



Smart growth planning can help developers, civics and municipal governments alike

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Smart growth solutions offer opportunities for developers, civics and municipal governments alike. Vision Long Island, a smart growth planning organization, can assist in these endeavors.

Suburban expansion has been hit hard by the current recession and consumer preferences. Across the country, growth rates in outer suburban areas have dropped to an anemic 1.6%, the lowest we have seen. The flip side is that 50% of folks want to live near town centers, according to a poll by the National Association of Realtors, the highest in this survey since its inception.

By a two-to-one margin folks would rather have investments in mass transportation than in road building. In addition, not one new indoor mall has been built in the past two years anywhere in the country, whereas during the '90s, 19 were built each year. To put an exclamation point on this, the second-largest mall builder in the country just filed for bankruptcy.

The trend is toward folks living in smaller housing, near transit, closer to their jobs and seeking amenities associated with town and village-style living, versus those of traditional suburbia. On Long Island, the drop in building permits for single-family homes and the increase in applications for multifamily apartments, condos and plans for new town centers mirror these trends.

Gov. David Paterson has been to Long Island announcing funding for transportation, energy, infrastructure and housing, including \$300 million for road improvements, traffic calming and one ferry operation. Investments in the Metropolitan Transit Authority include \$1.2 billion that is for the overall system and capital budget. Another \$24.5 million was put forward by the U.S. Department of Energy's Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grants directly to municipalities.

We must prepare ourselves to take advantage of these investments. Long Island towns and villages have requested nearly 300 projects worth over \$56 billion. Only a handful of these projects will receive funding in the first round of economic recovery legislation.

Towards that end Vision Long Island and the smart growth movement have accomplished a great deal over the last year: approvals of major and minor mixed-use, infill, and TOD projects, creation of new funding streams, partnerships with environmental and energy groups, increased federal and state attention, new civic and chamber support, and bolder local officials. Specific accomplishments include:

- 1) Support and planning for the approval of five projects of mixed income, mixed-use and infill housing in the following communities: Coram, Islandia, Mineola, Bayshore, and Middle Island.
- 2) Coordination and planning of transportation and sewer infrastructure recommendations from over 40 organizations and elected officials for submission to federal government stimulus package.
- 3) Reorientation of NYS DOT Region 10 towards safe streets, coordination with land use and walkable communities.
- 4) Creation of NYS Smart Growth Cabinet to direct the policies of state agencies towards Smart

Growth - including MTA, ESD, DEC, DOT, DOS others. Founding member of Empire State Future, a statewide Smart Growth advocacy group and convenor of Long Island Smart Growth Working Group to keep NYS agenda focused and on track.

5) Implementation of over ten community visioning process in the following communities: Rocky Point, Farmingdale, Middle Island/Coram, Mastic/Shirley, Lake Ronkonkoma, Gordon Heights, Bayshore, and Mastic Beach. Coordination of regional and sub-regional plans - Brookhaven 2030, Nassau HUB and Long Island 2035.

6) Smart Growth outreach and education to over 10,000 Long Islanders weekly and over 3,000 Long Islanders through 40 community and regional planning meetings.

These and a myriad of other local examples prove both the demand for community-enhancing infrastructure and the ability of our local leaders to seize these opportunities. The road to suburban transformation is a long one. Let's give these municipalities the tools they need to meet the needs of our changing communities.

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