

A SCAN OF SMART GROWTH ISSUES IN NEW ENGLAND

*Prepared for
The Funders Network for Smart Growth and Livable Communities*

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PART I: OVERVIEW OF GENERAL TRENDS AND CHALLENGES

GENERAL TRENDS AFFECTING GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

Population Growth and Development

New England* has experienced much slower population growth than many other regions of the country, most notably the Southwest, Intermountain West, and Southeast. Despite this fact, the latest decennial census figures show population growth across the board in New England, with Connecticut experiencing the slowest rate of growth (3.6%) and New Hampshire exhibiting the highest rate of growth (11.4%).

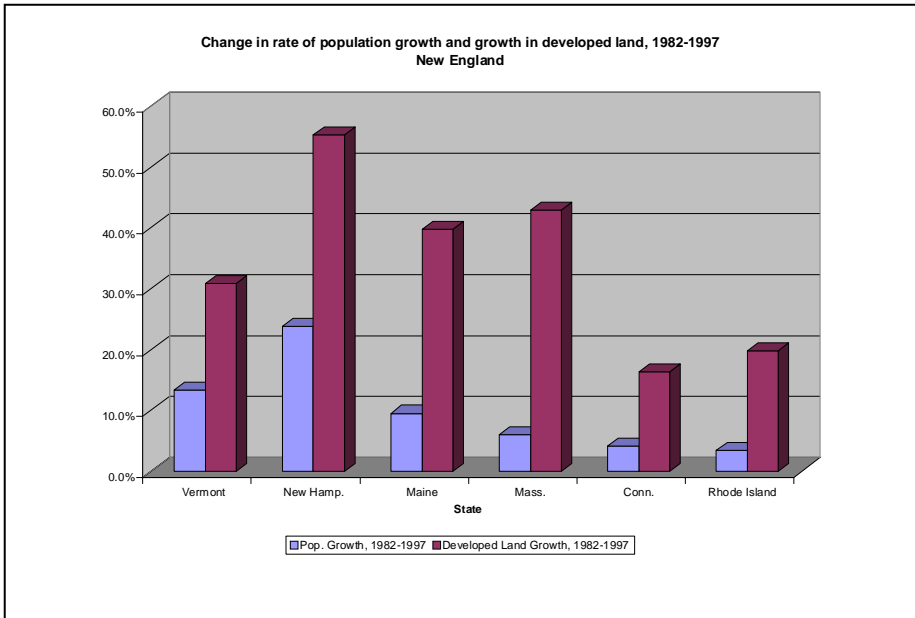
TABLE I: New England Demographics				
	2000 Population (millions)	2000 Population per Square Mile	1999-2000 Population Change (thousands)	1990-2000 Population Growth Rate (percent)
Connecticut	3.41	702.9	118	3.6
Maine	1.27	41.3	47	3.8
Massachusetts	6.35	809.8	333	5.5
New Hampshire	1.24	137.8	127	11.4
Rhode Island	1.05	1003.2	45	4.5
Vermont	0.61	65.8	46	8.2
United States	281.4	79.6	32,712	13.2

Source: Richard W. England, University of New Hampshire, U.S. Census Bureau ¹

This population growth has not been uniform across the region nor has it been uniform across each state. Certain counties and regions have experienced intense development pressures, whereas others have seen out-migration and net population loss. Regions like Mid-coast and Southern Maine, Southern New Hampshire along the I-93/Route 101 Corridor, Chittenden County, Vermont, Southeastern Massachusetts, and South County, Rhode Island have witnessed major population influxes.

Of course, population growth is only part of the story. The predominant sprawl development patterns in New England have resulted in large increases in developed land often in the face of modest or slow population growth. The chart and table below prepared by the Vermont Forum on Sprawl shows the change in rate of population growth vs. growth in developed land in New England for the period 1982-1997. It paints a disturbing picture of sprawl patterns in the region over the past two decades.

*Note: This paper focuses on the states of Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont. For further reading on other states, including Connecticut, New York and New Jersey, see the *NY NJ CT Scan* posted in the Strategic Assessment portion of the Resource Library at www.fundersnetwork.org.



During the period 1982-1997, Vermont had the lowest ratio of developed land to population growth, with developed land increasing at 2.3 times the rate of population growth, whereas Massachusetts had the highest ratio, with land developed at 7.2 times the rate of population growth. State by state population growth and developed land data are listed below, along with the ratios for the each of the New England states.

**Rates of Growth in Population and Developed Land in New England
(updated NRI 1997 data)²**

State	Population Growth			Developed Land			RATIO: Developed Land to Pop. Growth
	1982	1997	% Change	1982	1997	% Change	
Northeast							
Vermont	519,109	588,665	13.4%	242.7	317.5	30.8%	2.3
New Hamp.	947,719	1,173,239	23.8%	379.0	588.6	55.3%	2.3
Maine	1,136,684	1,245,215	9.5%	509.5	712.0	39.7%	4.1
Mass.	5,771,222	6,115,476	6.0%	1034.4	1479.2	43.0%	7.2
Conn.	3,139,013	3,268,514	4.1%	750.6	873.9	16.4%	3.9
Rhode Island	954,170	986,966	3.4%	167.5	200.6	19.8%	5.7

Economic Trends

The economic expansion of the last decade brought robust growth and reinvestment in some parts of New England – Chittenden County, Vermont, Southern New Hampshire, Greater Portland, Greater Boston, the I-495 corridor, whereas other areas like the mill towns of northern New England, western and southeastern Massachusetts, and Rhode Island have been slower to recover and diversify their economies. New England illustrates the dichotomies between the old manufacturing and extractive resource economies and the new global economies. On the one hand, the region is home to thriving sectors of the new economy including financial services, post-secondary education, software and communications, computers, technology and defense, biotechnology and life sciences. On the other hand, manufacturing and natural resource-based industries are in decline, or shifting production processes to use fewer lower skilled workers and greater new technology and automation. As industrial jobs have moved out of the region or offshore, jobs in extractive industries such as forestry and fisheries have been replaced often by lower-paying service jobs in the recreation and tourism-related industries. While describing greater Boston, the following point from the Boston Indicators report applies more broadly throughout the region. “In general, the regional economy is laden with jobs that are either well-paying, requiring a high degree of skill and education, or low-skill jobs that do not pay enough to support a family. For a worker without a college education, there are fewer opportunities to find a job between these two extremes.”³

Job Growth and Unemployment. While cities like Boston, Massachusetts, Portland, Maine, and Providence, Rhode Island have experienced a renaissance and major public and private investment in the last several decades, they remain the exception, rather than the rule. Despite this investment and revitalization, overall business investment and job growth has been greater in the outer suburbs and new growth towns. A recent report by Myron Orfield examines the percentage of change in jobs by municipality for the period 1993-1998, incorporating counties in eastern Massachusetts, southern New Hampshire, southern Maine, northern Rhode Island, and northeastern Connecticut. The report indicates that the region’s core (greater Boston) gained jobs between 1993 and 1998, but at rates below the regional average. The highest rates of growth occurred at the fringe of the region along I-495, following a trend toward job decentralization common across U.S. metropolitan areas.”⁴ In Rhode Island between 1980 and 1997, the state’s urban core cities lost both population and jobs to the suburbs. During that period, “the five core cities lost 4,600 private covered jobs (-3%), while the non-core communities gained nearly 48,000 jobs.”⁵ The story plays itself out to varying degrees throughout the region.

Education Gap. Newly released census data for New England indicates that the trend toward a more highly educated population has spread across the entire region. The Boston Globe reported that the about 16% of the region’s residents over age 25 did not have a high school diploma in 2000, as compared to 30% in 1980. The regional economy is described as increasingly sophisticated, requiring less brawn and more brains. While the overall education trend is up, there are major differences in level of educational attainment within the states. New England’s wealthiest counties are reporting much higher percentages of college graduates (41% in Chittenden County, Vermont; 33% in Grafton County, NH; 34% in Cumberland County, ME; 44% and 43% respectively in Middlesex and Norfolk Counties in MA; and 38% in Newport County, RI). The article goes on to point out that census data shows a continuing trend of segregation between the well-educated and the less-educated.⁶ Surely, while the overall education trends are quite encouraging, they highlight disturbing issues that may only be exacerbated by sprawl.

Regional Dynamics. Many communities and regions in New England are experiencing economic pressures and housing displacement not just because of conditions within their state, but also because of broader regional economic pressures emanating from the Boston and New York City metropolitan regions. For example, both Mid-coast Maine and the Lakes Region of New Hampshire have seen major residential development pressures driven by wealthy, out-of-state households seeking vacation or

retirement homes. These newcomers drive up housing prices, frequently displacing local residents. Even within states, there are great disparities between one region and another. For example, people often talk about the two Maines, the wealthier, more urbanized southern Maine and the rural, poor northern Maine. As smart growth advocates advance solutions, it is important to keep in mind these larger regional dynamics and to look closely at who benefits and who gets hurt from current development trends.

