areas. For many opponents of urban sprawl, these costs far outweigh any economic benefits that have been generated.

Opposing Sides or Converging Interests?

If this is the case, rural development may be the enemy of opponents of urban sprawl and proponents of smart growth. Attempts to fight urban sprawl may be the worst enemy of those promoting rural economic development. Is there a permanent chasm between rural development and smart growth? This chasm may be reflected in the statement of Richard Tanner, Executive Director of the Kentucky Magistrates and Commissioners Association. Tanner said, "I don't have any idea why anyone would support stacking development inside a city. The term urban sprawl is just another term for rural development" [2].

At the same time, some political leaders view the need for strong planning laws and regional cooperation as critical. In their view, urban sprawl is not a panacea for rural development challenges but rather a recipe for long term community stress and decline. As expressed by the current Madison County, KY, Judge Executive Kent Clark, "In many rural communities, mandated planning is the kiss of death. But it's got to be done" [2].

Cooperation, Conflict and Policy

At this point in time, many diverse views are held on whether urban sprawl is a rural development strategy or a rural problem. Several scenarios for moving forward are possible. One

URBAN SPRAWL CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

From the Director

Bo Beaulieu

One of the first changes that I made when I joined the SRDC in 1997 was to revise the focus and content of our quarterly newsletter. This new product, which we called *Southern Perspectives,* was unique in that each issue was devoted to a major topic such as education/human capital, rural labor markets, forestry as an economic development strategy, e-commerce, public views of agriculture, and health care.

Like anything else, it is time for us to introduce major changes to our quarterly newsletter. When we expanded our policy and information series over the past two years, we dissipated the need to use our newsletter as the vehicle for addressing priority topics in the region. In essence, our policy/information series now provide the mechanisms for highlighting social sciences research, policy and application of relevance to the South. In light of that fact, the SRDC Technical and Operational Advisory Committee encouraged us to rethink the content and format of our newsletter. So, as a staff, we decided to respond to our advisory committee's request.

In the near future, you will be receiving a new SRDC newsletter that will offer you a synopsis of key information/resources being published by our Center and other entities that address issues of critical importance to the South — available only electronically (by email and on the SRDC website). We believe this shift will allow us to disseminate information to you in a more timely and cost-effective manner.

I want to encourage you to complete and mail (or fax) the form found on page 11 or the electronic form. By so doing, you will be placed on our mailing list to receive the newest version of the SRDC newsletter when it is launched this spring. We look forward to hearing from you.

. . . And the Associate Director

Alan Barefield

This farewell issue of *Southern Perspectives* focuses on a topic that is increasingly a controversial issue to rural residents. Land use is becoming a central point of debate with two sides: rural agribusinesses (including farmers) and the rural poor on one side, and suburbanites and exurbanites who are fleeing metropolitan areas on the other. These people are migrating to rural areas typically due to an abundance of relatively inexpensive land, low crime, scenic beauty and good neighbors.

However, as with any type of process, change brings stress to the participants. Newcomers to these rural areas are not eager to smell the emanations from a confined animal feeding operation or witness their neighbor setting up mobile homes for farm worker housing in full view of their "dream home on a hilltop." Likewise, long-time residents often bristle at any effort to control the use of their land.

Individuals are not the only ones who fall under this stress. Development of farmland can put a tremendous strain on a community's public service infrastructure including not only the traditional water, sewer, natural gas and electrical utilities but also police, fire and educational services. The problems in financing the necessary infrastructure expansions are dilemmas faced by many county courts or boards of supervisors.

Many persons involved in these struggles characterize the problems as being pro- or anti-economic development. However, this is a vast oversimplification of the problem. The four articles presented in this issue do an excellent job of covering this topic in some rather unique ways. Eric Scorsone takes a unique look at the concept of urban sprawl, pointing out that there are both costs and benefits to sprawl as well as a tremendous opportunity for communities to cooperate. Mitch Renkow analyzes the challenges that populations shifts will bring for both immigrant and emigrant areas, while Jeff Dorfman examines the economic effect that land use patters have on local governments.

Finally, Joe Fratesi offers the unique perspective of a former planner from a large metropolitan area in determining whether "smart growth" is an answer to the continuing problem of urban sprawl. He attests that the smart growth tenets may indeed provide an answer, but that solid planning and involvement by all stakeholders is necessary for any solution to work.

