In his “Blueprint for American Prosperity,” Bruce Katz, vice president and director of the Brookings Metropolitan Policy Program, noted that “…between now and 2030 we will develop another 213 billion square feet of homes, retail facilities, office buildings and other structures. That’s double the amount of built space in the United States today.”

Importantly, we need this growth if we are to maintain our strength in the global economy, attain energy independence and contribute to resolving global environmental problems. But it is the “how” we grow that will determine whether we achieve these objectives.

To ensure that Smart Growth is considered in new projects funded or supported by the State, New York enacted the Smart Growth Public Infrastructure Policy Act (SGPIPA) in September of 2010. The Act’s intent is to minimize the “unnecessary cost of sprawl development.” It requires State infrastructure agencies, including New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT), to ensure that public infrastructure projects undergo a consistency evaluation and attestation using criteria set out in the Act. NYSDOT has developed a process that will ensure Smart Growth criteria are met in NYSDOT projects. To find out more information about this process, please visit www.dot.ny.gov/programs/smart-planning.

Growth management in New York is essentially a “Home Rule” right, however. Through their land-use planning and management authority, individual communities will decide when, where and what type of development is allowed and under what conditions. This Checklist is offered by NYSDOT as a tool that can help guide communities in making these decisions. The elements in the Checklist are in accord with the Smart Growth criteria set out in SGPIPA.

What Is Smart Growth?

Smart Growth is sensible, planned efficient growth that integrates economic development and job creation with community quality of life by preserving and enhancing the built and natural environment.

Smart Growth encourages growth in developed areas with existing infrastructure to sustain it, particularly municipal centers, downtowns (“Main Streets”), urban cores, historic districts and older first-tier suburbs. Smart
Growth means growing in a way that enhances our communities and our daily lives, now and in the future. This is growth that doesn’t magnify our traffic problems, that doesn’t result in higher municipal costs and that doesn’t needlessly pollute or consume open space. This is growth that enhances all the places where we spend time.

Smart Growth has two primary features: the “where” and the “how.” Smart Growth occurs “where” a project can be accommodated with minimal impacts and “where” it takes advantage of existing infrastructure. Smart Growth addresses the “how” by ensuring that the completed project works in harmony with its neighbors and expands choices that can otherwise be lost to sprawl: to walk or bike to work or shop, to use transit rather than a car, to spend time with friends and family in attractive common spaces, to provide a range of housing choices for all members of the community, and to avoid wasteful spending by using public infrastructure and services more efficiently.

What Are the Smart Growth Principles?

Every community has different characteristics, needs, objectives and opportunities. As a result, one community’s Smart Growth Vision and implementation plans are likely to be quite different from other communities whether it is a city, a suburb or a rural town or village. Still, each community can work toward a better future by considering whether a proposed project will contribute to a more economically efficient, attractive, user-friendly community. The Smart Growth Principles can be used to evaluate whether a proposed project is likely to contribute to a community’s overall well-being. These guiding principles are set out below.

✓ Locate near existing development and infrastructure.
✓ Increase the range of housing opportunities.
✓ Protect open space and critical resources.
✓ Create a vibrant mix of uses.
✓ Create or enhance choices for getting around.
✓ Design for personal interaction and walkability.
✓ Respect the desired character of the community.
✓ Be sustainable in the context of the community.

How to Use This Checklist

The Checklist is a “No-Fault” tool. It is not intended to be used to critique current land-use conditions or past decisions. Instead, the Checklist simply provides a method with which to consider whether a proposed or potential project is likely to result in larger, broader and more durable benefits to the community.

This Checklist also is not a regulatory tool but simply provides an easy way to evaluate proposed projects relative to the impacts and benefits they may
bring to the community. This Checklist will be successful if it stimulates a constructive dialogue among you, your community leaders, developers and agencies such as NYSDOT. This engagement can lead to changes that are to the greater benefit of the community.

The Checklist is broken into eight sections, one for each Smart Growth Principle. Read through the sections and check the box to the right if the answer to the question is “Yes.” If a section or question does not pertain to your community or to the project being reviewed, simply cross it out.

When you have completed the Checklist, look at the questions that pertain to your community and are not checked “Yes.” These suggest possible areas for further review and consideration. Does the project perform well in terms of access to infrastructure but poorly in terms of transit or walkability? Does it consume open space or farmland when infill or redevelopment of abandoned properties or brownfields are possible? It may be that there are reasonable opportunities to resolve problems and to provide broader and more durable benefits.

This Checklist is best applied to larger projects as they generally have the largest impacts, but it is a useful exercise for most project proposals. It is important to note, however, that local zoning and subdivision requirements may not permit or direct a project to be built to the criteria set out in this Checklist. In such cases, this Checklist can serve another purpose: to stimulate discussion in your community about whether there is interest in establishing a planning and land-use framework that will encourage growth in accordance with Smart Growth principles. What do you want your community to look like? How do you want it to function? What do you want to protect, preserve or enhance? How will you manage projects to achieve these ends? We offer the Checklist to help you find the answers.