Public Attitudes Towards Sprawl

There is mounting evidence across the region that the public is increasingly aware of the problems associated with sprawl, while they may define their concerns through various lenses: growth and development, housing affordability, traffic congestion, loss of open space, decreased hunting and fishing opportunities, health concerns, or other quality of life issues. A sample of the evidence follows.

The Vermont Forum on Sprawl has commissioned two polls on the subject of community values and sprawl. The latest poll conducted in 2001 indicated that a clear majority (66%) of Vermonters feel there is a need to take action to stop sprawl. In addition, 86% of respondents think development should be encouraged in downtowns and village centers.⁷

Housing Preference Surveys, such as one conducted by the State Planning Office in Maine, are showing that a large segment of the housing market is increasingly interested in a variety of housing options – traditional neighborhoods and town and city centers, as well as large lot zoning, and rural communities. In the Maine Homebuyers Survey, 35-45% of homebuyers indicated that they would give consideration to traditional neighborhoods if housing were available. Another 10% indicated that they were already buying in traditional neighborhoods.⁸

In 2001, voters across the country continued to support new programs to provide public funding for open space protection. According to *Land Vote 2001*, the state with the most local ballot initiatives in the country during the last election was Massachusetts (68), where cities and towns have been responding to the enactment of the Community Preservation Act (CPA), as well as other local open space needs. (See page 12 for additional information on the CPA.) In New Hampshire, voters in North Hampton passed a \$4 million bond to protect open space, and Stratham voters overwhelmingly (88%) approved a \$5 million open space bond. More than 47% of New Hampshire towns voted some sort of use-change tax revenue to protect open space in 2001. Across New England, over 40 separate ballot measures passed, generating more than \$130 million for open space protection, historic preservation, and housing.⁹

A new Massachusetts poll was commissioned this spring by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) in advance of the launch of their metro planning process for eastern Massachusetts. This poll, conducted by Lou DiNatale at the UMass Boston McCormick Institute shows that for the first time issues of growth and sprawl have made it into the first tier of concerns for residents of the state, in the same league as education and taxes. DiNatale has concluded that these polling numbers should capture the attention of the state's gubernatorial candidates and others running for state office. He believes that sprawl has at long last become a political issue in the state.¹⁰

Finally, beyond the opinion research and preference surveys, the sheer number of conferences, workshops, meetings, and other events focused on livability, community design, the housing crisis, land conservation, and healthy communities underscores how much these issues of growth, sprawl and quality of life are resonating with residents across the region.

PROBLEMS EMANATING FROM CURRENT AND FUTURE SPRAWL

New Englanders are witnessing a shift in demographics, investment, development, and jobs from our older, urban cores to new suburban regions and outlying, formerly rural, areas. This shift toward lower-density, automobile dependent development in outlying areas brings with it fiscal, environmental, health, and social impacts. Fiscal impacts include tax revenue losses in declining urban centers and ever increasing infrastructure costs in non-urban areas. Environmental impacts are legion -- loss of agricultural lands, forests, and wildlife habitat, polluted lakes and ponds, strained water supplies, increased air pollution and vehicle miles traveled, traffic congestion often bordering on gridlock, decaying urban recreational and green spaces. Public health impacts include increased automobile accidents and pedestrian casualties related to growth in vehicle miles traveled, higher rates of asthma and waterborne diseases due to increased air and water pollution, and other negative health effects that come with poorly designed communities that increasingly discourage exercise and encourage driving.¹¹ Finally, sprawl development causes a host of negative social impacts – greater isolation of the poor, elderly, and communities of color, housing shortages and a deficit of affordable housing, decline of farming and other natural resource-based jobs, increased vehicle miles traveled and decreased personal time, and lost historic and cultural resources affecting community character and sense of place.

Urban and Town Center Decline, Social and Economic Isolation. As middle and upper income households move from urban areas and town centers to more suburban and rural locations, low-income residents are often left behind. Particularly in more diverse southern New England, this economic segregation is accompanied by racial and ethnic segregation. In Rhode Island, 1990 census data indicates that the state's five core cities were home to 30% of the state's total number of families, yet had 61% of families living below poverty.¹² Newly released census data for Massachusetts indicates that from 1989-1999 most of the state's largest cities, among them New Bedford, Pittsfield, Springfield, and Worcester saw a drop in median household income. Many smaller communities in the western and central regions of the state experienced similar income drops.¹³

As enrollment in many urban public school systems drops, cities are left to educate poorer students often with special needs. In many cities, urban school systems are becoming increasingly poor and minority in their student make-up, providing fewer opportunities for children of different races and backgrounds to learn and grow together. Additionally, this flight to the suburbs and outlying areas means that many urban core communities are facing excess school capacities (infrastructure), while suburban and rural communities are seeing growing school enrollments and demand for new school facilities.¹⁴ What becomes clear is that both urban and suburban communities are paying more than they need for redundant school infrastructure.

With residents moving out, older urban areas and inner ring cities face declining tax revenues, forcing cities to increase tax rates for those remaining. At the same time, these areas experience growing pockets of poverty and unemployment. Cities are not alone in experiencing isolation and decline in the march toward sprawl development. Many older town centers are reeling from loss of population, tax revenues, and school children as those who can abandon neighborhood centers for more suburban and rural housing options (larger lots, new construction, lower property taxes, greater access to open space, etc). The irony of course is that new growth suburban communities face increased burdens on municipal services, public facilities and infrastructure, and school systems as development flocks their way.

Increasing Growth Pressures in Some Rural Communities. The flip side of urban and town center decline is the growing pressure on rural communities and small towns, which find themselves increasingly in the path of sprawl development. For example, the small New Hampshire cities of Portsmouth, Dover, and Rochester are losing population to outlying small towns such as Farmington and Milton. With little to nothing in the way of professional planning expertise, these rural communities find

themselves ill equipped to handle this new growth. The problem repeats itself throughout the I-93/101 “golden triangle” area of southeastern New Hampshire, where sprawl development pressures are greatly exacerbated from growth pushing north from Massachusetts. Similar stories could be told about rural communities across New England.

Vanishing Housing Affordability. As all New Englanders know, the underside of the 1990’s economic boom has been a very serious affordable housing crisis in many parts of the region. Many communities are witnessing a growing gap between household incomes and housing affordability. For example, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire rank in the top ten most costly states for renters, according to the National Low Income Housing Coalition.¹⁵ Data compiled by MAPC shows the affordability gap widening in eastern Massachusetts. In communities with the lowest median home sale prices in the region, a household would need to make between \$60,000 and \$70,000 to buy a home.¹⁶ While metropolitan Boston is at the upper extreme in terms of expense, its story is instructive. A recent report by the Metropolitan Area Research Corporation (MARC) points out that Boston has the third highest housing prices in the country, after the San Francisco and New York metro regions.¹⁷ The recent recession does not seem to have dampened this very hot market, with the average cost of a single-family home in Massachusetts rising to \$303,432 in March 2002.¹⁸ Housing affordability and gentrification pose a real threat to the future social and economic health of the Boston metro region. Other metropolitan areas are experiencing these problems on a smaller scale. The MARC report goes on to caution “Despite a strong economy and reinvestment over the last decade, concentrated poverty and racial segregation persist in many of the region’s older areas. There are significant inequities in the ability of the region’s communities to generate sufficient revenues for their needs.”¹⁹

Environmental Impacts. The environmental costs of sprawl are well documented – loss of open space, forests and farmland, habitat fragmentation, increased air and water pollution, degraded drinking water supplies, and water shortages. In the more rural parts of New England, we are losing large, undeveloped swaths of land critical for many species of wildlife such as bear, moose, bobcat, birds of prey, and waterfowl. In less remote, but still rural areas, habitat for rare, threatened and endangered species, such as the piping plover, the least tern, and the red-bellied turtle are disappearing. In our urban neighborhoods, urban wilds, woods, and important green spaces are being developed that provide respite, recreation, and renewal to city residents. Development and fragmentation degrade the capacity of the environment to provide critical ecological services – clean air and water, aquifer recharge, flood control -- and are increasingly understood to open the door to new emerging diseases – Lyme Disease, West Nile Virus, and others.

New England has lost more than 1 million acres of open space and agricultural land to development in the last twenty years, according to the National Resources Inventory.²⁰ In Vermont, a state known for its aggressive efforts to protect farmland, nearly 40% of land newly developed between 1982 and 1992 was former agricultural land.²¹ Forestlands are under similar pressures, as populations move out from town centers to outlying areas and second home developments grow.