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SRDC

is that rural and urban communities will continue to fight each other for population and employment growth and the resulting tax base. The other possibility is that rural and urban communities will begin to form regional partnerships where each party can achieve its stated objectives.

Given the potential conflict between urban sprawl and rural economic development, what are the potential sources of cooperation between communities? In the best case scenario, urban and adjacent rural communities will cooperate to ensure that growth occurs but does not overwhelm public services. Policies that inhibit development in rural areas with no corresponding benefits to those rural communities are not likely to foster widespread support.

Certain land use policies are likely to be more conducive to urban-rural partnerships versus others. For example, planning that is mandated in one community without addressing or seeking input from surrounding counties and communities is likely to produce unintended consequences. For example, mandating large lot sizes and growth boundaries will likely push growth into surrounding communities. While some communities may welcome this type of growth, a better policy would be one that consciously moves growth into rural or urban communities that desire such growth.

Some examples of a more coordinated planning effort across regional and county boundaries include greenbelts (green, undeveloped areas between population settlements), tax incentives and infrastructure provisions. With this type of cooperation, urban centers can promote new growth among their current housing stock to better utilize existing infrastructure, while a rural community can create incentives for those who wish to relocate. Cooperation can allow communities to share the costs and benefits of growth. Urban communities can share employment-based tax receipts with rural communities, while rural places help pay for the cost of maintaining urban roads used by rural commuters. Any of these strategies will require a mix of incentives (carrots) and regulations (sticks) to ensure their implementation.

Urban sprawl is typically defined as urban and metropolitan regions spilling over into the surrounding countryside. *Photo courtesy of USDA NRCS.*

Difficult Choices

Ultimately, each community must decide whether to inhibit or promote growth and development. In some cases, suburban and rural communities will attempt to attract growth while the core urban area will fight such efforts. In other communities, urban, suburban and rural communities may work together to promote a fair distribution of resources across a metro area and its surrounding rural counties.

Rural development and urban sprawl are not synonymous; at the same time, each community's situation must be carefully considered. For some rural communities, urban sprawl has become the economic development strategy. For other rural communities, sprawl is seen as a major threat to quality of life. In either case, urban and rural communities working together to design land use and economic development policies are more likely to produce results that contain benefits for citizens of both landscapes.

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About the Author

Eric Scorsone is an assistant professor and state Extension specialist in rural economic development at the University of Kentucky. His Extension and research work focuses on assisting rural communities in understanding the impact of local, national and international economic trends on economic development options. He has particularly focused on community economic analysis, rural health care, business retention and expansion, local government finances and land use issues.

Population Deconcentration and the Rural South

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A growing body of evidence suggests that Americans and the businesses that employ them are becoming more widely dispersed geographically. This trend, known as deconcentration, is generally thought to be driven by a variety of interrelated factors. These include increased mobility of both workers and employers, technological changes that have reduced the cost of distance, and preferences for amenities offered by suburban and rural environments.

The phenomenon of deconcentration bears very significant consequences for communities and for the local governments that provide (and must pay for) essential public services. Recent evidence on the extent of deconcentration in the South and its implications for economic development policy and local public finance are discussed below.

Deconcentration and the Allocation of New Jobs in the South

County-level commuting data from the 2000 Census allows us to document the extent of deconcentration during the 1990s. Two factors motivate the choice of the county as the basic observational unit. First, the county is the smallest geographical unit for which complete data are available that detail where workers live and work. Second, and more importantly, county governments are on the front lines of current debates over sprawl and land use planning policies, in large part because it is county governments which pay for public services and develop the land use plans which underpin observed development patterns in most places (and especially in rural areas).

The share of workers crossing county lines to go to work every day increased substantially during the 1990s. In 2000,

"The phenomenon of deconcentration bears very significant consequences for communities and for the local governments that provide (and must pay for) essential public services."

more than 31 percent of workers in the rural South worked in a county other than the one in which they lived, up from 25.9 percent in 1990 [1]. This suggests that businesses throughout the region are drawing workers from an ever larger geographical area, and hence the economic impacts of the new jobs created by those businesses will be spread more broadly than ever before.

A recent study funded by the Southern Rural Development Center analyzed employment, commuting and migration data for the 1,112 counties of the 13 Southern states [1]. Statistical techniques were used to partition observed county employment growth among residents of nearby counties (in-commuters), local residents currently working in a different county (out-commuters), currently unemployed residents, and new entrants into the local labor force. This latter category encompasses primarily in-migrants but also includes entry into the job market of current residents who had previously chosen not to participate in the labor force.

