Smart Communities Through Smart Growth

**Applying
Smart Growth Principles
to
Suffolk County
Towns and Villages**

Suffolk County Planning Commission
March, 2000

Photographs on the cover, top to bottom:
Argyle Lake, Babylon Village, NY
Ronkonkoma LIRR Station, Ronkonkoma, NY
Coventry Village, Smithtown, NY
Main Street, Northport Village, NY

Smart Communities Through Smart Growth

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Smart Communities Through Smart Growth
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Forward

Sustainable environments, friendly communities, and Smart Growth are umbrella terms incorporating progressive land use techniques that utilize resources wisely. Smart Growth concepts embrace a basic goal:

> **To protect or conserve existing resources for current and future use in ways that allow for continued growth and maximize the potential of those resources without negatively impacting the environment.**

"Resources" can be identified as anything from open space, to downtown business districts; existing infrastructure; including roads, public water and sewer mains; schools and community centers, blighted areas, and even brownfields. The concept of "Smart Growth" is also a reaction to the wasteful, sprawling and often destructive approach to land use characterized in many parts of Long Island which have gobbled up community resources, whether they be land, water or basic infrastructure. To give further credence to the term "Smart Growth", New York State is currently considering several pieces of legislation that provide incentives to local municipalities to better handle and plan their use and stewardship of local resources.

This new shopping development in Water Mill enhances the users experience through many features that includes a pedestrian friendly design.

Example of Housing in Babylon Village which is near the train station and close to downtown.

There are many examples of sprawl or "dumb growth" throughout the County. Just look around and ask: are we choking on traffic? Is the downtown anemic while the congested highway corridors sprout shopping strips or big boxes? Is the simplest need for a loaf of bread beyond reach without a car? We all live the consequences of "unsmart growth." The culprits may be auto-oriented infrastructure, rigid zoning laws, federal home lending, a combination of these, or even others. Whatever the reason, Suffolk County communities are not without tools to address this issue. Many communities have adopted policies and local laws to lessen sprawl and the waste of natural resources. In fact, some municipalities in Suffolk County may be ahead of the rest of the state in their reaction to suburban sprawl.

The main goal of this primer is to look into what principles make up "Smart Growth". The primer will take note of good examples of Smart Growth techniques in the County. Although there is unsmart growth and sprawl in our communities, there are land planning tools being utilized by some that may have wider applicability. As new projects are discussed, it is hoped that this primer will be a reference document for smarter projects and, as a result, Smart Communities for Suffolk County.

A Brief History of Growth in the Nassau-Suffolk Region, Long Island, NY

It can be argued that the Nassau-Suffolk Region is one of the oldest suburban sprawl communities in this country. Beginning with the post World War II development of Levittown up to today's march out to the East End, waves of development have periodically washed over the Region.

In the beginning development was embraced and encouraged by scores of governments and individuals. The mass production of automobiles and the federal government's decision to disburse population away from atomic bomb-prone city centers after World War II, led to a dramatic change to America's landscape. This development pattern enabled a large majority of the current suburban population to trace their roots to large American cities. With mobility and home financing, people poured out of the cities to the fresh air and green spaces of the countryside.

A great majority of Nassau and Suffolk's population can trace their roots to Brooklyn and Queens. How many of us can say that at least one of our parents is originally from these areas? Nassau and Suffolk's suburban growth has a direct correlation to the outward migration from New York City. As major roads were built, the citizenry was able to leave the crowded city for the suburbs. Government sponsorship of reduced interest mortgages and the favorable tax status of mortgage interest still encourages people to move, buy and invest in a new home on the fringe of the city they once called home.

This process of suburbanization (sprawl) deeply impacted what was an agrarian culture in both Nassau and Suffolk Counties.

Population and Housing

Beginning in 1930 and ending in the 1970's, the Bi-county population exploded. In 1930, the total Bi-county regional population was 463,914 people. By 1950, that population doubled to 948,894 and then doubled again in 1960 to a whopping 1,966,000 people. That kind of growth at that time in our nation's history was unprecedented. While other areas of this country were seeing post-war growth, they were not seeing growth as rapid as Nassau and Suffolk's.

In 1972, the US Census designated the Nassau Suffolk Region as the first non-urban core area in the United States as its own Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area. Between 1950 and 1960 Nassau/Suffolk grew by more than one million people. That is an average of 100,000 people a year! This sprouted from the productive pastures of Nassau and Western Suffolk where new housing developments and shopping centers grew. During this time a huge number of houses were built in both counties.

Between 1950 and 1970 more than 220,000 individual detached homes were built in Suffolk County alone. Nassau's boom was between 1940 to 1960 when that county added about 250,000 housing units to the landscape. These figures illustrate how large and imposing the explosion of population and development was on the island.