While loss of open space and ecosystem decline will drive some to act, water may well be the most compelling environmental message in the sprawl story. Sprawl development is threatening our water resources – degrading buffer and recharge zones around drinking water supplies, polluting aquifers and surface waters, increasing water withdrawals, and increasing the transfer of water from one watershed to another – or out to sea. Many towns are ill equipped to deal with the challenges posed to water resources from sprawl. Many do not recognize the problems. An October 1998 report by the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests noted that over 10% of critical water supply lands in New Hampshire are already developed, some towns have built over their best aquifers and are looking to other towns for water, and new water supplies are becoming scarce in many communities.²² Build out analyses

prepared for each of the 351 cities and towns in Massachusetts paint a frightening picture about water supply for many communities.

PART II: THE CURRENT SITUATION

NEW ENGLAND'S SMART GROWTH MOVEMENT

Key Organizations and Leadership

It is not clear that New England has a Smart Growth “Movement,” as much as it has varied, maturing, and increasingly connected initiatives to tackle one or more of the intertwined and complex facets of growth and development. There is some communication between organizations and states at regional conferences, trainings, and meetings such as EPA’s Smart Growth Institutes, the Lincoln Institute’s Training Program for Northeast State Planning Directors, and even nationally at the Growth Management Leadership Alliance. However, by and large there is very little strategic work at the supra-regional level that goes under the smart growth mantle. In general, the action on smart growth is taking place in New England at the local, regional and state level. There are notable early stage efforts to work across sector and with nontraditional constituencies. There is engagement between the public, private and independent (nonprofit) sectors, and there is growing interest and support of this work by the philanthropic community.

A number of well-established programs including the National Estuarine Research Reserve Programs in New England, the Gulf of Maine Program for the Marine Environment, SeaGrant, and the Rhode Island/Massachusetts Partnership for Narragansett Bay bring states and organizations together to work collaboratively on regional resource protection. Stakeholders in these programs are beginning to address smart growth issues as part of their broader agendas. These initiatives are places where regional smart growth activities can be nourished, building constituencies and partners for the future.

The individual and cumulative impacts of large infrastructure projects such as airports, port facilities, highways, and power plants have New England-wide significance. Such projects deserve special scrutiny and a regional response from smart growth advocates in order to minimize redundant infrastructure and attendant economic, environmental, and social costs to the region. It is time that advocates engage in discussion and strategy about these larger regional issues that drive sprawl, in addition to focusing on state and local concerns.

Vermont. Vermont was in the first tier of states nationally to implement development review legislation (Act 250) to address the problems associated with growth and development. The state is fortunate to have a number of strong nonprofits working on the various dimensions of sprawl, the majority drawn from the conservation and preservation communities. Certainly within the last five years, there has been an increased spotlight on sprawl and how it is harming the state. The Vermont Forum on Sprawl, now an independent organization, was created initially as a project of the Orton Family Foundation to draw particular attention to these issues through research, public education, training, and advocacy.

With initial encouragement, planning and design support from a group of private funders, seven leading conservation and preservation groups have come together in the past year to create the Vermont Smart Growth Collaborative. Core groups in the Collaborative include the Association of Vermont Conservation Commissions, Conservation Law Foundation, Friends of the Earth, Preservation Trust of Vermont, the Vermont Forum on Sprawl, Vermont Natural Resources Council and Vermont PIRG. Additional partner organizations include Housing Vermont, the New England Grassroots Environment

Fund, Vermont Businesses for Social Responsibility, and the Vermont Health Foundation. Part of the rationale for creating the Collaborative was to more closely coordinate the work of these key organizations, as well as to expand the representation of groups working actively on smart growth to include diverse and influential interests (affordable housing, agriculture, business, community development, health, conservation, social equity, etc). The Collaborative will pursue this work through advocacy and policy, public education and training, and community technical assistance and demonstration projects.

Another source of critical leadership, strategic and financial support on sprawl is the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB) and its Executive Director, Gus Seelig. Created in 1987, VHCB grew out of a partnership between the conservation and affordable housing communities working to commit state finances to purchase perpetual interests in land for conservation and affordable housing purposes. Beginning with a \$3 million state appropriation in 1987, VHCB has received annual support from the state budget and received a portion of state property transfer tax receipts.²³ It has also secured additional public and private funds to support its work. As of this year, VHCB has awarded over \$142 million to nonprofit housing and conservation groups, municipalities and state agencies. These funds have protected more than 328,000 acres of agricultural and recreational lands, and created more than 6,400 units of affordable housing.

Vermont's preservation community is deeply engaged in smart growth work. The Preservation Trust of Vermont proactively embraces issues of community development, downtown redevelopment, and housing using historic preservation as lever. A five-year partnership with the National Trust for Historic Preservation has supported technical assistance to local communities using preservation circuit riders. This very successful partnership between a state and national preservation group offers a model for other states in the region.

The state is home to an active network of housing land trusts that began with the creation of the Burlington Community Land Trust (BCLT) in the mid-1980's. This network of housing trusts has been a principal advocate for affordable housing in the state, its membership composed of successful, nonprofit housing developers. BCLT alone has developed more than 300 rental and 400 homeownership units since its founding.²⁴ The housing trusts work closely in partnership with VHCB, which provides them both capacity-building and housing development support. The strong coalition and linkages between conservation groups and affordable housing advocates that came together to create VHCB continues in Vermont to this day. It is a successful model that has staying power, offering lessons to other states in the region, and providing smart growth advocates a good foundation from which to launch new coalitions and partnerships.

Vermont's land trust community has made impressive strides conserving important open spaces, working forest and farmlands, and ecologically critical lands in the past two decades. The Vermont Land Trust has taken the lead conserving working lands, benefiting greatly from generous support from VHCB, the Freeman Foundation, the John Merck Fund, Vermont Community Foundation, and others in the philanthropic community. Other regional land conservation players active in Vermont include The Nature Conservancy, the Trust for Public Land, the Champlain Valley Greenbelt Alliance, and the Upper Valley Land Trust.

The state's political leadership has been somewhat less engaged in growth management than in years past. Yet, there is generally good bi-partisan support to revitalize village centers and downtowns, and to protect the state's agricultural and forest lands. Governor Dean has been a strong supporter of land conservation and affordable housing through annual appropriations to VHCB. The Governor also has formed a Development Cabinet to ensure that state agencies are complying with the state's smart growth policies and principles. The Dean Administration has not been so strong on transportation policies and decisions

that demonstrate smart growth. State expansion of the Circumferential Highway (the Circ) in greater Burlington is widely seen as a poster child for sprawl. In the Legislature, members of the Upper Floors Task Force were major advocates for the new Downtown Bill, which passed and was signed into law this May. At the municipal level, one sees progressive leadership on growth and sustainability issues from Peter Clavelle, the Mayor of Burlington. The Mayor's Legacy Plan developed in collaboration with the Institute for Sustainable Communities, calls for increasing densities and infill development in the City of Burlington, among its many smart growth friendly recommendations.

Private philanthropies have been catalysts and supporters of smart growth efforts in Vermont in recent years, including the Orton Family Foundation, which supported the initiation of the Vermont Forum on Sprawl, Eileen Growald, the Cox Charitable Trust, the John Merck Fund, and the Ittleson Foundation. The Freeman Foundation has been a major supporter of historic preservation and farmland conservation across the state, working closely with advisors at the Vermont Land Trust and Preservation Trust. The New England Grassroots Environment Fund has supported a range of grassroots activities related to growth and sprawl in Vermont and throughout the region.

New Hampshire. New Hampshire's conservation and land use practitioners have long been involved in efforts to protect the green infrastructure of the state, but many have only recently begun to think of their work more broadly in smart growth terms. Leading conservation players include the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests (Forest Society), Audubon Society of New Hampshire, The Nature Conservancy, and Conservation Law Foundation. The state has a growing network of land trust organizations that receive support and technical assistance from the Forest Society and the state's very active Cooperative Extension Service based at the University of New Hampshire. The Center for Land Conservation Assistance was created at the urging of staff at New Hampshire Charitable Foundation's Greater Piscataqua Community Foundation (GPCF), which has provided major start-up support to this new entity. A New Hampshire GIS Conservation Collaborative (NHGCC) composed of nonprofits from the university and conservation community, public agency staff, and funders has been meeting since the fall of 2000 to develop strategies and a work plan for accelerating the pace of geospatial technologies for conservation and land use benefits. The New Hampshire Charitable Foundation (NHCF) and the Samuel P. Pardoe Foundation have supported NHGCC.

In the past year, NHCF has begun to engage the state's nonprofit leadership, business, and public agency officials to explore ways to think more strategically and ambitiously about tackling haphazard growth. The Foundation hosted a meeting last fall with a broad cross-section of stakeholders from the affordable housing, business, conservation, land use, preservation, and real estate communities and state agencies to hear a presentation by Ben Starrett of the Funders Network for Smart Growth and Livable Communities. Following this meeting, a planning group formed to explore a more deliberate approach to smart growth in the state. This group includes Rachael Stuart from NHCF, Rick Minard of the New Hampshire Center for Public Policy Studies, Nancy Girard of Conservation Law Foundation, Mike LaFontaine from the NH Community Loan Fund, Kate Hartnett from the Jordan Institute, Nancy Lynch from NH Celebrates Wellness, and Jeff Taylor, director of the Office of State Planning. A second organizing meeting was held this April, with a subcommittee now tasked with shaping development of a New Hampshire Smart Growth and Livable Communities Partnership. Initial ideas call for a forum to build cross-sectoral linkages and common ground for action, including public policy initiatives. The Partnership will be seed funded by NHCF with the hope of attracting regional, national, and individual donors in future years.