The results of that research are reported in Table 1. Between 60 and 70 percent of local labor market adjustment to new employment opportunities during the 1990s was accounted for by changes in commuting patterns. The remaining 30 to 40 percent was accounted for by labor force growth, primarily due to inmigration. Significant rural-urban differences in the allocation of new jobs were found to exist. A much greater share of new jobs in metro counties were filled by (nonresident) in-commuters than is the case for rural counties, while employment growth in rural counties appears to be accommodated to a much greater extent by reductions in out-commuting.

Urban employers thus appear to draw their workers from a wider geographic area (including nearby rural counties) than do rural businesses. Conversely, new jobs in rural counties are likely to be taken by local residents to a much greater degree than is the case for metro counties. This will be especially the case for rural counties in which a substantial portion of increases in the size of the labor force is attributable to increased labor force participation of current resi-

Table 1. Proportion of Employment Growth Accounted for by Different Activities

Activity	Rural Counties	Metro Counties
Increased in-commuting	27.3%	52.9%
Decreased out-commuting	41.6%	9.8%
Increased unemployment	3.9%	4.4%
Increased labor force size	34.9%	41.6%

Source: Renkow [1]

dents (as opposed to in-migration). This effect is in turn dependent on the degree to which new jobs created match the skill levels and reservation wages of county residents who were previously nonparticipants in the labor force.

Impacts of Geographic Spillovers

The research reported above suggests that employment growth in one county will usually generate significant "spillovers" to nearby counties. This means that a substantial amount of the direct income generation effects of industrial recruitment and other local job creation strategies will likely end up in the pockets of residents of other jurisdictions. At the same time, some communities — notably rural communities located near fast growing urban counties — may be able to "free ride" on the success of others communities' industrial recruitment efforts.

The shopping habits of cross-county commuters will affect the overall impacts of employment growth as well. To the extent that workers patronize retail outlets in the county in which they work, the economic stimulus and attendant multiplier effects associated with that spending will be captured by businesses in the workplace county, not by those located in the residence county. Spending by nonresident commuters also boosts sales tax revenues for the workplace county, while at the same time causing a "leakage" of sales tax revenues from the commuters' residence county.

Finally, the way in which new jobs are allocated between local residents and nonresidents bears important local public finance consequences. When job creation leads to substantial in-migration of new residents, the demands on local governments to provide public services increase correspondingly. On the other hand, if a significant share of new employment opportunities are taken by nonresidents who commute into the community from elsewhere, then employment growth in one location may

The share of workers crossing county lines to go to work every day increased substantially during the 1990s.
Photo courtesy of USDA NRCS.

give rise to substantial spillovers of fiscal impacts to other communities. For example, employment growth in one location that leads to significant residential development in a nearby "bedroom" community can give rise to considerable strains on the fiscal resources of the latter community. This phenomenon has been observed widely in the South in rural counties located adjacent to fast-growing urban centers.

Implications for Local Governments

A key implication here is that old assumptions about the economic and fiscal impacts of employment growth are no longer tenable. Individual communities' ability to capture the benefits of new industries and businesses is clearly much reduced relative to the past, and in some instances may be quite small.

The findings that have been reported here also carry an important message for county governments worried about providing, and paying for, public services for local residents. A growing body of empirical evidence from studies of the fiscal costs of providing community services demonstrates that residential land uses, on average, represent a net drain on local fiscal resources and that commercial land uses tend to subsidize residential development. The fact that a significant amount of urban economic growth translates into substantial residential development in nearby rural communities poses a difficult fiscal challenge to local officials in those "bedroom" communities — at least up to such time that commercial development occurs, which often accompanies residential development.

Creative strategies will be required of rural communities seeking solutions to the economic development and public finance challenges associated with continuing population deconcentration. Two mechanisms that one hears mentioned with increasing frequency by local government officials and planners are regional economic development strategies and zoning. Both are heavily laden with political baggage — zoning because it runs counter to longstanding traditions of landowner independence, and regionalism because it entails elected officials addressing the interests of constituencies other than the ones that elect them. However, the increasing number of communities experimenting with "smart growth" initiatives and multi-jurisdictional partnerships indicates that the perceived economic benefits of these sort of public policy experiments may be beginning to outweigh their political costs.

