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](http://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 development conditions or past land use planning and management decisions. Instead, the Checklist simply provides a method with which to evaluate whether current land use planning and management practices in your community align with the Principles of Smart Growth and are likely to guide public investments and private developments to achieve larger, broader and more durable benefits in your community.
This Checklist assumes some familiarity with existing municipal plans, zoning and subdivision codes, community investment practices and ongoing site plan and subdivision permitting activities. It is offered as a way for municipal planners and other officials to identify actions that communities might take to attract and to achieve growth that reflects the Smart Growth Principles. As with many such exercises, it starts with questions. 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 public investments and private developments to achieve these ends?

The Checklist is broken into seven sections. Together, the questions in these sections would typically cover the planning elements required to promote development consistent with the Smart Growth Principles. Read the questions in each section and check the box to the right if the answer to the question is “Yes.” If there are sections or questions that do not pertain to your community, cross them out.

Once you’ve completed the Checklist, look at the areas that are not checked and evaluate their relevance in your community. Does the community protect farmland and open space but lack a plan to create a walkable, mixed-use center? Do its planning and management practices provide for a broad range of housing choices? Does it promote transit-friendly residential density? Does its zoning provide for linear commercial development when there are opportunities for infill or redevelopment of abandoned properties or brownfields? Your answers to the questions provided in the Checklist indicate areas where your community may want to reshape its land-use planning and management practices.

### Smart Growth Checklist
For Municipal Land Use Planning and Management

#### Section I: Municipal Planning Profile.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If Yes</th>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☑</td>
<td>Is the Comprehensive Plan current? It should be updated every 10 years and more often if the municipality is growing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
<td>Does the Comprehensive Plan provide a clear “Vision” of municipal objectives and priorities?</td>
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<tr>
<td>☐</td>
<td>Does the Comprehensive Plan identify areas for more detailed study and planning, such as economic development, or critical areas for preservation or redevelopment or a long-range infrastructure plan?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
<td>Has the municipality revised its zoning map and zoning ordinances to reflect the recommendations and/or requirements of the Comprehensive Plan and/or the more detailed studies and plans?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
<td>Does the municipality follow a rigorous site plan and subdivision review process, including use of SEQR or GEIS, in permitting proposed developments or subdivisions?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Section II: Infrastructure. The municipality can reduce public costs stemming from the provision of water, sewer, transportation and other public infrastructure by limiting their extension outside of existing or planned centers.

- Does the municipality have a comprehensive infrastructure plan? [ ]
- Do the municipality’s infrastructure investment policies limit expansion of infrastructure to encourage development density? [ ]
- Do the municipality’s zoning requirements and investment actions promote industrial, commercial or retail development in areas already served by infrastructure such as downtowns, empire zones, industrial parks and urban redevelopment zones? [ ]

Section III: Open Space, Farmland, Critical Environments. The municipality can protect its environment by acting to preserve critical resources and environmental amenities, such as drinking water, open space and outdoor recreation areas.

- Does the municipality have a plan to preserve or to protect critical environmental areas, such as aquifers, unbroken forest and habitat of threatened or endangered species? [ ]
- Does the municipality have a farmland protection program? [ ]
- Does the municipality have a scenic or viewshed preservation program? [ ]
- Does the municipality have policies for or a program to clean up and/or to reuse properties with identified environmental problems? [ ]
- Does the community have an outdoor recreation plan? [ ]
Section IV: Mixed-Use Development. The municipality can promote a vibrant and livable community by integrating diverse activities in central places and encouraging redevelopment of existing centers.

If Yes  

Does the municipality have an existing or planned mixed-use center, including at least four of the following: housing, retail, office, commercial, public, education or recreational facilities?  ❑

Do municipal zoning and/or subdivision requirements promote dense development in or near this center?  ❑

Do municipal zoning requirements and investment actions promote redevelopment, higher-density reuse and brownfields development in or near this center?  ❑

Does municipal zoning have a mixed-use category?  ❑

Does municipal zoning concentrate retail and commercial development in well-defined, deep, dense areas that are within at least one-half mile of three of the following: schools, public institutions, residential developments or recreation areas?  ❑

Section V: Transportation and Access. The municipality can provide safe, efficient and lower-cost transportation choices by promoting transit, walking, bicycling and least-cost, least-time transportation options to its constituents.

If Yes  

Does the municipality promote development densities that are sufficient to warrant public transit?  ❑

Does the municipality promote developments accessible by at least three modes of transportation including automobiles, bus, rail, pedestrians or bicyclists?  ❑

Does the municipality expect developments to complete and interconnect roads and bike and pedestrian links to abutting subdivisions or developments?  ❑

Does the municipality expect developments to provide/obtain multiple routing approaches to their proposed development or subdivision?  ❑
Section VI: Municipal Character. Municipal actions can contribute to the community’s overall quality of life by encouraging development that is attractive and built at a human scale.

**If Yes**

- Does the municipality have a plan or standards for the reuse or rehabilitation of historic structures or other structures of significance to the community?
- Does the municipality have building size and architectural standards reflecting the “Vision” of the Comprehensive Plan?
- Does the municipality have a plan to improve the public streetscape with pedestrian-friendly amenities, including landscaping, benches, lighting and the like?
- Does the municipality have a plan to finance and to create community spaces, such as plazas, squares and parks?
- Does the municipality have a recreational trails plan linking schools, homes, parks and preserves?

Section VII: Sustainability. Municipal actions can promote a high quality of life by encouraging development that is sustainable, serves all groups in the community and reduces demand on scarce resources.

**If Yes**

- Does the municipality have a plan or subdivision and zoning requirements to provide a broad range of housing options in the community? (single- and multi-family homes, 1-2-3 bedroom apartments and condominiums, low- and high-rise residences)
- Does the municipality have a low-income housing plan?
- Does the municipality have a “Green Code” encouraging the use of recycled materials?

Now that you’ve completed the Checklist, look at the areas that are not checked and evaluate their importance to your community. Does the community protect farmland and open space but lack a plan to create a walkable, mixed-use center? Do its planning and management practices provide for a broad range of housing choices? Does it promote transit-friendly residential density? Does its zoning provide for linear commercial development when there are opportunities for infill or redevelopment of abandoned properties or brownfields? Your answers to the questions provided in the Checklist indicate areas where your community might want to strengthen its land-use planning and management practices to Grow Smart.

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 programming in urbanized areas. There are 13 MPOs around the state.
Metropolitan Planning Organization Contacts

Adirondack Glens Falls Transportation Council
www.agftc.org

Binghamton Metropolitan Transportation Study
www.bmtsonline.com/bmts

Capital District Transportation Committee
www.cdtcmpo.org

Elmira-Chemung Transportation Council
http://www.elmirampo.org

Genesee Transportation Council
www.gtcmpo.org

Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council
www.gbnrtc.org

Herkimer-Oneida County Transportation Study
www.ocgov.net/planning/hocts

Ithaca Tompkins County Transportation Council
www.tompkins-co.org/itctc/

New York Metropolitan Transportation Council
www.nymtc.org

Orange County Transportation Council
www.co.orange.ny.us/planning

Poughkeepsie-Dutchess County Transportation Council
www.co.dutchess.ny.us/CountyGov/Departments/TransportationCouncil/PLpdetcIndex.htm

Syracuse Metropolitan Transportation Council
www.smtcmpo.org/

Ulster County Transportation Council
www.co.ulster.ny.us/planning/tran.html

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Region 7 - Watertown
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Region 8 - Poughkeepsie
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Region 11 - New York
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