Despite the many initiatives moving forward, NH state government appears to be less aggressive in its response to sprawl pressures than some of its sister states in the region. While one can point to impressive land conservation initiatives, the state takes a hands-off attitude when it comes to supporting regulation or comprehensive planning. To be fair, lack of state government leadership on growth and sprawl-related issues is a problem endemic to New England. Governor Shaheen's Smart Growth

Initiative primarily is aimed at redirecting state budget expenditures in ways that channel growth into city and town centers. This is an important step forward. The State Legislature has been consumed with school financing issues for the past several years, with little energy to tackle smart growth in systemic ways. The Office of State Planning (OSP) has an engaged and interested director in Jeff Taylor, and has done good work building public awareness and supporting development of planning tools like GIS. As evidence of its outreach, more than 300 persons attended OSP's most recent conference, which looked at growth and sprawl issues in New Hampshire. While very engaged in this issue, OSP has limited authority and modest resources with which to tackle sprawl development.

One of the more promising approaches for engaging leadership from New Hampshire's development community is the Jordan Institute's Minimum Impact of Development Partnership (MIDP), under the direction of Kate Hartnett. MIDP has received funding from numerous donors, including NHCF and the Merck Family Fund. Its work with developers, builders, architects, and other real estate industry leaders has produced a set of "good development" principles and practices, and provides opportunities for modeling and demonstrating better development practices over the next few years. Its *Three Infrastructures* project in collaboration with Audubon Society of New Hampshire is a research and education effort to describe the green, built and social infrastructures on which New Hampshire communities depend.

Another interesting opportunity presents itself in New Hampshire Celebrates Wellness, a new broad-based coalition that has come together to promote livable, walkable communities. Recognizing that the public health and healthy lifestyles need to be critical elements of public discussions about sprawl, members of this coalition have been involved in planning for the New Hampshire Smart Growth Partnership.

Maine. Leadership on Smart Growth in Maine has come from two principal sources: the State Planning Office (SPO) in the person of its director Evan Richert, and the ECO ECO Smart Growth Forum under the guidance of Ted Koffman of the College of the Atlantic. ECO ECO (which stands for Economy and Environment) has been meeting in Maine since the early 1990's for the purpose of building stronger working relationships between business leaders and environmentalists. Its membership has worked on several special projects including the Maine Environmental Priorities Project and the Smart Growth Forum.

Maine participated in an Environmental Priorities Project in the mid-1990's, with funding from the EPA and private funders. Among its findings, the Project's final report completed in 1997 pointed to sprawl as a "smoking gun" issue for Maine's environment.²⁵ That same year the SPO released its *Costs of Sprawl* Report and hosted a series of informational meetings around the state. From then on, ECO ECO decided to focus on the sprawl issue, first by holding a statewide conference, and later by co-hosting a series of eight regional meetings with the SPO and developing an ongoing roundtable on sprawl -- the Smart Growth Forum. Both ECO ECO and the SPO have worked since then to educate the public and policy makers about the costs of sprawl and alternatives to sprawl. A number of legislative initiatives have grown from this work in the past several years, strongly supported by politically influential members of the Forum. ECO ECO Coordinator, Ted Koffman, is a member of the Maine Legislature, and several other members of the group are elected officials or running for office. In addition to Koffman and Richert, the Forum includes politically connected individuals such as representatives of the Maine Realtors Association, the Chamber of Commerce, developers, architects, planners, and writers.

A promising new group, the Service Center Coalition, is an off-shoot of the Smart Growth Forum. Coalition membership includes the Maine Realtors Association, the Maine Homebuilders Association, the Maine Chamber of Commerce, the Maine State Housing Authority, conservation groups including The Nature Conservancy, Maine Coast Heritage Trust, and Maine Audubon Society. This group has met three

times to date and is working on a policy platform to present to gubernatorial candidates and candidates for state office. Ultimately, the group hopes to provide a voice to counterbalance the Maine Municipal Association, which has been a major barrier to certain smart growth policy reforms.

Education and outreach activities led by ECO ECO and the SPO have spawned new community and regional efforts to address sprawl. One such example is the fledgling Friends of the Mid-Coast, which has received seed funding from donors including the New England Grassroots Environment Fund and the Jessie B. Cox Charitable Trust. Another promising ally is the Maine Council of Churches, which has become increasingly interested in sprawl and smart growth issues, producing materials for distribution in church study circles.

Massachusetts. There is a constellation of education, organizing and policy work in Massachusetts taking place with leadership from the nonprofit community. Some work falls under the banner of smart growth, but more often it is defined as transportation reform, community development, and affordable housing. These efforts are increasingly better linked to smart growth thinking and policy.

Six leading housing, preservation, and conservation groups in the state are investing staff time, financial resources, and political capital in the Community Preservation Coalition (CPC). The Coalition provides public education, outreach, and technical assistance to local communities interested in passing the Community Preservation Act (CPA) at the local level. This new law, enacted in December 2000, enables local communities to adopt modest local property tax increases to support land conservation, historic preservation, and affordable housing. Once passed at the local level, cities and towns have access to state matching funds of \$25 million annually. CPC Steering Committee members include Massachusetts Affordable Housing Alliance, Citizens Planning and Housing Association (CHAPA), Historic Massachusetts, National Trust for Historic Preservation, Massachusetts Audubon Society, and the Trust for Public Land.

CHAPA and the Massachusetts Association of Community Development Corporations have taken the lead on state advocacy efforts to expand state and local support for affordable housing through a new Housing Bond Fund. Within metro Boston, the Greater Boston Interfaith Organization (GBIO), a large and active coalition of faith-based organizations has made its presence felt in the media and before decision-makers regarding the urgency of providing safe and affordable housing for the region's low income residents. GBIO has demonstrated support for smart growth principles through efforts to promote transit-oriented, mix-income housing developments in several Boston neighborhoods, and its strong support of the CPA campaign in Boston last fall.

Also working at the state level is the Environmental League of Massachusetts (ELM) and the Massachusetts Environmental Collaborative, a partnership of more than 55 organizations working to promote stronger state policies and laws. ELM and the Collaborative have been major proponents of the CPA, the state's Open Space Bond, the Livable Communities Act, and the Environmental Justice bill. Another important player in Massachusetts is the Conservation Law Foundation, working on various dimensions of the sprawl problem from urban revitalization to transportation reform throughout New England. CLF's legal hammer has been an important tool in the smart growth advocacy toolbox in the region – challenging major development proposals, highway projects, and other infrastructure projects that would promote sprawl.

The state is home to a number of important regional initiatives on sprawl. Notable examples include the Boston Society of Architects' *Civic Initiative for a Livable New England*, a two-year educational, visioning, and planning process in metro Boston focused on sprawl and alternatives to sprawl. Co-chaired by Rebecca Barnes, now chief planner at the Boston Redevelopment Authority, more than one thousand citizens participated in the Initiative's forums, workshops, charrettes, and future search

programs. Several other Boston area planning and visioning efforts have taken place with The Boston Foundation playing a lead role. The Boston Indicators Project, coordinated by the Boston Foundation's Community Building Network, is a collaborative effort that has brought together a diverse constituency across ten sectors to develop and monitor indicators of change and progress. The Boston Indicators Project is working in partnership with the Boston Redevelopment Authority, the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), Boston College (through its Boston Citizen Seminars), Northeastern University and many nonprofit and academic institutions and organizations to create a high-leverage civic agenda for Boston and the region based on shared access to data and ongoing dialogue within and across major sectors -- from civic health, cultural life and the arts, to education, the environment, the economy, housing, public health and safety, technology and transportation. This project has also been supported by the Barr Foundation, Fleet Charitable Trusts and the James M. and Cathleen D. Stone Foundation.

MAPC, in a departure from its traditional approach, has kicked off a major, inclusive and broad-based effort to include residents of its region – metropolitan Boston's 101 cities and towns covering more than half of the state's population – in developing a new growth strategy. Beginning with a major civic event, a Boston Citizen Seminar co-sponsored by most of the groups working on regional planning and sprawl issues including the Barr and Boston Foundations, the process will use an array of tools and approaches battle tested in other successful regional planning efforts such as Envision Utah, to engage residents, local officials and experts in dialogue and deliberation over the next several years.