Suffolk County Population
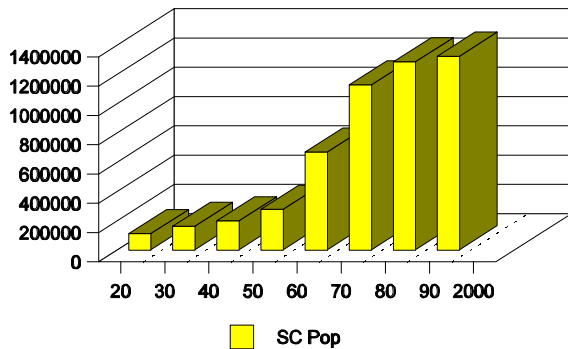
On Long Island, suburban sprawl rolled over and obliterated the agricultural landscape. After a while the large influx of people demanded ever larger amounts of land for larger lot housing and commercial development. Initially, the development bolstered the existing downtowns, but eventually auto-oriented shopping centers and malls developed and shifted the focus of shoppers and residents away from downtown with its small shops and limited parking. The decline of the pre-war downtowns was the beginning of the adverse effects of sprawl on Long Island.

In the last twenty years the Nassau-Suffolk

Region has continued this piecemeal suburban sprawl eastward even though population growth has slowed and stabilized. Between 1970 and 1980 about 100,000 housing units were constructed to house a population that had grown by almost 160,000 people. Compare this with the following ten years when 60,000 more units accommodated only an additional 40,000 people.

The trend was and is more housing square footage on larger lots. The amount of land that is consumed to build these new homes is higher now than it was when the population was growing by leaps and bounds. New houses in a typical subdivision have one to two acre lots as opposed to the ½ acre or less that were built in the past. Here in Suffolk County we are consuming more land to house fewer people as compared with twenty years ago when we were putting more people on far less amounts of land. This is an example of not using one of our resources, land, wisely for the next generation. More land and road frontage per unit has also translated into higher per capita taxes for municipal services over the years.
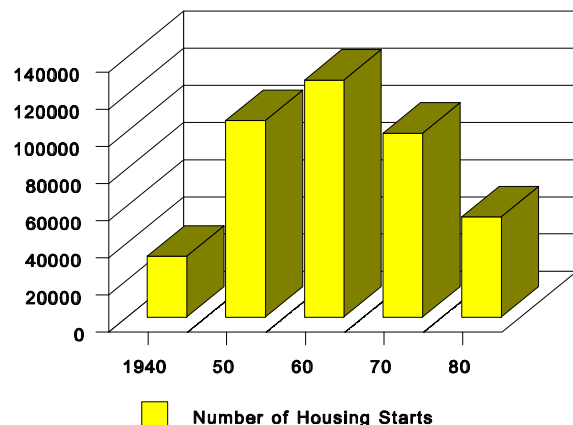

Water Mill is an example of a newer hamlet in Suffolk County that might feel the pressure from large-scale commercial development

By allowing sprawl to continue many towns now look like Any Place, USA. It all looks the same. Sprawl has stripped away the very sense of place and replaced it with a commercialized version of every where else.

Due to its unique history, Long Island is an interesting mix of pre-suburban sprawl communities with downtowns surrounded by the newer developments of houses (built in the 60's 70'and 80's) and commercial uses along the major highways outside of the older centers.

This housing development, in Dix Hills, illustrates the current trend in more land used to house fewer people.

In the last ten years, development patterns, quality of life and the environment have become major issues for many Long Islanders. Along with high taxes, these concerns all have a direct link to unchecked growth.

Long Island is collectively scratching its head and wondering: **"Where is that beauty, fresh air and green space which attracted us here in the first place?"** This unchecked growth is often aided by the very communities that chart and control the growth.

An example in Oakdale on Montauk Hwy of an underutilized shopping center. The action for commercial development has moved north to Sunrise Highway.

There are many examples outside the Long Island Region of the ill effects of suburbia. One such area is Atlanta, Georgia. The city in recent months has had all of its federal highway funding canceled because of re-occurring poor air quality. The poor air quality is a direct result of Atlanta's auto-oriented sprawl and unchecked growth. The fact that a majority of the people that work in Atlanta use the car and live a great distance from outside the city has led to an over-dependence on the car as the primary means of transportation. The result of this dependence has given Atlanta the longest average commute in the nation and has even made Hewlett Packard reconsider building a new skyscraper facility in downtown Atlanta. The city that in the early 80's and 90's was booming is now seeing the storm clouds on the horizon. Even though Atlanta has a central business district its problems can easily be applied to Long Island. The spread out nature of Atlanta's growth mimics a great deal of the Island's landscape. Can you imagine if a large company that was headquartered here on Long Island decided to not expand here due to traffic and growth congestion? Would that awaken all of us to see how affecting our quality of life development really is?

Zoning and Ordinances: The DNA of Sprawl

The characteristics of the current landscape can be traced to zoning and ordinances. Originally designed to ensure adequate light and air for packed tenement dwellers, zoning has robbed much development of its mixed use energy and symbiosis. It may be argued that the Region's zoning codes favor cars over people, segregate land uses, do not promote connections between land uses and do not promote flexibility. Think about it. Individuals have to make separate trips for almost everything here on the island causing extreme dependence on the automobile. Shopping centers, offices and industrial parks are all located along main roads. Residences are about as far as you can possibly get from commercial uses, forcing more car trips which add to road congestion.