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About the Author

Mitch Renkow is a professor in the Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics at North Carolina State University. His research interests include development economics, regional economics and technology adoption.

The Economics of Smart Growth: Dollars and Sense for Local Governments

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Smart growth is a term applied to a variety of development patterns and building techniques that are designed to be either more environmentally, economically or sociologically friendly to the community. Smart growth ideas include higher density housing developments; mixing land uses together, or at least placing them closer to each other; open space preservation; multiple transportation options; combined transportation and development planning; and the reestablishment of linkages between neighborhoods, commercial locations, public buildings and office areas. Smart growth is big because growth, traffic, school congestion, farmland preservation and other related issues are of huge concern in many parts of the United States right now. Smart growth is a buzzword used in both positive and negative ways by people on all sides of growth issues.

A series of studies conducted across the country examined the impact of land use patterns on the fiscal health of local governments. These cost of community service studies trace the source and destination of all dollars received and spent by county or city governments, then add up both the revenue and expenditures into categories for commercial and industrial land uses, residential land uses, and farm and forest lands. Nine such studies have been completed in Georgia. What these studies universally show is that residential development does not provide enough revenue to cover its required service costs, while commercial, industrial, farm and forest lands provide considerably more in revenue than they receive back in service expenditures. These results factor in all tax breaks and exemptions that any taxpayer receives and account for all sources of revenues, not just property and sales taxes. A table with both national and Georgia results is included below (Table 1). These figures confirm that residential development never directly pays enough for the services it receives, usually being about 15 percent short, while business land uses (including commercial, industrial, farm and forest uses) generally provide a sizable surplus to the local government.

The reasons for the residential land use revenue shortfall are twofold. First, most local government services are provided to residents, not businesses. Think home trash pickup, parks and recreation programs, health and human services programs, public safety, and especially schools. Second, the property values simply do not generate enough money to cover the associated costs, mostly because the shortfall can be recovered from the other land use categories. Businesses, which are providing a fiscal surplus, get that money from people (their customers) whose average direct contribution yields a shortfall. Since in the end all the money comes from residential sources (when people shop at the businesses), such a revenue and cost structure works as long as a community has a balanced enough tax base. If local residents can do enough of their shopping within the county or city to create the business surplus that offsets their residential shortfall, the government will be fiscally sustainable. However, if a county or city grows only through residential development, and too much consumer spending occurs outside the taxing jurisdiction, the government will face either a fiscal crisis or the need for large tax increases.

So, how can smart growth policies impact local government finance?

- Higher density development saves local governments money by reducing maintenance costs on infrastructure (because shorter runs of pipe, roads, etc., are needed) and by saving on operating costs for services such as trash collection.
- Building new development in the right location, next to existing infrastructure and development, saves money on capital costs for new infrastructure and on operations and maintenance of that infrastructure in the future.
- Changes in design standards, zoning and regulations blocking mixed uses can lead to more innovative and creative land use plans that keep the tax base balanced and provide more property taxes (and require fewer service expenditures).
- The inclusion of commercial and office sites near or within residential areas also works to increase the percentage of shopping dollars spent within the county, increase the proper-

Table 1. Revenue-to-Expenditure Ratios (in Dollars) from Around the Nation and in Georgia

	NATIONAL*			GEORGIA		
	Residential	Commercial/ Industry	Farm/ Forest	Residential	Commercial/ Industry	Farm/ Forest
Minimum	1 : 2.11	1 : 1.04	1 : 0.99	1 : 2.27	1 : 0.96	1 : 0.94
Median	1 : 1.16	1 : 0.27	1 : 0.36	1 : 1.28	1 : 0.45	1 : 0.49
Maximum	1 : 1.01	1 : 0.05	1 : 0.02	1 : 1.09	1 : 0.10	1 : 0.27

* National figures are from a group of 95 Cost of Community Services studies compiled by the American Farmland Trust http://www.farmlandinfo.org/fic/tas/COCS_11-02.pdf.

ty tax base, and increase local sales tax dollars.