Beyond the Big Dig is a special education, outreach, and communications effort sponsored by the Boston Globe, MIT's Department of Planning and Architecture and WCVB-TV, with support from the Boston Foundation, to engage the public in visioning for the future of Boston's new linear park to be built above the infamous Big Dig.

With leadership from Alternatives for Community & Environment (ACE), Bikes Not Bombs, the T Riders Union, MASSPIRG and other important community-based organizations, a large coalition of neighborhood, community, public health, and environmental justice groups has recently come together to promote transportation equity and transportation reforms to benefit Boston's low income neighborhoods and communities of color. This coalition, On the Move: Greater Boston Transportation Justice Coalition, is demanding that the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) support several projects to benefit low income communities and communities of color in the list of projects submitted as part of the Regional Transportation Plan. The coalition's platform calls for improvements and clean up of the public transit system, equitable investment of transportation dollars for inner-city transit, bicycle paths, and pedestrian spaces, a seat at the table in transportation decision-making, and linking transportation improvements to transit-oriented community development for all income levels.

Intense growth and development pressures in southeastern Massachusetts have catalyzed a number of regional efforts to protect some of the most sensitive ecological lands in the state from imminent development. A Cranberry Coalition composed of Massachusetts Audubon Society, The Nature Conservancy, the Trust for Public Land, The Wildlands Trust, and the Coalition for Buzzards Bay is working to protect important lands in southeastern Massachusetts that have remained undeveloped because of cranberry production. Earlier work by the Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences, The Wildlands Trust, and the Coalition for Buzzards Bay produced a natural resources atlas for this region intended to help guide resource protection at the community and regional level.

Within the public sector, leadership is coming from several places. Secretary Bob Durand of the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (EOEA) has made Community Preservation one of the agency's priority issues. The state's strategy has been one of providing information and tools to communities – build out analyses, a GIS-based BioMap to guide land conservation for biodiversity, community planning support, citizen training through a Community Preservation Institute, and funding

through the Community Preservation Act. The state's community preservation efforts have encouraged partnerships between the state's environment, housing and community development, and transportation agencies. At the regional level, several of the state's planning agencies have been extremely active on growth and sprawl including MAPC, the Southeast Regional Planning and Economic Development District, and the Cape Cod Commission. The Cape Cod Commission is one of two regional planning commissions in the Commonwealth with regulatory authority over land use (the other being the Martha's Vineyard Commission).

The last few years have seen the state's philanthropies increasingly engaged in growth and livable communities work, among them the Barr Foundation, The Boston Foundation, Cox Charitable Trust, Island Foundation, Merck Family Fund, Sheehan Family Foundation, and Sweet Water Trust. Other neighborhood and community development funders like the Hyams Foundation and the Riley Foundation have focused on issues such as neighborhood revitalization, community organizing, and gentrification. Beyond grantmaking, funders are using their influence as convener to add value to this work. The Barr Foundation has pulled several of its grantees into a Smart Growth Learning Cluster facilitated by staff at the Aspen Institute. Grantees involved include ACE, Boston Society of Architects, CHAPA, MAPC, and Manomet Center for Conservation Science. The Essex County Community Foundation has launched the Environmental Stewardship Initiative, a special outreach and educational effort to engage community groups and citizen leaders on smart growth.

Rhode Island. Rhode Island enjoys the distinction of being the smallest and most densely populated state in New England, no doubt some of the reason why the state has shown important leadership on smart growth. The state is fortunate to have an active nonprofit community focused on smart growth issues. In addition, Rhode Island has benefited from aggressive land protection and land use planning efforts led by its land trust community and the University of Rhode Island's Coastal Resources Center, most notably on Aquidneck Island (home of Newport) and in South County (Washington County).

In the forefront of smart growth efforts in the state is Grow Smart Rhode Island, which is active on a variety of fronts to educate the public and policymakers about the harmful effects of sprawl on Rhode Island communities and natural resources. Grow Smart was founded by business and civic leaders, and its board reads like a "who's who" in Rhode Island – corporate leaders, utility executives, college presidents, the head of the Urban League, preservationists and conservationists. Under Executive Director Scott Wolf, Grow Smart has demonstrated active leadership in a number of policy campaigns, as well as developed and sponsored a highly successful training program for municipal officials in collaboration with the State Planning Office, URI Cooperative Extension, and others.

Rhode Island business leaders have been active advocates for smart growth, recognizing the cost of sprawl development to the state's fiscal health and quality of life. In particular, the state's utilities have been out front on smart growth led by Jim Dodge, Grow Smart's board chair and the retired chief executive of Providence Gas, and Mike Ryan of Narragansett Electric.

From the state's conservation community, Save the Bay has had long involvement and an advocacy and policy presence on growth management and sprawl issues. On the land acquisition side, The Nature Conservancy has worked very hard over the past decade to protect critical ecological lands in the state, partnering with local land trusts and landowners.

Private funders have provided critical support for both land use and land conservation activities, including Champlin, Doris Duke, Dunn, McBean, and van Beuren, as well as the Rhode Island Foundation and the Prince Charitable Trusts. State funders also have supported community development and affordable housing under the leadership of the Rhode Island Foundation. The Foundation has recently extended its

activities from grant support to active community development investor, using foundation assets to invest in the rebuilding of one Providence neighborhood.

Political leadership for smart growth has come from several directions. Jan Reitsma, the head of the state's Department of Environmental Management, co-chairs the Governor's Growth Planning Council, and has been a strong proponent of smart growth efforts. Governor Almond has been good on some growth-related issues, providing strong support for the state's \$35 million open space bond, and establishing by executive order a Governor's Growth Planning Council that among other things has recommended a growth center policy for the state. A locally-designated, state-recognized growth centers initiative would be developed through the local comprehensive planning process and would lead to directing state funding to priority growth areas. Several members of the Rhode Island General Assembly (the state legislature) have been important advocates for legislation creating an historic preservation tax credit and for a statewide building rehab code, and the current Speaker was supportive of recently passed brownfields legislation.

Defining Issues

Northern New England perceives itself as primarily a rural place – so the loss of farmland, forests, and rural character provide strong impetus to do things differently. The public and local officials are waking up to the costs of extending public infrastructure into more and more rural areas – whether by building new roads or water/sewer lines, financing new school construction, or buying another fire truck to service homes going up on the outskirts of town. Many rural towns are looking aghast at population projections that call for a doubling of residents over the next 10-20 years. With vehicle miles traveled increasing across the region, longer commutes and traffic congestion are growing concerns to residents of rural and formerly rural communities.

These quality of life concerns are important to suburban residents and small town residents in southern New England, as well. Loss of community character, farms and woodlands, increased traffic and congestion and other negative byproducts of growth and development are felt in communities throughout the entire region. For many communities, threats to water resources will top the list of growth concerns – both as drinking water supplies diminish and as citizens recognize that conventional wastewater treatment lowers water tables and robs watersheds of water for recharge and future ecological services. For others, concerns about sprawl may begin with quality of life issues, yet move toward public health imperatives, as water resources are threatened with pollution and excess withdrawals, and residents begin to connect the dots between development patterns, less healthy lifestyles, and health problems such as obesity.

In more urbanized southern New England cities, defining issues include the fiscal impacts of sprawl development on city centers and inner core communities, as tax revenues, upper and middle income households, and jobs head to outlying, new growth areas. Smart growth advocates, neighborhood activists and public officials are recognizing the costs that sprawl is imposing on cities – decreased revenues and infrastructure investment, job out-migration, disproportionate responsibility for society's poor and less able citizens, declining housing stock increasingly out of the financial reach of many residents. These costs need to be shared more equitably across the region. Cost of sprawl studies and fiscal impact analyses point to the need to encourage reinvestment in our urban cores. Suburbanites concerned about quality of life impacts need to align with urban interests concerned about fiscal impacts of sprawl to promote alternative ways of growing.

Housing affordability is a grave concern to many working and middle class households living in the region's central cities and town centers, and the regions affordable housing and community development organizations are actively seeking solutions and new approaches to this problem. In each of the five states, housing advocates, smart growth groups, and conservationists are recognizing there may be greater

opportunities to achieve policy reform by working together than at cross-purposes. Vermont's Housing and Conservation Board, New Hampshire's Smart Growth Partnership, Massachusetts' Community Preservation Coalition, and Rhode Island's Housing and Open Space Trust Fund are all vehicles for working more closely across sector. These alliances are not without their challenges, as many housing advocates and land conservation groups sometimes view the other as an obstacle to their own success. There will be a need for bridge building and joint action strategies over the next few years to realize the potential of this powerful partnership.

Two arguments resonate strongly with the public – cost and choice. On the subject of cost, the public may not fully understand the underlying drivers of sprawl, but people certainly are increasingly feeling the costs – in their pocketbooks, in their communities, and in terms of their personal time. A variety of excellent reports and publications have made a compelling case about the costs of sprawl and the opportunities presented by more compact development patterns – the Vermont Forum on Sprawl's Exploring Sprawl Series, the New Hampshire Office of State Planning's Changes & Challenges Report, the Maine State Planning Office's Costs of Sprawl Report, the Commonwealth's State of the Environment Report, and Grow Smart Rhode Island's Costs of Suburban Sprawl and Urban Decay Report. This data is compelling and persuasive, and can provide both greater public awareness, and a launching point for action.