For every new shopping center constructed along any given highway on Long Island, new infrastructure as well as traffic congestion are added into the equation that make up sprawl.

"Smart Growth" is not an all out cure for sprawl and the every day woes of current Long Islanders but it does provide a framework and a dialogue to help set forth the necessary actions that need to take place in Suffolk County. Suffolk's proximity to New York City and the fact that our County has many different faces adds to our unique position. The County is roughly divided between the heavily suburbanized towns of western Suffolk County and the rural tourism-based eastern half of the County. The County possesses downtowns, fishing villages, world famous beach resorts, a winery region, the most productive farmland in the state, and centers of higher learning and industry. The County has a wide range of communities, such as Commack, built during the onset of suburbanization, and communities such as, Manorville that are now just becoming suburbanized. This primer will outline some benefits and the applicability of implementing Smart Growth to our local communities.

This newly built shopping center, because of a merger of two retail giants, stands completely abandoned. Meanwhile, another new shopping center was built across the street.

Principles of Smart Growth

Smart Growth is comprised of many principles, some of which have been agreed upon by the **Smart Growth Network.** The network was initiated as a program through the EPA and is made up of a large coalition of organizations and municipalities that have interests in Smart Growth for their own communities. Since the concept is ultimately community-based, smart growth for one area may be different than another area. Some principles may be inversely related, for example focusing intense mixed use development toward areas of existing infrastructure may by default save open space. The same can be said when applying mixed use development with housing. Once again, by default, an almost instant need for walking is created. This helps promote the smart growth principle of creating pedestrian friendly communities.

The following principles are compiled from the Smart Growth Network and other national, state and local groups that deal with the issues of Smart Growth. While the principles can be stated many ways they can be boiled down to their essential components. Many others can be created or tailored depending on local situations throughout Suffolk County.

- **Direct development to strengthen existing communities.**

- **Encourage mixed land uses and mixed use buildings.**

- **Encourage Consultation between Communities.**

- **Take advantage of compact building sizes and create a range of housing opportunities.**

- **Provide a Variety of Transportation Choices.**

- **Create Pleasant Environments and Attractive Communities.**

- **Preserve Open Space and Natural resources.**

- **Make development decisions predictable, fair and cost effective.**

Applying the Principles of Smart Growth

Direct development to strengthen existing communities and sites.

Outcome of this action:
This will help many of our local downtowns, and other areas that contian preexisting infrastructure. These areas have been impacted by strip development along outlying roadways in Suffolk County. Smart Growth actions can be applied to the redevelopment of older areas including commercial, industrial and residential sites. Some of this activity is already occurring. The Gardiner Manor Mall in Islip Town is now being reused as a much more up-to-date shopping center. This reuse allowed for the redevelopment of an existing site as opposed to carving out another site in an area that is not suited for such a development.

Development of an office building adjacent to the existing Smithtown railroad station takes advantage of existing transportation infrastructure and proximity to the Central Business District.

Reconstruction of the Gardiner Manor Mall reuses an existing commercial site. This reuse avoids both the creation of an abandoned shopping center and construction of an additional new shopping center.

Encourage mixed land uses and mixed use buildings

Outcomes of this action:
This activity will help create the density of development that is needed to sustain a healthy community. By mixing compatible uses, a walking community is created. By having stores on the first floor and residential uses on the second or third, the base population is within walking distance of these uses. This action can already be seen in older downtown areas such as Sayville, Northport or Huntington. By providing many differing services in any given area, local synergy is created and the need for people to drive to that area for any particular services or stores is diminished.This will help reduce the use of the automobile. Sayville is an example of a downtown that incorporates a healthy mix of uses in a centralized location. The main street area has many stores and services that provide for residents and visitors alike. Retail stores are shoulder to shoulder with restaurants and personal services such as barber shops and professional offices. Many residents can walk from a store in town to the post office, then on to the bank and finally to the library. All of these examples of walkability are aspects of the smart growth principles. The concentration of uses in a tight knit area lends itself to leaving the car in one place. It might even allow a resident to walk into town and leave the car at home. The alternative is to drive everywhere because of the separation of land uses that have been zoned, compartmentalized and spread out, each in its own location unrelated to the other.

These buildings in downtown Northport Village exemplify a mixed use of first floor retail with second and third floor residential use.

Retailers in Northport encourage walkers by providing comfortable benches and a clean and safe sidewalk.

