

Smart Growth: Why It's Needed

Each year, development consumes over 100,000 acres of forest and farmland (an area of land more than twice the size of Washington, D.C.) in the Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia sections of the Chesapeake Bay watershed. This amount of land development exceeds what should occur from population growth. The reason we are losing so much land is due to the spread-out nature of development, otherwise known as sprawl. Beyond wasting land and destroying rural landscapes, sprawl negatively affects our quality of life in other ways. Its excessive stormwater runoff pollutes the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries; its reliance on the automobile pollutes the air and the Bay and clogs roads with traffic. Its spread-out nature also creates higher taxes, because far-flung development is more expensive to service. We must grow smarter if we are to protect our quality of life and the Chesapeake Bay.

What Is Smart Growth?

Smart growth differs from conventional development in a variety of ways.

Smart growth uses land efficiently.

Smart growth is compact. It clusters development together by avoiding large residential lots and excessive setbacks of structures from property lines and streets. The streets themselves also are narrower in width. Taken together, these features use less land than does sprawl development. A smaller area of developed land also means less stormwater runoff and associated water pollution. The most land-efficient growth of all occurs on vacant or underutilized sites in existing urban or suburban communities. Such infill and

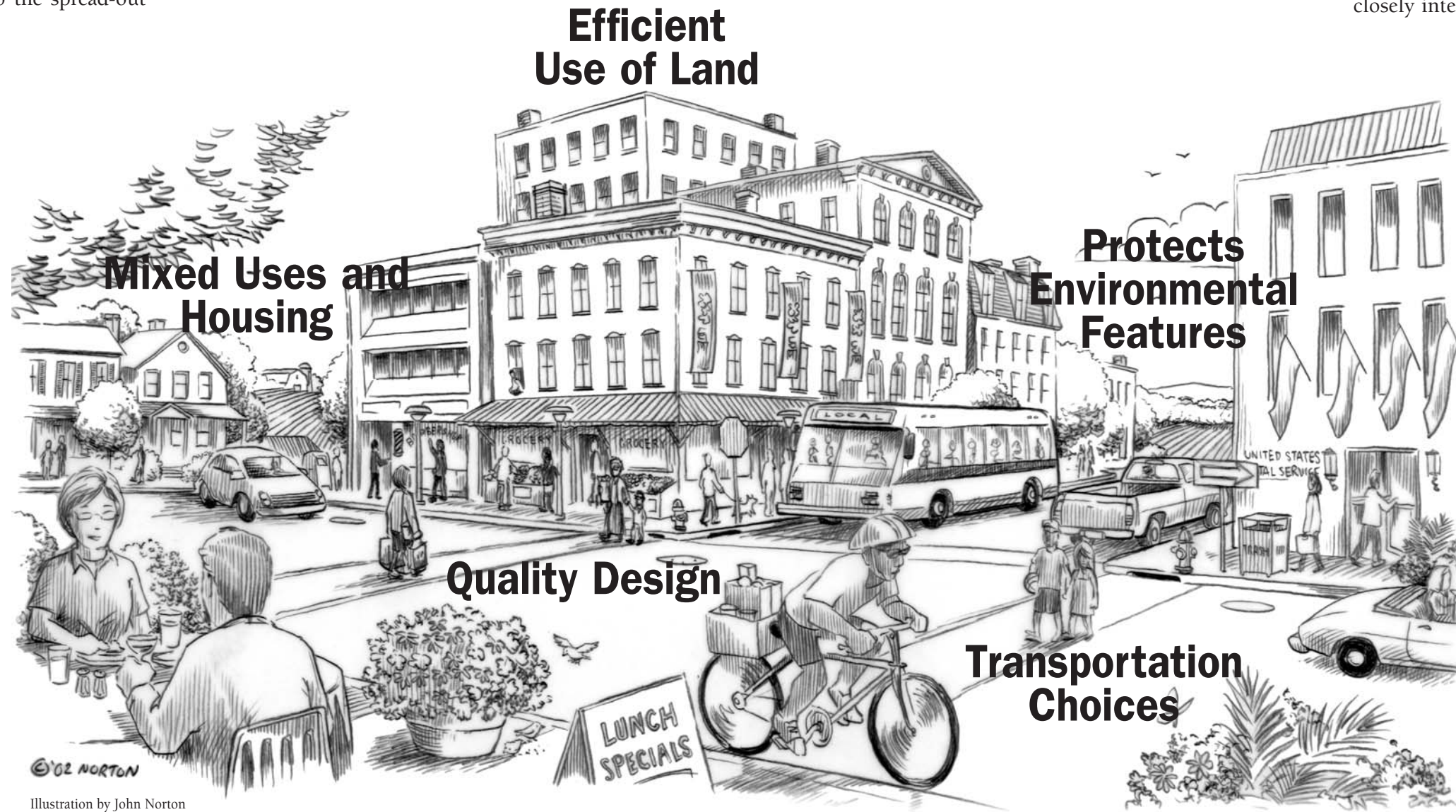
redevelopment projects avoid the need for developing open land while at the same time revitalizing cities, towns, suburbs, and villages.