Finally, there is the issue of choice. Sprawl reduces our choices for where we live, work, play, raise our families, and how we move around. Conventional sprawl development, which happens because society has created rules and regulations mandating such development, is not meeting the needs of the marketplace. Housing preference studies and polling in Maine, Vermont and other states have shown that people want a range of living options – traditional neighborhoods, downtowns, large lot homes, and rural housing. This issue of sprawl and choice can help define smart growth discussions and policy options moving forward. Many believe that the public is way out front of policymakers on these issues. It is time for government to play catch up.

THE DIRECTION OF CHANGE

Key Policy Accomplishments

Looking across the five state region, there are a number of tax and land use policies in place to help manage growth, encourage resource conservation and protection of working lands, and promote downtown development. Three states -- Vermont, Maine and Rhode Island -- have comprehensive planning legislation to encourage state agencies and municipalities to plan for growth. It does not seem a coincidence that Vermont, the state with the oldest growth management infrastructure in the region, is also the state that seems least spoiled by sprawl. While these laws provide an important basis for planning, in all cases they have been gradually weakened over the years through legislative changes or lack of funding. Several New England states offer state tax credits for re-use and renovation of historic properties, and each of the states has current use programs that tax working forests and farmland at lower rates, as long as the lands remain in active production.

Four of the five states (not Massachusetts) have smart growth policies or legislation in place requiring state agencies to consider how state investments and policies may inadvertently promote sprawl in their decision-making, and directives to support redirection of state funds and infrastructure to downtowns and developed areas. Each of the five states has committed public resources to acquire important natural and agricultural lands over the past several years, with state support often matched by federal, local, and private dollars. While funding commitments vary greatly from one state to another, land conservation has been one of the most promising lights in the region's efforts to mitigate sprawl.

Transportation issues have largely been addressed on a state-by-state basis in New England, although transportation reform advocates like CLF have taken a broad regional approach to this work. Three distinct strategies have been pursued: 1) devolution of control over transportation planning; 2) changing the rules governing transportation spending; and 3) linking transportation planning for urban areas with broader smart growth strategies. There have been modest successes in several states transferring control of transportation planning from the state to those closer to the ground. In greater Boston, Massachusetts' Pioneer Valley, and Rhode Island, the Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) have been restructured to include greater representation from local municipalities. In Vermont, the state's Omnibus Road Project Devolution Law gives communities power to take over planning and design for road projects. In Maine, Regional Transportation Advisory Committees (RTACs) have been in place since the early 1990's, with mixed success. Still, the model is an important one that smart growth advocates hope can provide a building block for future transportation reforms in Maine, and an example for the region.

While there has not been a lot of progress changing state rules around transportation spending, there have been notable successes increasing state transportation expenditures for public transit. Regional transportation advocates have also prevailed on Amtrak to extend its rail service from Boston to Portland, Maine after years of advocacy and planning. Among the successes, Vermont has opened its first commuter rail service, the Champlain Flyer, serving rapidly urbanizing Chittenden County. Massachusetts' MBTA has expanded bus, commuter rail and ferry service within the region, with future rail extensions in the works. Rhode Island's major investment and expansion of the T.F. Green International Airport has been accompanied by plans for future rail links between the airport and downtown Providence. There are several early examples of work to link transportation planning with smart growth in the region's urban areas, including Burlington's Main Street Landing Project, Boston's Urban Ring and Silver Line public transportation options, and redevelopment of the Providence train station and adjacent downtown properties. Transportation and community development advocates are increasingly interested in opportunities to link these strategies, with a number of exciting projects moving ahead.

Despite these accomplishments, many feel we are re-arranging the deck chairs on the Titanic. Perhaps the most difficult barrier to smart growth reform in New England is the region's tradition of home rule and lack of effective regional government. It remains to be seen how this barrier may be creatively overcome as state governments ponder whether to exert strong leadership, and local governments begin to recognize the need to work across jurisdictions in cooperative fashion. There is no question that there is significant public momentum on this issue of sprawl in New England, but it remains to be seen how the polity responds.

Vermont. The continued success and broad-based support for the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board may be one of the state's most significant accomplishments to support smart growth. Additional policy achievements of the past several years, include securing a state policy requiring state agencies to direct funding and infrastructure investments into existing growth areas, and to report annually on compliance. Another recent success has been closing of the "ten acre loophole" which had exempted developments of ten acres or more from the need to secure on site sewage disposal approval. Recent agency rulemaking regarding water and sewer grants and CDBG funding will steer these grants and loans to designated growth centers. Finally, after four years of hard work, a coalition of Vermont organizations has pushed through a Downtown Bill that will provide more incentives for development in downtowns, village centers, and new town centers. One obstacle the coalition had to address was opposition to the bill from some members of the conservation community worried about new limitations on Act 250 review of downtown development. On the positive side, the coalition brought together a diverse set of players promoting downtown development including the Agency of Commerce and Community Development, the Chamber of Commerce, the League of Cities and Towns, local downtown organizations, the Vermont Forum on Sprawl and the Preservation Trust.

Looking ahead, top policy priorities include monitoring implementation of the Downtown Bill, the Development Cabinet law, and monitoring legislation that could open the door to sprawl development from the use of alternative sewage treatment systems. The alternative treatment bill could have beneficial impacts for village centers, but could also open remote areas to development. Advocates also are exploring the idea of a new state Farm Viability Enhancement Program that might include measures such as agricultural bonds to finance farm investments, state procurement of locally grown food, tax incentives for farm investment, support for infrastructure and market development projects, and other options.

New Hampshire. In 1999, New Hampshire's Legislature directed the Office of State Planning to examine how growth trends are affecting land development patterns in the state. The Growth Management Committee that followed developed a series of policy recommendations to strengthen the ability of state and local government and regional organizations to address sprawl. Several legislative changes were made in 2000 to provide better consideration of smart growth in state actions and policies, including a statute requiring an annual report to the Legislature and Governor on Smart Growth. However, the most ambitious policy recommendations have not yet been realized. They include updating and revising the state planning statutes, establishing and coordinating state development goals and policies, and coordinating regional land use planning with state transportation programs.

The Committee report did urge the state to continue significant funding for the Land and Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP), which has happened in the last biennial budget. New Hampshire's commitment to LCHIP has been one of the more visible achievements to address fragmentation and threats to critical natural areas caused by sprawl. There is some concern in New Hampshire that unless the conservation and affordable housing communities begin to work more closely together on sprawl that the state's 1 million acre land protection goal will only increase the cost of the remaining developable land.

To begin to address the housing shortage and affordability problem, the Growth Committee recommended promoting mixed use zoning districts at the local level, with technical assistance from regional planning agencies. In addition to the policy areas noted above, other policy priorities include dealing with the unanticipated consequences of existing rules on sprawl, such as school construction standards, recodifying required elements of master plans, and requiring inclusion of specific elements in regional development plans.

Several of the zoning and planning changes recommended are incorporated into bills that are pending before the state Legislature. Future policy priorities will be guided in part by recommendations of the Growth Committee's report.

Maine. The budget crisis of the early 1990's saw Maine pull back from earlier legislative achievements on growth management. The states fairly new Growth Management Act was weakened, and planning resources cut. The economic recovery of the mid to late 90's led to new growth pressures, a resurgence of public concern about sprawl, and greater recognition of sprawl development's societal costs. The experience of the 90's left smart growth reformers acknowledging that a top-down regulatory approach would not find acceptance in Maine. To succeed in the future, smart growth policy reforms would require bottom up approaches with the right amount of state prodding, and state reform of its own sprawl-inducing practices.²⁶

Four principles underlie the work of Maine's smart growth advocates, and have guided policy strategy and early policy achievements:

- Provide choices for where people can live;
- Pay for the costs of our choices;

- Healthy places don't die (bad state policies drive disinvestment in service centers)
- Developers can be our allies.

During this past legislative session, Ted Koffman co-chaired a Growth Management Study Committee, which generated a number of legislative proposals over the course of the year. Nine bills were passed in whole or in part. One that passed called for the creation of an ongoing Community Preservation Advisory Committee to be comprised of six legislators and seven other key interests. The Committee is charged with providing review of growth management issues and will make recommendations on a variety of issues that are related to growth management and sprawl including transportation, education, siting of schools and public buildings, creation of a state transferable development bank, taxation and land use policies. It is expected to be a locus of smart growth reform in the future.