Encourage Consultation between Communities

Outcome of this action:
Suffolk County is faced with the contrast of protection vs. growth. Some communities wish to protect their resources while others prefer to develop them. Differences in development philosophies create an environment that pits towns against their neighbors. Lawsuits and a general feeling of resentment can result from the lack of coordination between communities. There are numerous examples of protracted legal posturing in the development process in Suffolk County. Consequently, discussion between communities, civic associations and community leaders should be engaged when dealing with development and in particular Smart Growth. If one town applies Smart Growth and a neighbor does not, an isolated approach to Smart Growth results. This may work at the start but it is not cohesive enough for the larger scale. One municipality's approach might negate the accomplishments of another, for example, the approval of a large mall across the town's line. The one town's idea of directing growth to areas of existing infrastructure is dealt a fatal blow by the other town's lack of cooperation with its neighbor.

Pictured is a garden apartment complex adjacent to and existing rail road station.

An example of Senior citizen housing built on an old school site in downtown Lindenhurst.

Take advantage of compact building sizes and create a range of housing opportunities

Outcomes of this action:
This action refers to allowing densities that are associated with traditional compact downtowns to be applied to residential and commercial development that occurs from new growth. A framework provided through local zoning codes can allow higher densities which use land more wisely. Higher densities would be allowed in areas located within the existing infrastructure enabling residents to walk to shopping, personal services, community centers and transportation facilities. In terms of housing choices, increased density will allow for a mixture of housing types and prices in the same area. The density, land costs and presence of community support facilities make it easier to develop attractive housing for a variety of income groups. This may be difficult to accomplish in Suffolk County because a majority of single family homes are on half acre to acre lots. However, the burgeoning senior citizen population, those in need of starter and/or economically priced housing do not require the large lots that a big family may need. These targeted groups could be guided to higher density housing with a variety of styles at existing transit and town centers. High density senior housing exists in the County already. Unfortunately, much of this housing is far away from existing transportation or community downtown centers. It is, however, a step in the right direction. High density housing development should be located in existing downtowns and expanded to offer a variety of choices to a larger populace. (Note: high density development may ultimately lead to the need for sewers and the costs associated with sewer upgrades, expansions and operations.)

Provide a Variety of Transportation Choices

Outcomes of this action:
Suffolk County is home to one of the nations most heavily used commuter railroads as well as the Long Island Expressway, occasionally the butt of jokes as "the world's longest parking lot". Auto registrations have doubled over the last twenty years while population growth has stabilized. An example of a Smart Growth transportation action is a proposed bus shuttle between MacArthur Airport and the Long Island Railroad (LIRR) Ronkonkoma train station. Although not related to housing density, the airline passenger population that is needed to justify moving people between the airport and the station via shuttle can be considered as a transportation alternative. This idea is applicable to Smart Growth policies when relating density to the provision of a variety of transportation choices. Transportation options might relieve Suffolk County's roads of some automobile congestion. Opportunities exist on both the north and south forks of the East End for using the commuter rails for local travel and concentrating development near stations.

A proposed bus shuttle between the new Ronkonkoma Railroad Station between the station and the new Long Island MacArthur Airport terminal is an example of a Smart Growth transportation choice.

The village park at the end of Main Street in Northport Village incorporates a pleasant environment and an attractive community.

Create Pleasant Environments and Attractive Communities that are pedestrian oriented and give residents a sense of pride in their communities.

Outcomes of this action:
This action will give cohesion to a Smart Growth plan by encouraging uniform design conditions for pedestrian access. Incorporating historical features within a project can compliment the area and strengthen a sense of place. By designing projects that incorporate community interests, municipalities can create or enhance pleasing environments as well as give local residents a sense of pride in their communities. For instance, the Town of Islip has a uniform code for shopping center enhancements. A new store must comply with uniform codes when it enters a shopping center. The new store becomes a catalyst for refurbishing and redeveloping the remainder of the center. This uniform code allows the Town of Islip assure cohesion in design as opposed to the hodgepodge of awnings, signs and design features that characterize many of Suffolk County's shopping centers.

Preserve Open Space and Natural Resources

Outcomes of this action:
This Smart Growth principle can result by allowing mixed uses in areas with existing infrastructure instead of committing open space for new development. By directing anticipated growth to areas that are already developed there is less development pressure on pristine areas. By default, the municipality preserves natural resources that need protection, create valuable recreational lands and open space preserves and preserve vistas that are pleasing to the eye. All of this strengthens the quality of life. The municipality also retains the land value of existing developed or redeveloped parcels. Less land supply causes the remaining land's value to increase. Having a preserve next to a development adds to the the value of developed property. Conservation easements, clustering, transfer of development rights, conservation subdivisions and purchase of development rights are all Smart Growth tools for open space preservation and conservation. Simply directing development towards areas that are currently developed will not single handedly save these precious natural resources. Some growth will still occur in the areas that are targeted to be preserved. However through the judicious application of higher densities and mixed land uses in areas that are already developed a new land use trend is possible. While land acquisition is the most direct method of open space preservation, Smart Growth development techniques can also result in the preservation of natural resources.