Smart growth mixes land uses and housing types. In sprawl development, land uses and housing types are separated into distinct areas in which only one type of use exists. On the other hand, smart growth closely intermingles homes, shops, and workplaces,

especially in the center of a community. Land uses can even be mixed vertically within buildings as well as horizontally. A building may contain shops on the ground floor, with offices and apartments located on the floors above. Also part of the mix is a variety of housing types: single-family homes, apartments, condominiums, and townhomes. The availability of a variety of housing types makes housing available for people of all income levels.

Smart growth offers a variety of transportation choices. Smart growth is designed to support walking, bicycling, and transit as well as driving. Narrower streets slow vehicle speeds, streetscapes are designed to create a pleasant walking environment, and a grid street layout offers full pedestrian access throughout a community. Smart growth's compactness and mixed land uses mean more destinations are within reach of walking and bicycling trips, and transit is a viable option. Transit stations serve as a focal point for development and activity in a community. As a result of these features, residents of a smart growth community need not rely on cars for most trips. This variety of transportation options results in less vehicle traffic (as much as 20-30

percent fewer auto trips) and less air pollution. Vehicle exhaust is a leading contributor to unhealthy



air, and it accounts for a large share of the airborne nitrogen pollution that eventually winds up in the Bay.

Smart growth protects environmental features. Smart growth ensures that environmental and cultural features such as wetlands, mature woodlands, wildlife habitats, and the best local farmland—located outside of designated growth areas—won't be developed to accommodate growth. But smart growth also means that environmental features located inside growth areas don't have to be sacrificed to make land available for development. Because smart growth uses land efficiently, it allows land to be set aside for the preservation of important and sensitive environmental features as part of the fabric of a growing community.

Smart growth incorporates quality design. Smart growth is carefully designed neighborhood by neighborhood, rather than designed with the repetitive cookie-cutter designs typical of recent conventional development. Establishing a design theme with attention to architectural details for each neighborhood gives each neighborhood its own look and identity. Attractively designed buildings, streetscapes, and other public spaces create lasting value in real estate as well as a sense of place.

Where To Find Examples

In a sense, smart growth is a new name for the way towns, villages, and communities have traditionally been designed. Development as we know it today in the form of sprawl is a new phenomenon that has



become widespread only since World War II. The most complete examples of smart growth today are many of the historic communities that exist throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed, such as Annapolis, Maryland; Staunton, Virginia; and Lititz, Pennsylvania. Examples of new development projects that incorporate smart growth principles include Bethesda Row in Bethesda, Maryland; the Randolph neighborhood of Richmond, Virginia; and the Susquehanna Commerce Center in York, Pennsylvania. See the websites listed at the end of this brochure for other examples of smart growth development projects.

What You Can Do

Despite smart growth's many advantages, many local governments make growing smart difficult or illegal due to outdated zoning, development regulations, and road and parking standards. These official policies may prohibit the mixing of land uses and housing types, shallower property setbacks, narrower roads, and other key features of smart growth. Policies can be changed, however. You can help—learn more about smart growth and the policies that shape development in your community, and get involved in promoting the approval of smart growth policies and smart growth development projects.

For More Information

Contact the Chesapeake Bay Foundation or any of the other organizations and websites listed below for more information about smart growth and how you can make a difference in your community.