Advocates have identified several priorities for policy reform: school funding policies, highway access transportation policy, location of state offices and office buildings, state infrastructure investments, and inequitable state investment policies that redistribute state dollars from urban to rural areas. In the last two legislative sessions, advocates successfully passed legislation to give preference to downtowns and quasi- public buildings for location of state offices, as well as to establish standards and limits on access to the state's arterial roads. The state passed a \$20 million housing bond last fall, considered a major step forward for affordable housing. Another achievement has been creation of a Municipal Infrastructure Trust Fund and modest initial funding, which will enable the state to target infrastructure investments in a way that leverages good planning in designated growth areas.

This last legislative session saw the defeat of the Great American Neighborhoods Bill that would have permitted higher housing densities, and exemption from certain frontage and minimum lot requirements for developers designating 30% of housing units as affordable. Unfortunately, the Maine Municipal Association saw this bill as a huge threat to home rule, and worked vigorously to sink it. Smart growth advocates see affordable housing as a major leverage point for smart growth, and will be looking at a variety of measures for encouraging communities to provide a mix of housing and employee housing. Business community support for this issue will be critical over the next few years.

Additional leverage points and policy priorities include: 1) tax reform to provide a local option tax to service center communities to offset costs of serving the wider region, 2) tax shifting to decrease reliance on the property tax and moving toward greater sales taxes, and 3) reform to state building rehab codes to allow broader re-use of older building

Several years ago, Maine voters approved a \$50 million land conservation program to conserve critical open spaces and natural areas threatened by development and changing ownerships. The Land for Maine's Future Program includes a requirement that 10% of bond funds be spent for open space in or near rapidly developing areas, as well as a requirement that a portion of funds be allocated to farmland preservation. Public financing for open space acquisition, particularly near growth areas, will continue to be a policy priority for smart growth advocates. Thinking beyond the current land acquisition program, there may be opportunities to consider framing a broad capital spending program in the near future that links open space and housing.

Massachusetts. The Commonwealth has a rich history of progressive policy development on environmental protection, community development, and public health. However, as it relates to growth and sprawl, the record is mixed. Notable earlier successes include fairly consistent and significant support for land conservation, and a nationally known law, Chapter 40B, the Anti-Snob Zoning Act. Many smart growth and housing advocates acknowledge that 40B is a double-edged sword. While it has been credited with creating 25,000 new units of affordable housing since inception, it has its weaknesses. The bill and its statutes do not provide communities with incentives to plan where housing should be

developed, including affordable housing. Instead, some argue that developers have misused the law to develop large-scale housing that is not in keeping with community character. The law stipulates that any community that does not have 10% of its housing set aside with a subsidy (i.e. affordable), can have all locally adopted rules, regulations and ordinances waived by developers submitting a comprehensive permit application to build housing with as little as 25% reserved for affordable units.²⁷

A more recent policy milestone was passage of the Community Preservation Act in the spring of 2000, granting Massachusetts' communities the right to raise local property taxes to fund land conservation, historic preservation, and affordable housing. A permanent state matching fund of approximately \$25 million annually provides added incentive to communities to adopt CPA locally. The CPA adds another layer of public financing for open space, intended to complement the state's land acquisition program and private efforts. Two critical pieces pending in the Legislature include a new \$750 million open space bond bill now wending its way through the Legislature, and the Livable Communities Act, which would for the first time establish state policies around growth and sprawl, and provide planning dollars for communities to revise local plans, with funding tied to local zoning reform.

Despite the Commonwealth's history of progressive action, the state has never taken a comprehensive approach to sprawl. Massachusetts has no land use planning statute, and has what Stuart Meck from American Planning Association calls "the most regressive zoning enabling statute in the country." A legislatively appointed zoning reform committee is looking at changes to this zoning law, but is generally viewed as stacked with developers and real estate interests unsympathetic to smart growth reforms. Two regions of the state, Cape Cod and Martha's Vineyard, have land use regulatory authorities that support regional planning and decision-making. While other regions have considered such regional approaches, none have yet been willing to give up home rule.

On the transportation front, several policy achievements deserve mention. As noted earlier, regional planning agencies have worked with transportation reform advocates in two regions of the state to restructure the MPOs, putting transportation funding decision-making more in the hands of local communities. Devolving control over transportation planning away from the state highway department will continue to be a priority over the next few years. After years of state budget bail outs, the Legislature has passed the MBTA Forward Funding Bill providing the state's largest transportation authority with 1 cent of the 5 cent state sales tax, with explicit directive that the agency not come back to the Legislature to cover budget shortfalls. Some smart growth advocates hope that this bill will change how the MBTA does business, looking at its capital assets, including more than 5,000 acres of urban land, as opportunities to explore creative smart growth approaches – such as transit-oriented, mixed-use developments.

Beyond policy, several planning efforts are worth noting. Through Vision 20/20, fifty-one communities in Southeastern Massachusetts have come together over the past several years to develop a regional vision and action plan for growth. This region, until recently the fastest growing in the state, has concluded that its communities must work more closely together in the future to direct growth and maintain the region's traditional character and qualities. With the conservation community focused on this region because of its ecological values, and civic leaders committed to regional partnerships, Southeastern Massachusetts seems poised for creative smart growth approaches in the next few years.

In metro Boston, The Boston Foundation, MAPC, Boston Redevelopment Authority and Boston College Citizens Seminars are collaborating to develop a new growth strategy and vision for the metropolitan region. These partners are committed to collecting critical data, fostering regional dialog and planning through a major civic process, monitoring progress based on a set of 10 key indicators, and articulating a collaboratively developed vision for the future of the metropolitan region. As part of this effort, The Boston Foundation is updating and expanding its Boston Indicators Report due out by year-end. This public outreach and technical work will build off of recent efforts of The Boston Foundation, Boston

Society of Architects, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs.

Another exciting new initiative is the creation of the Metropolitan Mayors Coalition, an effort to build dialog and cooperation between greater Boston's urban mayors representing ten urban core cities (Boston, Cambridge, Chelsea, Everett, Malden, Medford, Melrose, Quincy, Revere, and Somerville). The Coalition, which is staffed by MAPC, provides a forum for collaborative initiatives, starting with a project to pursue cooperative purchasing. Together these cities represent more than a \$3 billion market, and significant collective power at the Legislature, with potential to become a formidable presence on smart growth issues in the metropolitan region.

Rhode Island. Between 1989 and 1992, Rhode Island enacted three laws that set in place a framework for growth management and land use planning. The Comprehensive Planning and Land Use Regulation Act required every municipality to prepare a detailed land use plan, with attention to nine major elements. Local zoning must be consistent with the comp plans, which need to be updated every five years. Local plans are reviewed and approved by the Statewide Planning Office, as well as all state agencies, a unique aspect of the Rhode Island model that is not in place in any other New England state. The state review and approval aspect has caused the most complications and seen some delays, but is also thought to offer the best possibility for integrated and regional planning. One other aspect of the law deserves mention. The Act holds the state to compliance with locally approved plans. The two other policy achievements at that time were the Rhode Island Zoning Enabling Act and the Land Development and Subdivision Review Enabling Act. Together, these three laws create the foundation for systemic land use planning in the state, although they did not mandate implementation of new land use techniques. The specifics of land use design regulations, decision-making, and enforcement remain local prerogatives and responsibilities. The regulatory approach as it currently stands is limited in effectiveness primarily due to the fact that the Rhode Island General Assembly has mandated that all land use decisions are local.

More recently, smart growth advocates have successfully pushed through new legislation that will provide tools and incentives for revitalizing cities and town centers. These victories include: passage of a statewide building rehab code, and creation of a commercial historic preservation tax credit of 30% (a 20% residential tax credit is already in place). The Rehab Code will provide developers and owners of older buildings with a friendlier and more predictable system for rehab projects. Rhode Island is only the third state in the country, after Maryland and New Jersey, to establish such a statewide code.

Smart growth advocates have worked with elected and agency officials, the private sector, and nonprofit groups to bolster brownfields redevelopment in several important ways. Recent advances include designation of brownfields point people at two state agencies, a new web site, historic tax credits, a \$200,000 EPA grant to Groundworks Providence to create a brownfields job training program, and new state policies on arsenic and marginal risk. Smart growth advocates also have collaborated with the House Legislative Commission on Brownfields to introduce a bill in the General Assembly this session providing a state income tax credit, mandating reports on environmental insurance and a licensed environmental professional program, clarifying liability protections for municipalities, and updating language in the existing state legislation to be consistent with new federal brownfields bill. Consistency with federal language will ensure Rhode Island's eligibility for new federal brownfields funding. All the non-financial aspects of the brownfields initiative recently passed the Rhode Island General Assembly, but the tax credit was deleted from the bill due to widespread fiscal concerns. There is strong resolve by community development and smart growth advocates to promote the brownfields tax credit in the next session of the General Assembly.