Argyle Lake Village Park in Babylon Village

Scenic Vista in Stony Brook

Make Development Decisions Predictable, Fair and Cost Effective

Outcomes of this action:
Reducing red tape can make the Smart Growth process work. For example Southampton Town currently expedites minor subdivision reviews and a similar process has been proposed for Southold. Other improvements that should be considered include: uniform subdivision regulations; simplified site plan requirements; and as-of-right incentives. Smart developments should be structured by towns and villages as permissible alternatives to current zoning when certain conditions are met. Such conditions are: acreage minimums dependent upon location and amount of redevelopment necessary; proximity to transportation choices; and presence of infrastructure, especially sewage disposal. Lack of delay, flexibility and higher densities create cost effective development.

Seedlings of Smart Growth

Town and Village Seedlings for Smart Growth

Although most of Suffolk County has developed in the days since sprawl began, there are many areas of our County that resulted from the use of Smart Growth like policies. Some Town and Village programs or zoning codes that exhibit seedlings of Smart Growth follow.

Central Pine Barrens Protection

Environmentally sensitive pieces of land in the towns of Brookhaven, Southampton, and Riverhead are being protected to preserve the natural resources within the 100,000 acre area. Ground water and habitat preservation are being accomplished through this protection act that was initiated in 1993 and adopted in 1995. Various land uses and zoning measures are used to accomplish the preservation goals.

Transfer of Development Rights, Cluster Zoning and Conservation Easements are the three main planning tools in use at this time. This protection act guides development away from environmentally sensitive land and directs it to areas that are more equipped for development. A 50,000 acre area outside the core preservation area called the compatible growth area encompasses the receiving area. Many receiving areas are contiguous with existing infrastructure and close to downtowns or hamlet centers. By redirecting the development through this regional plan, the protection act is accomplishing some aspects of Smart Growth.

Transfer of Development Rights (TDR)

Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) is a technique in which the development rights of one parcel of land are transferred to another parcel in order that the sending parcel can not be further developed and increased development density is permitted on the receiving parcel. The Suffolk County Health Department amended the county rules of development relating to sanitary waster disposal to incorporate TDR.

Development and density which complies with local zoning can now be moved from a one area to another through the sterilization of sending parcels within the County. This Smart Growth principle results in the preservation of land every year. Brookhaven Town has been particularly active in creating a market for TDR credits out of the sensitive Pine Barrens areas. TDR credits have been uses to create additional density in approved subdivisions and for modest increases in the number of beds in newly built nursing and retirement homes. These TDRs resulted in the preservation of close to 200 acres in the last two years.

Town and Village Seedlings for Smart Growth Continued

Cluster Zoning

This Smart Growth tool allows for an arrangement of buildings on the land in which lot size and/or setback requirements are varied in order to provide open space, or other amenities. It maintains the same density as permitted in a conventional subdivision; also known as open space or conservation subdivision. Most of the towns in Suffolk County use clustering in subdivisions to preserve wetlands, farms, scenic vistas and historical sites.

Planned Unit Development (PUD)

A special provision or district in the zoning ordinance, planned unit development and planned development districts can be applied to development of large tracts of land, usually permitting a combination of residential and nonresidential land uses, developed as a unit. PUDs differs from clustering since it can involve mixed land uses and an increase in density. The towns of Islip and Brookhaven have these districts in their zoning code. However, these developments are treated as zoning changes and often require costly land assemblage and therefor are rarely used by developers.

Conservation Easements

Easements, covenants, restrictions or other interests in real property can be created, which limit or restrict development, management or use of property for the purpose of maintaining the scenic, open space, historic, archeological, architectural, natural condition, character, or significance. Conservation easements provide for some limited development in the context of open space or farmland preservation.

Town and Village Seedlings for Smart Growth Continued

Special Studies:
Sunrise Highway Corridor Study, Town of Islip

Unlike the western part of Sunrise Highway in the Town of Islip, the eastern section of Sunrise Highway was not as built out with commercial development prior to its transformation as an expressway. The western part of the highway is filled with the typical sprawl that accompanies commercial strip zoning along highway corridors. This kind of development weakened existing communities along the more traditional shopping/residential areas on Montauk Highway to the South.

The Greenview in Oakdale is an example of Islip's attempt to rezone parts of Sunrise Highway for more residential as opposed to commercial development.

A study done prior to the widening of the roadway recommended that a large portion of the available land along Sunrise Highway be rezoned to high density/clustered residential. **The policy plan specifically states that the vitality of existing hamlet centers and older shopping centers would be weakened because the amount of new commercial space would far exceed gains in population and disposable income.** The Town of Islip has focused a good deal of new high-density garden style apartment/ residential development in recent years because of the recommendation of this study. Greenview in Oakdale, Saddle Rock in Bohemia and Spruce Ponds in Holbrook are examples of providing housing and eliminating the negative effects of continued commercial sprawl along Sunrise Hwy.

Housing in or near Central Business Districts

A significant aspect of Smart Growth recommends housing be located within walking distance or in the central part of a town for easy access to services, business, community and municipal facilities. Examples of various Suffolk County municipalities exemplifying this principle follow.