- Open and green spaces (such as parks, nature areas, greenbelts and trail networks) raise the property values, and thus property taxes paid, of surrounding developed property by an average of 10 percent for a radius of about a quarter mile around the open or green space.
- Preserving open and green spaces (including farms and timber land), particularly near streams and all drinking water sources, provide environmental amenities for free. Governments can save money on water treatment and get improved storm water retention and air quality. New York City has been a leader in preserving farmland upstream as a method of securing a safe drinking water supply at a lower overall cost; that is, the cost of land preservation is less than the cost of cleaning up the water if it gets polluted from development.
- Providing transportation alternatives such as walking and biking (with paths, trails, sidewalks or dedicated bike lanes) also reduces service costs as maintenance costs and environmental impacts decline with reduced automobile use.
- Impact fees can be levied on new development to help recover some of the fiscal shortfall. Impact fees especially make sense on residential development and should be higher on traditional subdivision development and on "sprawl" developments that leapfrog open space rather than build contiguous to existing developments.
- Higher density developments and mixed retail/residential or office/residential developments tend to attract more young professionals and older empty nesters than traditional subdivision developments. If such smart growth developments produce a lower average family size and a smaller number of public school students per household, huge savings can be realized. By far, the most expensive government service is public schools, and a new residential development virtually never pays enough in taxes to pay for the school costs of the children in these residences; the remaining costs are passed on to local businesses and longer-term residents through tax increases.

Residential development never directly pays enough for the services it receives.
Photo courtesy of USDA NRCS.

The concept of conservation subdivisions can be used to illustrate these points. The term conservation subdivision describes a residential concept where a tract of land is developed using a higher density on part of the land, while the remainder of the land is permanently preserved as open or green space. Averaging across the entire tract, the density is set at whatever the standard is for that area. Such a development can provide environmental amenities such as storm water retention and reduce service costs in many areas of government provided services. Such a development also usually provides equal or greater property and sales taxes to the local government and likely raises property values for surrounding properties. Yet, current zoning and development regulations in most jurisdictions make such developments either impossible or extremely difficult to build. At a minimum, local governments should not penalize or retard the use of smart growth methods.

Local governments can improve their fiscal situation, the health of their local economy, and the quality of life in their area by creating incentives for certain smart growth features. Developers proposing to build mixed use developments, to increase residential density and preserve open space, or to include path and trail networks in their developments might be rewarded with faster approval processes, lower permitting fees, or waivers of some infrastructure improvements. Smart growth cannot solve all of society's problems, eliminate all the negative impacts of growth, or stop sprawl. Still, the encouragement of smart growth methods can be a win-win proposition where residents, developers, businesses, the environment and government can all come out ahead.

About the Author

Jeffrey Dorfman is an economist and professor at the University of Georgia, where he has been since 1989. He teaches classes in economic theory and the economics of the food industry and performs research on productivity measurement, the economics of growth and sprawl, the effect of e-commerce on agribusiness, and Bayesian econometrics. He also works as a consultant to a variety of businesses, foundations and local governments.

Realities of Smart Growth

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All over the county, especially in suburban cities and rural towns, people cringe at the sound of two simple words: planning and zoning. Perhaps no two words create as much stress, tension and aggravation as these. It may be because these terms are associated with the development of local farmland or the increase of local traffic or the emergence of large residential and commercial projects. Whatever the reason, public officials, developers and citizens alike are facing a similar problem — the developmental sprawl resulting from the out-migration of citizens from the urban cities toward the surrounding suburbs and rural areas.

The Problem of Sprawl

For over 50 years, a large percentage of the middle class population has left the metropolitan city for the suburbs and surrounding rural countryside. This urban migration and subsequent suburban sprawl has left not only the cities, but also the suburbs and surrounding rural areas, suffering from the negative consequences associated with new commercial and residential developments. As a planner for the City of Germantown, TN, an affluent suburban city located approximately 20 miles from downtown Memphis, I was able to get a first hand experience with local land development issues and possible solutions to them. From that experience it became obvious to me that suburban and rural areas are being forced to build new roads, schools, bridges and other types of infrastructure necessary to accommodate the new residents fleeing the nearby cities. Combine this large-scale increase in new developments with the loss of undeveloped open space — "green space" — and the resulting issue of sprawl begins to take off.

So, what can be done to mitigate this problem of sprawl? This is where the term "smart growth" comes into play. This term is being thrown around a lot lately, and very few people know exactly what it means or what is associated with it. In the mid 1990s, the idea of smart growth grew out a series of meetings held by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Urban and Economic Development division. In 1996, a wide range of stakeholders came together as a cohesive unit known as the Smart Growth Network. In an effort to solidify this idea, the SGN came up with 10 smart growth principals, which are shown in Figure 1.