**Chesapeake Bay Foundation
Headquarters & Maryland State Office**
Philip Merrill Environmental Center
6 Herndon Ave.
Annapolis, MD 21403
410/268-8816 • 410/269-0481 (from Baltimore metro)
301/261-2350 (from DC metro)

Pennsylvania State Office
The Old Water Works Building
614 North Front Street, Suite G
Harrisburg, PA 17101
717/234-5550

Virginia State Office
Capitol Place
1108 E. Main Street, Suite 1600
Richmond, VA 23219
804/780-1392
Website: savethebay.cbf.org
E-mail: chesapeake@cbf.org
Membership information: 1-888-SAVEBAY

Maryland Department of Planning
301 West Preston Street
Baltimore, MD 21201-2365
410-767-4550 • www.op.state.md.us

1000 Friends of Maryland
1209 Calvert Street
Baltimore, MD 21202
410/385-2910 • www.friendsofmd.org

10,000 Friends of Pennsylvania
117 S. 17th St., St. 2300
Philadelphia, PA 19103
215/568-2225 • www.10000friends.org

Coalition for Smarter Growth
1777 Church St. NW
Washington, D.C. 20036
202/667-5445 • www.smartergrowth.net

Environmental Defense
1875 Connecticut Ave., NW
Washington, D.C. 20009
202/387-3500 • www.environmentaldefense.org

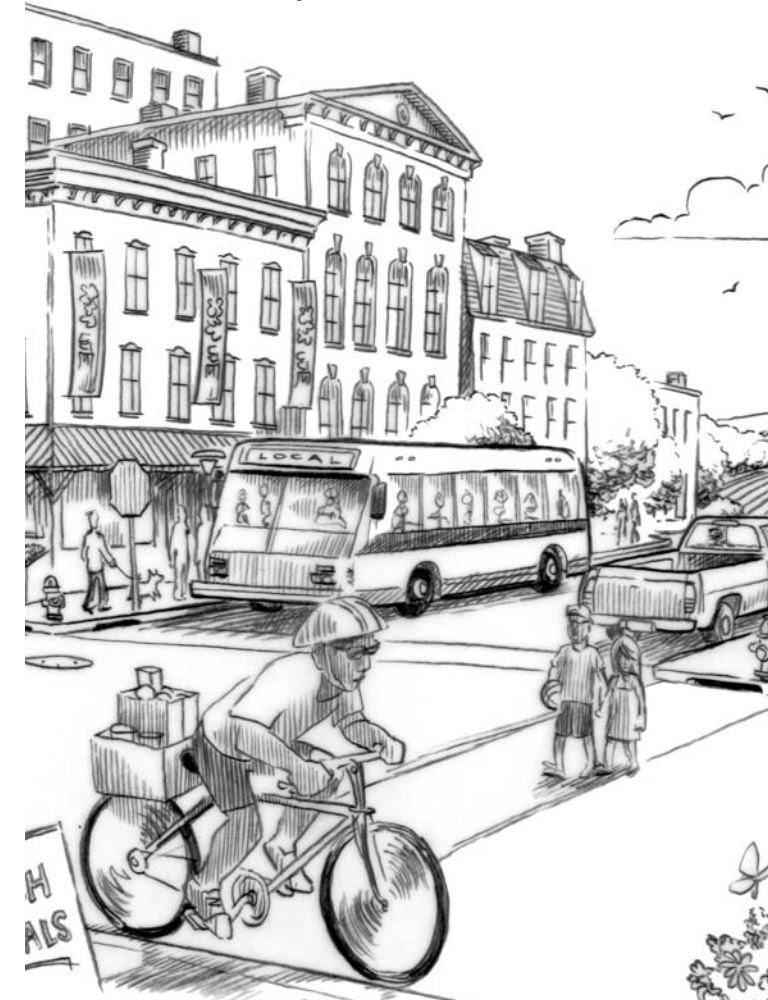
Piedmont Environmental Council
P.O. Box 460, 45 Horner St.
Warrenton, VA 20188
540-347-2334 • www.pecva.org

Smart Growth Websites
www.smartgrowth.state.md.us
www.sprawl-busters.com
www.smartgrowthamerica.com
www.smartgrowth.org
www.uli.org
www.smartgrowth.net
www.sprawlwatch.org

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Smart Growth

Ensuring a Healthy Future for Our Communities and the Bay



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