Brentwood, Town of Islip

The Sunrise Corridor Study uncovered the need to develop more apartments for seniors, empty nesters and singles in Islip Town. One project is in Brentwood very close to the downtown and within walking distance to the post office, library and train station. This project was approved by Islip Town because this project is going to have a positive impact on downtown Brentwood. This senior housing project will be completed in the latter half of the year 2000.

Town and Village Seedlings for Smart Growth Continued

Housing in or near Central Business Districts Continued

   Town of Southampton

Southampton has provided for Senior Citizen housing in areas that are easily accessible to transit and within easy access to hamlet/ business centers. The Senior Citizen Zone Code states that the Senior citizen zone should be a site within a convenient distance to a central business district or hamlet area, which provides shopping, transportation and community facilities. This kind of zoning is very much a part of the Smart Growth concept. It provides for housing that is dense and in an area that is already developed, by putting development in areas with existing infrastructure. It provides for housing in a pedestrian oriented hamlet center as well. Hampton Bays has two examples that encompass these ideals. There are two projects just south of the tracks in Hampton Bays less than a quarter of a mile from the center of town and the train station. The Town Code provides for apartments on the second floor of offices or stores in the Central Business District with the stipulation that there are no more than 2 bedrooms in one apartment. The code also states only one apartment per office or no more than two apartments per building.

Multi- Family Residential in the township will be provided if the district is within one and half miles of the boundary of an existing village boundary. The idea is that community services and transit are within an accessible distance to a higher population that would reside in the Multi-Family-Residential district.

Accessory Apartments: Above stores in Central Business Districts these units provide residents with easy access to shopping, personal services, community facilities, offices, shared parking and other downtown amenities. Recent changes in the state building code will allow for facilitated mixed use new construction of this type the access to walk to and from businesses to your home and also provides for a wider array of options for housing.

Town and Village Seedlings for Smart Growth Continued

Housing in or near Central Business Districts Continued

Town of Smithtown

The Town of Smithtown allows accessory apartments above stores or offices in the following zoning categories: Professional Business 3, Neighborhood Business and the Central Business District. These are contingent upon approval by special exception from the Board of Appeals. These examples appear along Lake Ave in St. James.

Villages:
Amityville, Northport and Port Jefferson

Amityville provides for apartments in the downtown above stores. The applicant needs to go through the zoning board of appeals and attain a special permit from the zoning board.

In **Northport** existing apartments above stores in the Central business district have remained viable due to the desirability of the downtown location, which mixes a variety of stores, restaurants and other facilities that include Northport' s harbor recreational opportunities.

Mixed use buildings containing commercial use on the first floor and apartments on the second floor in St. James in the Town of Smithtown

Port Jefferson allows for accessory apartments in the General Commercial C-2 district as well as the General Commercial District C-1. Planning Board approval is required as a conditional "as of right" use.

Town and Village Seedlings for Smart Growth Continued

Mixed Use Zoning - Town of Brookhaven

The Town of Brookhaven has identified two areas where mixed use can occur. In **J7 Zoning** or Central Transportation District, mixed use development can occur in the area around the **Ronkonkoma Train Station** and near and adjacent to the **Port Jefferson Train Station.** The purpose of this zoning is to encourage and permit the development of compatible business, industrial and residential uses within close proximity to major transportation facilities. Residential uses existing at the time of the creation of this district are legal non-conforming uses and have been grandfathered into the existing code.

Currently the Ronkonkoma Train Station provides a mix of retail and offices with the existing homes around the area. The J-7 zone allows stores, restaurants, professional offices, (in some to a height of 6 stories) and municipal services. The development of this transportation district is a great model of Smart Growth development exemplifying access to mass transit via the new train station development. The code permits higher density to encourage land assemblage, demolition and redevelopment. This code was modeled on the Town of Islip Downtown Development District for Bay Shore.

Smart Growth Initiative - Town of Huntington

The Town Board by resolution, has adopted Smart Growth Principles and directed the Planning and Building Departments to be part of a Smart Growth Steering Committee.

Two not-for-profit groups dealing with the Smart Growth issue are assisting the Town: **Sustainable Long Island** and **Vision Huntington**. Both are actively involved with the Town to see that the town has the best resources and people to do the job. These groups have also worked together with the Town on a pilot project for Gerard Street in Huntington Village that should be completed in a year or two.

The Gerard Street project is a traffic calming/ beautification project to enhance the streetscape of the downtown around the Huntington post office. The projects public input/charrette design process was funded by the Town as a way to facilitate community participation in planning and design. This participatory approach is a cornerstone of Smart Growth.

Photos above show the reconstructed LIRR Ronkonkoma Train Station with surrounding mixed uses.

The Village of Northport, above, has been identified by Vision Huntington as one of Long Islands best examples of a community that embodies Smart Growth principles.

Federal and State Seedlings for Smart Growth

As Smart Growth becomes an issue that incorporates many aspects of daily life, many of our government officials and offices are taking an active role in promoting or educating the public at large on Smart Growth issues.

