

SMART GROWTH IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

Adapted in part from www.icma.org

When one thinks about smart growth principles, it is easy to think that they apply primarily to our urban communities—those with traffic-choked arterials, dense mixed-use centers and complex infrastructure challenges. But the principles of smart growth can apply to a range of settings, including the more rural communities in Georgia.

Communities across the country want to get the most out of future growth and development. Residents and leaders from all types of communities—from urban to suburban to rural—want to achieve the best possible economic, social, environmental, and public health outcomes. This desire is particularly evident in rural communities that may be experiencing changes in their traditional landscapes and ways of life. In communities with less diverse economies, the choices between “what was” and “what could be” are critical.

The reverberations of simple decisions or even of inaction can be relatively dramatic. Rural economies may be booming, in decline, or simply in flux—this status shapes priorities and frames the local debate. In communities facing growth pressures, there is often a struggle to maintain farmland or natural landscapes, small-town traditions, and rural character while still benefiting from development. Growth can bring traffic congestion and conflicts between the natural resources economy and residential lifestyles not dependent upon working lands. Where local economies are struggling to stay afloat, however, the focus is more often on development strategies that will attract public and private investments.

A recent report produced in partnership between the US Environmental Protection Agency and the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) explains these principles in detail. *Putting Smart Growth to Work in Rural Communities* is designed to provide rural decision-makers with a resource for balancing competing goals while creating more vibrant, sustainable communities. It is intended to show how smart growth approaches can be adapted and applied in the rural context, particularly in times of change. Following a brief discussion of key issues facing different types of rural communities and how smart growth is perceived in rural environments, the majority of this publication addresses how to put smart growth into practice in rural communities. This third section of this publication is framed around three key goals, which can help a community pursue its vision for accommodating and attracting sensible growth in the future, while maintaining and enhancing its rural character and quality of life.



The three goals are:

1. **Support the rural landscape** by creating an economic climate that enhances the viability of working lands and conserves natural lands;
2. **Help existing places thrive** by taking care of assets and investments such as downtowns, Main Streets, existing infrastructure, and places that the community values; and
3. **Create great new places** by building vibrant, enduring neighborhoods and communities that people, especially young people, don't want to leave.

This report is a great resource for rural communities and may be downloaded free of charge on the ICMA website –www.icma.org.

- Upcoming Events -

GA Association of Zoning Administrators Conference
July 28-29, 2011—Pine Mountain, GA
 For more information visit www.georgiazoning.org

GEMA Elected Officials Communications Forum
August 1, 2011—Atlanta, GA
 For more information visit www.gmanet.com

Good Urbanism 101
August 20, 2011—Macon, GA
 For more information visit www.georgiaplanning.org

Georgia Planning Association Fall Conference
September 28-30, 2011—Savannah, GA
 For more information visit www.georgiaplanning.org
MARK YOUR CALENDAR NOW!

Join the Georgia Planning Association for its 2011 Fall Conference in Savannah September 28-30, 2011. Training for planning officials will be featured. If you have ideas for specific sessions you'd like to see, email them to scausby@atlantaregional.com.