### Smart Growth Checklist

**For Proposed Development Projects in Your Community**

**Principle I: The proposed project is located near existing infrastructure.** Smart Growth can help reduce pressure on local budgets by reducing the need to build infrastructure for a proposed project.

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- Is it served by existing roads and public sewer and water services with sufficient capacity to support its operations?
- Is it in an area targeted for priority development, such as an Empire Zone, Industrial Park or urban redevelopment zone?
- Is the availability of existing public services, such as police, fire, schools and health, sufficient to serve the project?
Smart Growth Checklist
For Proposed Development Projects in Your Community

Principle II: The proposed project provides a range of housing options. Smart Growth ensures the availability of housing for all needs and incomes. This contributes to the economic sustainability and social diversity of a community.

Does it offer a mix of housing types and sizes for a range of ages and likely situations? (apartments, condos, single-family homes, studios, 1/2/3/ bedrooms) ❏
Does it have a range of housing prices and options (purchase/rent)? ❏
Does it provide affordable housing? ❏

Principle III: The proposed project protects open space, farmland and critical environmental areas. Smart Growth preserves critical resources, such as groundwater recharge areas, and environmental amenities, such as open space, farmland and recreation areas. This enhances property values, health and the community’s long-term sustainability.

Does it avoid critical environmental areas, such as aquifers, unbroken forest and habitat of threatened or endangered species? ❏
Does it avoid the acquisition and change in use of operating farms or prime farmland? ❏
Does it involve the cleanup and reuse of properties with identified environmental problems, such as brownfields? ❏
Does it avoid sensitive environmental viewsheds or preserve views of scenic, historic or cultural areas? ❏

Principle IV: The proposed project provides a mix of land uses. Smart Growth mixes land uses which contributes to the creation of a vibrant community by integrating diverse activities and expanding the offerings currently available.

Is it a mixed-use project, including any combination of at least three of the following: homes, retail, commercial, recreational, educational, or public facilities? ❏
Does it add a new and compatible type of land use to an existing neighborhood or district? ❏
Does it add new and compatible products or services to an established business district? ❏
Smart Growth Checklist
For Proposed Development Projects in Your Community

Principle V: The proposed project provides multiple transportation and access choices. Smart Growth focuses on providing transportation choices, and specifically healthier, safer and more cost effective choices.

If Yes □

Is it within walking distance of public transit? □
Is it accessible by multiple modes of transportation, including bus, rail, pedestrians, bicyclists and autos? □
Is it fully connected to the surrounding community; can you take different routes to the project? □
Is there full access to and from the property from surrounding developments? □

Principle VI: The proposed project is walkable and designed for personal interaction. Smart Growth provides people with opportunities to interact with their surroundings ... safely, efficiently and happily ... enhancing their quality of life.

If Yes □

Are the number, density and location of housing units sufficient to promote walking and transit? □
Are the size and location of commercial or retail uses sufficient to promote walking and transit? □
Is it within walking distance of at least three other land uses, such as housing, schools, offices or retail businesses? □
Does parking allow easy and safe access by pedestrians to buildings and not visually dominate the project? □
Does it improve access to prime viewsheds or historic and cultural sites? □

Principle VII: The proposed project is respectful of the community’s character. Smart Growth seeks to preserve the historic, cultural and social characteristics that so often attract new businesses and residents to a community.

If Yes □

Do buildings conform to the desired scale and architectural styles of the community? □
Does it reuse or rehabilitate historic structures or other structures of significance to the community? □
Does it support the public streetscape, including pedestrian-friendly amenities such as landscaping, benches and lighting? □
Does it create or enhance community spaces, such as plazas, squares and parks? □
Principle VIII: The proposed project is sustainable. Smart Growth recognizes that the quality and viability of a community are intimately linked to the national and global economy and environment.

If Yes ✓

Does it contribute to the economic vitality and diversity of the community? □

Are critical resources or inputs renewable and drawn from the surrounding area? □

Does the proposed project have a small carbon footprint? □

Does the proposed project use a high percentage of renewable materials? □

When you have completed the Checklist, look at the questions that pertain to your community and are not checked “Yes.” These suggest possible areas for discussion: Does the project perform well in terms of access to infrastructure but poorly in terms of transit or walkability? Does it consume open space or farmland when infill or redevelopment of abandoned properties or brownfields are possible? It may be that there are reasonable opportunities to make improvements that provide broader and more durable benefits.

Adapted with permission from New Jersey Future, Trenton, New Jersey
Transportation planning and programming for the state system is a responsibility of both the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) and the Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs). NYSDOT has 11 regional offices within the state. Each office provides planning, project development, programming and system maintenance and operating services in its region.

The MPOs are federally mandated organizations responsible for transportation planning and project in urbanized areas. There are 13 MPOs around the state.
Land Use and Transportation
Smart Planning

Metropolitan Planning Organization Contacts

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<th>Adirondack Glens Falls Transportation Council</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council</td>
<td>Ulster County Transportation Council</td>
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<td><a href="http://www.gbnrtc.org">www.gbnrtc.org</a></td>
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<td>Region 10 - Hauppauge</td>
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