The Federal Role

Communities know best -- land use and infrastructure decisions are, and will continue to be made by local and state entities. Each community should grow according to its own values -- the appropriate role of the federal government is to help inform not direct patterns of future growth. The federal government can help communities by:

▸ Sharing information, tools and resources to help them understand and envision the future impacts of different growth strategies;

▸ Providing incentives for communities to work together to address challenges and opportunities related to patterns of growth and development; and

▸ Aligning federal actions to support community smart growth efforts.

A list of federal, state and local initiatives to encourage Smart Growth to occur follows. They encompass federal programs that put government building investment in downtowns in the form of new facilities or reusing and enhancing older structures to give the downtown a boost. This allows the federal government to be a carrier of Smart Growth principles that intensifies the development in areas that are already developed and hopefully within walking distance to each other.

Federal Seedlings for Smart Growth

EPA - Sustainable Development Challenge Grants:
Provides competitive grants, up to 80% of the cost of the project, for local communities that range between $30,000 to $250,000 dollars. These grants will build partnerships that will increase the capacity of communities to ensure long-term environmental protection through the application of sustainable development strategies. EPA intends these competitive grants to be catalysts that challenge communities to invest in a more sustainable future.

EPA - Smart Growth Network:
Is a program initiated by the EPA's office of Urban and Economic Development Division (UEDD) and includes about thirty well known not-for-profit, private enterprise and other forms of government involved in casting a national spotlight on metropolitan development that serves the economy, community and the environment. The Smart Growth principles that this packet discusses are directly from the Smart Growth Network.

General Services Administration - Good Neighbor Program:
Is a program initiated in 1996 as a commitment to build local partnerships and to enhance the livelihood of the nations communities by serving as a catalyst for economic revitalization in the establishment and construction of and continued reuse of buildings in downtown's across the nation for the agencies needs.

United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) -TEA - 21:
An extension of the ISTEA bill that was passed in the mid 90's, the bill allows for heavy investment from the federal government in major transportation projects. A major component is ISTEA's landmark environmental provisions to reduce air and water pollution, to preserve wetlands and open space, and to make transportation facilities more compatible with the environment. Major funding for alternative transportation appears throughout the bill. Enhancing existing mass transportation, and improving and creating more pedestrian friendly access through non-automobile transit is a key focus for this bill. TEA-21 continues the commitment to protect and enhance communities and the natural environment affected by transportation.

State Seedlings for Smart Growth

New York

New York State has agreed to convene a special task force to study the Smart Growth issue further. The task force will consist of heads of various state agencies. The task force is expected to be formed at the end of this year or at the beginning of next year. The state has also appropriated money through the Dept. of State to provide for $800,000 dollars for pilot projects that will incorporate Smart Growth principles. These monies are to be given out within the next few months. An announcement as to the procedure to attain the funds will be announced shortly from the Dept of State.

Maryland

The State of Maryland is by far the one state that has taken the Smart Growth agenda to the forefront. Passed in 1997 The Smart Growth Areas Act, Chapter 759 of the Laws of Maryland requires the state to fund target areas for "growth-related projects" called Priority Funding Areas. Growth related projects are defined as State programs, which encourage or support growth and development such as highways, sewer and water construction and State leases of new office facilities. The Priority Funding Act is written so that the local municipalities, namely the counties can have a written model to base their own criteria for Priority Funding Areas. The PFA further states that the boundaries of these areas will be drawn by the counties using land use, developed density, zoning density, and water and sewer service criteria contained with in the act. Suffolk County can look at this example as a possible way to adopt Smart Growth policies within its own agencies that deal with infrastructure that have a great impact on the type of development that goes on in the County.

County Seedlings for Smart Growth

Suffolk County

The County's role in the last few years had been to help retain and/or expand existing county buildings and or facilities to help downtowns stem the tide against decline. The county's initiatives follow.

Central Islip Psychiatric Center - Central Islip

Central Islip Court Complex; reusing the old Psychiatric Center land for the new County court complex, federal court house, Touro law college as well as a new ballpark. This location is accessed by a major road and interchange improvements funded by the County. The Town of Islip was instrumental in the redevelopment of the property, through the adoption of a community-based Master Plan.

L. Park Row, a housing complex that reuses land that originally housed the Central Islip Psychiatric Center.

R. The Central Islip Court Complex including the Federal Court Building and the County Court Building.

County Seedlings for Smart Growth Continued

Touro Health Services Center- Bay Shore
> Touro Health Services College in conjunction with the Town of Islip moved into the old County Mini-Center in downtown Bay Shore in 1997. (Photo right) The influx of college students is helping to stabilize and bolster the downtown area, which was the major reason for the County working with the Town and College to effectuate the transfer.

Downtown Riverhead
> Expansion and renovation of the Riverhead County Courts will bring more people into the area to use business and services that are located in Downtown Riverhead. Another relocation is the Cornell Cooperative Extension to a new site in Downtown Riverhead. The County is working with the Long Island Railroad Museum and the Town of Riverhead to refurbish Steam Engine 39 as the centerpiece for a future transportation system moving tourists between Riverhead and Greenport to cut traffic congestion on the North Fork.

