



Local Issue Brief

The American Institute of Architects • Government Advocacy • Current Issue Position and Analysis

Smart Growth Key Points:

➔ *The 2008 Moving Communities Forward study done by the AIA and the University of Minnesota shows that well-designed transportation projects utilizing smart growth and TOD benefit a community by facilitating economic development, creating jobs, increasing productivity, and easing the movement of traffic. For more information:*
www.movingcommunitiesforward.org.

➔ *The AIA's 10 principles for livable communities provide architects and policy makers with the foundation to create viable, long-lasting, architecturally inspiring communities:*

1. Design on a Human Scale
2. Provide Choices
3. Encourage Mixed-Use Development
4. Preserve Urban Centers
5. Vary Transportation Options
6. Build Vibrant Public Spaces
7. Create a Neighborhood Identity
8. Protect Environmental Resources
9. Conserve Landscapes
10. Design Matters

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Smart Growth/Transit-Oriented Development

AIA Position

The American Institute of Architects (AIA) supports transit-oriented, smart growth development. The AIA believes that smart, mixed-use development, which includes residential, commercial, retail, and municipal buildings in close proximity to transportation options, cuts down on automobile use and promotes walkable, healthy neighborhoods.

Action Sought

The AIA urges local government officials to pass laws promoting smart growth development. Successful programs already exist in cities, towns, and counties across the country. These programs preserve urban centers, promote managed growth, decrease congestion and sprawl, enhance neighborhood identity, improve health, and support outstanding architecture.

Explanation and Justification

Local officials across the country have responded to citizen requests for smarter growth over recent years. These leaders can continue this forward momentum by passing laws and formulating initiatives that create environmentally-sensitive, pedestrian-friendly, livable communities. As Americans are moving back into cities and embracing new urbanist principles, they increasingly yearn for neighborhood connections.

On the local level, incentive zoning programs have worked particularly well. These plans can include initiatives such as bonus density programs, form-based codes, and tax credits in return for focused development within cities and towns. By concentrating this development on areas with pre-existing infrastructure, it also saves local governments money and protects the environment. Arlington, Virginia, successfully used incentive zoning to focus development in its Rosslyn-Ballston transportation corridor, resulting in over 21 million square feet of retail, office, and commercial space, more than 3,000 hotel rooms, and over 22,000 residential units. These "urban villages" encourage people to live, shop, play, and work in their immediate community and to travel using multiple modes of transportation.

Other communities are beginning to examine policies, such as congestion and variable toll pricing. These policies and similar market-based mechanisms place a direct cost on automobile usage and further encourage mass transit options. Congestion pricing and variable toll pricing have been successfully used in cities throughout the world, including London, Stockholm, and Singapore, but are just being introduced to American cities. The benefits can range from discouraging inefficient use of roads to reducing vehicle carbon emissions and creating a reliable mass transit funding mechanism. However, when reviewing the benefits of such policies, it is imperative to reliably offset the additional costs that can accrue disproportionately to lower income households.

Mixed-use, smart growth development protects open space and the environment by reducing sprawl and environmental problems, including surface water run-off and carbon dioxide emissions. Smart growth development supports vital public transportation systems and affordable housing through the promotion of mixed income neighborhoods. The creation of diverse, attractive, walkable neighborhoods furthers the AIA's goals of livable communities and should be desired in localities across America.