

Issues In Focus

Smart Growth

Stopping Sprawl & Creating Livable Communities



“Smart growth” means focusing new development where it will have the least impact on the environment, while enhancing existing communities. Smart growth planning seeks to create viable communities where pedestrians are respected, neighborhoods are cherished, wildlife and parks are preserved and downtowns flourish.

STOPPING SUBURBAN SPRAWL

Thousands of square miles of natural habitat and farmland are lost annually in the United States to suburban sprawl. While precious open space is being paved over in New York, population growth is slow or declining. This common but unsustainable pattern leads to redundant, expensive infrastructure, increased air and water pollution, disinvestment in existing downtowns, and a declining quality of life. Yet every level of government has been encouraging this unsustainable pattern through subsidies to sprawl and barriers to creative redevelopment of existing communities.



WHO CARES ABOUT SMART GROWTH?

The debate in the state Legislature began earlier this year with the introduction of a bill by Assemblyman Sam Hoyt and Senator Mary Lou Rath. Discussion continued at a three day smart growth conference in Albany organized by the National Audubon Society and in several other forums. A smart growth working group representing environmentalists, planners and builders has been meeting regularly in Albany to share concerns and strategies about sprawl issues. And the Earth Day Lobby Day '99 Steering Committee developed a set of anti-sprawl principles as part of this year's Earth Day agenda. The result of all of this attention is a three bill smart growth package in the Assembly, and major amendments to the original Hoyt/Rath bill based on the work of the smart growth working group.

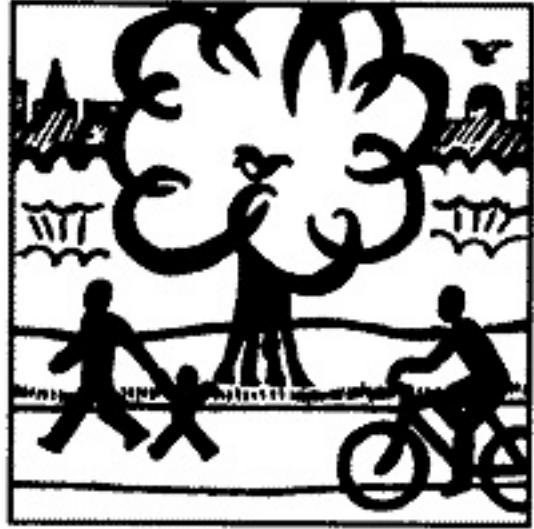


THE STRATEGY

We need to send a loud message to the legislature that something needs to be done soon to encourage conservation and more thoughtful development right away.

We support three new bills in the legislature because they promote smart growth in New York State:

- **A. 8386 (DiNapoli)** would establish smart growth principles and a process for communities to create their own smart growth plans. A municipality with an approved plan would be eligible for certain incentives.
- **A. 8387 (Hoyt)** would create a smart growth task force within State government to examine and make recommendations about planning and growth issues.
- **A. 130 (Brodsky)** would create boards to develop plans for a region defined by environmental, economic and social factors rather than specific municipal boundaries. This would encourage planning efforts that are more sensitive to regional concerns.



What you can do

- Contact your State Assemblymember and Senator, and urge them to support the smart growth package: A. 8386 (DiNapoli), A.8387(Hoyt), and A. 130 (Brodsky).

Senator _____
New York State Senate
Albany, NY 12247
(518) 455-2800

Assemblymember _____
New York State Assembly
Albany, NY 12248
(518) 455-4100

- Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper. This will help spread the word that sprawl is a serious problem that affects us all.
- Support EPL/Environmental Advocates. Members are our political strength. Legislators need to know that their constituencies are concerned and involved. By working together, we can help avoid costly sprawl and create more livable communities.

For Further Information:

David Higby, Program Associate
1-800-SAVE-NYS
dhigby@envadvocates.org

Or visit Environmental Advocates' Web Page:
www.envadvocates.org