County Health Department site in Downtown Brentwood
> County services located in downtown Brentwood in an older underutilized shopping center. It is also close to the railroad station. (Photo right)

Downtown Revitalization Grant Program
> Initiated by the county legislature, the program provides money to downtowns for assistance to better remedy the esthetics of Suffolk County's Central Business Districts. It is hoped that these monies will provide for basic (lampposts, pavers, new sidewalks etc.) enhancements to the area that will provide for a more pleasing environment for visitors and residents alike.

Other Counties
Lancaster County: An example through Co-operation
> The County and Townships are working together to examine the codes and variances that might hinder a more resourceful community. Lancaster County, Pennsylvania is aggressively working with its local Townships on the Smart Growth issue. The County and the Townships are similar to Suffolk County, the townships make the majority of the planning decisions and the County serves in an advisory position. The County's comprehensive plan was amended to include Smart Growth principles. Then the County asked the Townships if they would change their plans to reflect what the county has proposed in the overall comprehensive plan. If the townships agree to amend their comprehensive plans then the County will pay the amendment costs thereby providing an incentive to implement new Smart Growth features.

Private Sector Investment for Smart Growth

Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) Fund

TND is an investment opportunity that is putting equity and financing for Smart Growth type residential/ mixed use developments throughout the country. The TND fund strictly invests with companies that are developing these types of communities that embody many of the Smart Growth Principles. The TND fund is seeking out and helping to develop the market potential for one of the highest return potentials of any segment of the US real estate market. The TND fund will invest in projects and the development companies by investing only in communities that ensure traditional character through strict design and architectural codes as well as requiring that each element financed is consistent with a communities master plan. This fund works exclusively with the private sector**. It is up to the local municipalities to change their zoning codes to allow such investment in those projects to occur and make it attractive for development companies to want to invest in that kind of growth here in Suffolk County.**

Conclusion:
Smart Growth and its
Application to Suffolk County

There is no simple method for incorporating Smart Growth in Suffolk County. Implementation is as varied as the County itself. County and Town officials should heed of this when applying Smart Growth to local municipalities.

The County has differing problems that may require multiple solutions. The County's landscape provides a multitude of issues.

Smart Growth principles are more apt to be used in their entirety on the East End of the Island because development pressure is high, resources are unique and historical and natural features remain relatively untouched. On the western end of the county, Smart Growth would be applied gradually because the area is already heavily developed. Currently these areas are undergoing in-fill development, small subdivisions construction, office development, reuse and rehabilitation of shopping centers, redevelopment of the state hospitals, and the gradual uplifting of the downtowns. These are steps in the right direction. The incorporation of Smart Growth principles within these projects need to be more widely considered.

Is a development designed for people or for cars? Does the development complement and strengthen existing community fabric? These are the questions that need to be asked by the County and the Towns and the answers should incorporate a Smart Growth principles.

Coventry Village, part of a mixed use residential and commercial development that includes rental apartments, owned attached and single family detached units, a drug store and day care center in Smithtown Town.

New office buildings constructed in downtown Babylon Village with architecture consistent with the existing style and scale of the Village.

Applying Smart Growth Principles to Suffolk County Towns and Villages

Smart Growth is a positive trend to change the ways in which this nation and Suffolk County have been developing. The citizens of this country have become aware of the Smart Growth initiative and have reacted favorably. In 1998, 240 local initiatives which incorporated some aspects of Smart Growth were passed. If the buzzwords "Smart Growth" are merely a phase, people seem to like it. Smart Growth has the potential to create dialogues about changing the landscape and how we function in that landscape in a positive way.

The $7.5 billion federal dollars that were appropriated to do just that opens the door for further governmental assistance. That same momentum exists in Suffolk County. The voters of Suffolk County continue to support almost all preservation and quality of life initiatives that are placed on the ballot.

Local governments should be commended on their response to the public. As the national spotlight continues to enlighten quality of life issue, more and more people are asking the question: **Is my community really providing a healthy environment and high quality of life?**

Potential new families and business are not only looking at taxes and schools, but at the sense of place amidst all the clutter. As other parts of the country aggressively change local laws to address Smart Growth issues, Suffolk County might find itself lagging behind other regions for not only high paying jobs and education, but increasingly a place to congregate, a place to walk and more importantly a sense of place.

Suffolk County needs to provide a landscape and a mindset that knows how to use its resources well and re-adapts itself to those changing needs in a pro-active way. Suffolk County, the Towns and the Villages need to seriously address these issues and move toward the reality that our "human ecology" can be accommodated best by Smart Communities. **These communities recognize the interrelated web of housing, transportation, business facilities, open space and social interaction that enrich our lives, supports our economy and respects our natural resources.**

New shopping center with pedestrian friendly design

An abandoned part of a shopping center in Babylon Town

Resources for Smart Growth

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