Collectively, these principals have defined the smart growth planning movement. Do these principals provide the answers to the development problems facing our local communities? Many will say, unequivocally, yes.

Figure 1. The 10 Smart Growth Principles as defined by EPA's Smart Growth Network

1. Mixed land uses.
2. Take advantage of compact building design.
3. Create a range of housing opportunities and choices.
4. Create walkable communities.
5. Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place.
6. Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty and critical environmental areas.
7. Strengthen and direct development towards existing communities.
8. Provide a variety of transport choices.
9. Make development decisions predictable, fair and cost-effective.
10. Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions.

However, any rural community considering implementing these principals must be made aware of certain realities. Specifically, in order for smart growth principals to be effective, those involved in the planning process must be cognizant of the questions and confusion that will inevitably arise during the planning process; the necessity of having continual input and involvement of all stakeholders; and the need for basic, yet solid, traditional planning techniques to be firmly in place, along with a qualified staff needed to oversee and guide the planning process. Without recognition of these realities, any attempts at implementing smart growth principals will be difficult at best.

Defining Smart Growth

What exactly is smart growth? Many people may define smart growth by listing some of its basic principals, but does that provide a clear definition for the average person to understand? In truth, there is no concrete definition of smart growth. Its definition is ever changing; it is based on the context in which it is used and the perspective from which it comes. Basically, it means different things to different people in different circumstances.

As a planner, I may have defined smart growth by having a successful mix of uses in an area, all the while utilizing the existing infrastructure and preserving green space. However, many residents of the local community may have defined smart growth as having a community that has wide, tree-lined streets with sidewalks and good schools. On the other hand, working professionals may feel that having the ability to leave their home and utilize high-speed public transportation to work is a sign that the community has grown smartly. Finally, to environmentalists or owners of rural/farmland property (and often owners of property adjacent to rural/farm-

People cringe at the sound of two simple words: planning and zoning.
Photo courtesy of USDA NRCS.

land property), smart growth may be defined as the preservation of the existing green space.

Without a solid definition, those wrestling with the principals of smart growth will need to realize that it will have different meanings to different people.

Tough Questions, Difficult Answers

Like the definition of smart growth, planners, public officials, developers and citizens must also be cognizant of the fact that many of the principals of smart growth are extremely general and often raise more questions than answers. Take the principals of having mixed uses, compact developments, and conserving green space for instance. With respect to the principals of mixed uses and compact development, while many planning professionals may agree that these principals are an excellent way of combating the negative growth patterns associated with sprawl, several unseen questions may arise. For instance, how compact are we willing to develop? At what point is the density of the compact developments acceptable to community? With regards to a mixture of uses, which uses are to be permitted in specific places, and how closely should those uses be mixed to one another? In larger cities, high-rise developments are a possible solution. However, while the high rise my provide the high density, mixed use that some desire, others may see them as visual blights on the landscape and simply a matter of trading off horizontal sprawl for vertical sprawls. The principal of preserving open space typically raises similar problems, including what qualities of open space should be preserved and for what purposes. To environmentalists, preserving open space may mean the environmental conservation of particular habitats or natural ecosystems; to the rural farmer it may mean preserving working farmlands or forests; and to the residential family it may mean the creation of recreational areas and functional uses of common open spaces within developments. These types of questions will inevitably arise when considering utilizing smart growth principals.

Involvement of Stakeholders

Along with being prepared for the inevitable questions and confusion that will arise with smart growth, in order for smart growth to be successful, communities must be aware of the need to have continual involvement from all affected stakeholders. While this may sound obvious and simple, many of the problems associated with land development issues arise from either the lack of effective communication between the stakeholders, the failure to continually receive input from all the stakeholders, and often both. Since all of the different stakeholders will undoubtedly have different ideas on such things as mixed uses, compact development, and preserving open space, it is imperative that all stakeholders come together and work toward answering these questions and arrive at an equitable solution. For this to happen, clear lines of communication must be established at the onset of development, continue through the planning process when these specific questions will arise, and remain open during construction and completion of development. Having the input of all the stakeholders will create a more harmonious atmosphere and one in which the citizens, developers, public officials and city staff all feel they are an important part. It should be noted that it is the responsibility of each and every stakeholder to ensure the lines of communication stay open.

While the planning staff of the local governmental authority often will act as a middle-man between all interested parties, the reality is that the stakeholders (especially the developer and the surrounding citizens) must make an attempt to get together and work through these issues and questions. Without the involvement of all the affected stakeholders, you can be certain that the implementation of any planning process, especially smart growth principals, will be difficult to achieve.

Basic Planning Techniques

After recognizing the many questions and concerns that will arise during the planning process, and the need for continual input from the affected stakeholders, it is important for communities attempting to effectively implement any smart growth principals to have solid and basic planning techniques set in place. By this, I am referring to the need of communities for such things as: solid comprehensive land use plans; zoning ordinances; and development regulations; a general consensus from the public as to how they want their community to grow or what is important to them; and, finally, the qualified staff necessary to oversee the planning/development process.

Without the necessary ordinances, regulations and guidelines, both the professional planning staff and the local citizens will have a difficult time in working with developers to achieve the smartly planned growth they are looking for. Once the community as a whole has an idea of how they want to grow (i.e. as a community with an emphasis on residential development, commercial development, mixed uses, no mixed uses, emphasis on parkland and green space, etc.), it needs to adopt the necessary guidelines and regulations that will allow for that type of growth and development. With the backing of such things as a land use plan, zoning, and sign and development regulations, communities will be better able to implement the generalized principals of smart growth.

So, is smart growth the answer to suburban sprawl? From my experience, it is one possible answer as long as those involved in the planning process remember that there are some practical realities that must be addressed in order for it to be successful. If communities have solid and basic planning techniques set in place and have a qualified staff necessary to administrate the process, get the necessary involvement of all stakeholders and work together and answer the inevitable questions and concerns that will arise, smart growth may provide the answers to the growing-pains many communities are feeling.

About the Author

Joseph N. Fratesi is a governmental training specialist with the Center for Governmental Training and Technology in the Mississippi State University Extension Service. At the Center, Fratesi plans and delivers educational programs for local government officials; writes materials appropriate for local government education; coordinates computer applications and services for the Center; and provides technical assistance in computer applications and services to local governments and associations of local government officials. Prior to working for the Center, he worked as a planner for the City of Germantown, TN.

Names in the News

D.C. Coston was named acting director of the Oklahoma State University Cooperative Extension Service, replacing Dave Foster upon his retirement.

Kathy Ibendahl joined the SRDC staff in November 2003 as the curriculum specialist for the Rural E-Commerce Extension Initiative. Ibendahl formerly worked for the University of Kentucky, College of Agriculture Alumni and Development Office.

John Jensen was appointed to the SRDC Board of Directors in 2003. Jensen serves as interim dean and director of the Agricultural Experiment Station at Auburn University.

Mississippi State University Extension Service director **Joe McGilberry** was appointed to the expanded position of executive director of University Extension and Outreach Oct. 1, 2003. Both the MSU Extension Service and Continuing Education now report to the executive director.

Ken Roberts was appointed to the SRDC Board of Directors in 2003. Roberts serves as the associate vice-chancellor and associate director of the Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service.

Vance Watson has been named vice president for agriculture, forestry and veterinary medicine as well as director of the Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station and dean of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. He had served since January 2002 as interim vice president and interim dean.

Upcoming conferences...

Southern Community Development Educators Conference
May 19-21, 2004
Tampa, Florida

This meeting will build upon the current momentum of Extension community development programming at the national, state and local levels and will provide an opportunity for individuals to network with others from throughout the Southern region on common interests. In addition, it will provide professional development opportunities and will offer a forum for discussing and pursuing the formation of a national association of community development educators. Check out the conference website for more information: http://srdc.msstate.edu/cred/scde/.

National Extension Tourism Conference
People, Places and Partnerships: Keys to Success
September 27-30, 2004
Kissimmee, Florida

More than ever, successful tourism planning hinges on integrating the needs of people, communities and special places through viable partnerships. As the demographic composition of many communities transition, and as demands on urban and rural landscapes intensify, establishing partnerships will become increasingly challenging.

As one of the one world's leading tourism destinations, the Orlando area and Central Florida will provide an excellent backdrop for discussing opportunities and challenges of planning for successful tourism, including exploring ways to strengthen and develop partnerships; identifying strategies to work with increasingly diverse communities and publics; and sharing techniques for enhancing urban and rural tourism attractions. Visit the conference website at http://srdc.msstate.edu/04tourism/.

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