Affordable housing, community development and smart growth advocates also have worked together this year to secure a state commitment to the Neighborhood Opportunities Program to develop more

affordable housing units and promote neighborhood revitalization. Ten million has been committed (\$5 million this year and next) toward a \$46.5 million goal, with the first \$10 million expected to produce 200 units of housing. An ad hoc coalition of these same interests is exploring the best way to secure a long term state commitment to the Neighborhood Opportunities Program. Finally, there is some discussion about developing a campaign with housing, smart growth, conservation and community development interests to encourage the state to fund the Rhode Island Housing and Open Space Trust Fund. The Trust Fund exists on paper, but has never been funded by the General Assembly.

In the transportation sector, Rhode Island has done much to include local input into the transportation planning process through the state MPO, and has been recognized for its efforts nationally. Advocates believe that even more can be done to bring greater local control over transportation funding decisions.

PART III: FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES, CHALLENGES & DIRECTIONS

KEY OPPORTUNITIES OVER THE NEXT THREE TO FIVE YEARS

Each of the five states faces a different set of circumstances and will take its own path to promoting smarter ways of growing. Despite the different cultural, political, fiscal, and legal realities in each state, there is consistency in many of the opportunities, themes, and ideas in development that have come up in preparing this background paper. There are also opportunities to work collaboratively across New England to develop joint strategies and policy agendas that can be pursued and implemented at the state, regional, or local level.

Communications and Language. There is interest in collaborating at a New England-wide scale to conduct a large and sophisticated regional poll that can be used both regionally and within each state to develop messages and communications strategies. Advocates are enthusiastic about partnering on a regional poll, and then working together to help craft appropriate messages and conduct targeted outreach. One outreach opportunity suggested by Aaron Gornstein at CHAPA would be to organize a smart growth briefing for New England's Congressional Delegation, modeled on a similar approach taken by the New England Housing Coalition. Another area highlighted for greater attention and better message development is the smart growth/equity connection. In order to bring equity and community interests to the table, messages must reach beyond a focus on sprawl to address the issue of equitable growth and development. As one practitioner pointed out, in this time of fiscal scarcity, our message must be about economic development and jobs.

Data Collection, Interpretation, Dissemination. There is a wealth of data and information on growth, development, economic and education trends available within the region that has been collected and developed by state agencies, regional planning commissions, academic centers, and nonprofits. Newly released 2000 census bureau data and analyses only add to this repository. These data paint a compelling picture of change in the region. Powerful tools like GIS, remote sensing, build out analyses, and other decision support tools are increasingly available. Both New Hampshire and Maine are moving forward to expand GIS data layers and get this information into the hands of communities and citizens. Massachusetts has produced build outs for each city and town. The Boston Foundation and MAPC are developing a regional repository for data on the health of metro Boston, with interest in exploring how this might be scaled up for New England. Yet, it is not enough to produce this data. The challenge is to put the power of information to work to inform and engage the public, citizen activists and leaders, the business sector and public decision-makers in order to level the playing field on sprawl. Smart growth practitioners are exploring new ways to bring this information to the fore by partnering with educational institutions, the popular media, community organizations, and youth-serving groups, to name but a few. Putting data in the hands of citizens and community leaders through presentations, workshops and

training is a powerful way to build a smart growth movement in the region. In doing this, we need to be open to new avenues of communication and popular engagement, using diverse tools and creative social marketing techniques.

Education and Training. There are an increasing number of places where public and private sector partners are packaging data and information on sprawl and taking it to various audiences – local communities, municipal officials, architects and builders, the public at large. Examples include the Maine State Planning Office’s slide presentation on sprawl, Grow Smart Rhode Island’s training program for municipal officials offered in conjunction with the State Planning Office and URI Cooperative Extension, the Commonwealth’s Community Preservation Institute, a partnership between EOEI and the state university system, and the Vermont Smart Growth Collaborative’s Community Assistance Program. These are valuable activities that need to be replicated and scaled up. In particular, education, technical assistance, and training opportunities should target key audiences such as municipal officials, local government volunteers (planning boards, conservation commission, housing commissions), citizen activists, and local planners. This education and training must take place at multiple levels – within local communities, among communities in the region, and at the state. The public interest community has a big role to play in this effort. Both public and private sector resources need to be targeted toward this work.

Elevating the Importance of Cities. New England has many urban revitalization success stories to celebrate that have come about because of a concentrated and long-term focus on rebuilding our cities. Smart growth advocates need to recognize that the real work of developing livable communities takes place at the community and neighborhood level. Advocates need to elevate the importance of cities as preferred and vibrant places to live. In doing so, practitioners must focus on community economic development opportunities such as livable wage strategies and expanded homeownership.

Framing a Vision. Upcoming regional planning processes, if done well, offer opportunities to engage a wide cross-section of their communities in visioning and planning for growth. The Metro Boston planning process under the guidance of MAPC is one example of where a regional planning agency is trying new approaches to how it goes about its work. This time around, MAPC is working with the Boston College Citizens Seminar, The Boston Foundation, Boston Redevelopment Agency, and others to incorporate unprecedented outreach and diverse representation in its planning process. MAPC also is working with its partners to make regional data and information more accessible and to develop a set of regional indicators to benchmark progress toward regional goals.

Building New Alliances and Coalitions. Throughout New England, advocates from diverse sectors are recognizing the need to develop broad-based stakeholder coalitions of interests (housing, transportation, public health, environment, historic preservation, community development) in order to tackle the multifaceted systems, structures, and policies that promote sprawl and discourage smart growth. Vermont’s Smart Growth Collaborative, New Hampshire’s Smart Growth and Livable Communities Partnership, the ECO ECO Smart Growth Forum, Massachusetts’ Community Preservation Coalition, and Rhode Island’s Brownfields Coalition are but several examples. There are interesting sets of players converging that are working on transportation, housing, and land use issues and are looking to elevate the smart growth debate in new ways. Affordable housing and healthy homes advocates are connecting to the larger smart growth agenda. There is great power in nontraditional alliances and opportunities to shift the power dynamic in ways that begin to level the playing field for smart growth. No one organization can move this agenda on its own. To succeed, practitioners must build trust and relationships in some cases where relationships have not existed before. The initiatives highlighted above begin to build relationships cross-sector, as do many other coalition efforts underway. Together these growing constellations of interest must coalesce around a set of smart growth policy reforms that begin to dismantle systems and mindsets that have in some cases been around for a century or more. Funders and the public sector need to invest heavily in this community- and capacity-building work.

Focusing on State Expenditures to Stop Subsidizing Sprawl. Most, but not all, of our New England states have come to recognize that state budget and capital expenditures offer huge potential for discouraging sprawl and encouraging good growth. With state budgets ranging from several billion dollars in northern New England to \$23 billion in Massachusetts, redirecting just a portion of state expenditures is a powerful incentive that can provide important signals and leverage for private sector investment as well. Vermont has state guidelines for growth and a Development Cabinet appointed by Governor Dean to monitor conformance. New Hampshire's Smart Growth Program seeks to redirect state spending toward growth centers and downtowns, beginning with a focus on state offices and real estate. Maine and Rhode Island have both created directives to state agencies to give preference to service centers and downtown when siting state offices. Massachusetts has many state policies encouraging growth in urban areas, yet no overarching policies on smart growth. It is unclear how effectively these current policies take on the big three state budget drivers of sprawl – transportation spending, water and sewer infrastructure investments, and new school construction. Focusing on these drivers seems fertile ground for smart growth advocacy work in the next few years. Vermont advocates are developing a Report Card to analyze and report on how the state is doing in meeting its smart growth charge. Report cards and techniques to develop and monitor them will be the subject of a national conference and the GMLA meeting in Vermont in the fall of 2003.

Policy Reforms to Encourage Downtown Reinvestment. Much energy has gone into legislative and policy reform efforts to chip away at the many statutes, rules and regulations that provide disincentives to downtown redevelopment and reinvestment. Vermont's new Downtown Bill and Brownfields Programs in each state, are but two examples of important policy and funding levers that can direct redevelopment to cities, downtowns and village centers. Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) programs provide additional opportunities but are underutilized in the region. There are opportunities to package state investment tax credits with tools like location efficient mortgages in ways that encourage smart growth in downtowns and can produce more affordable housing. While smart growth advocates have made important strides forward, much remains to be done to encourage downtown reinvestment. This area will require sustained attention moving ahead.

Transportation Reform. There is fairly good consensus in the region with regard to transportation reform strategies that will promote smarter growth. These include devolution of planning authority, changing state rules and policies governing transportation spending priorities, and better linking transportation planning and smart growth strategies in urban communities. A number of steps have been taken to give local communities greater control over transportation decisions, and to advocate for public transportation investments in place of highway construction. To date, this work has not come together in the form of a large regional transportation coalition as it has in the New York, New Jersey, Connecticut Tri-State region. There are opportunities to encourage greater strategic thinking between transportation advocates in the region, and to encourage collaboration and inclusion of more diverse voices in setting a regional transportation agenda.

Strengthening Planning Requirements. With public officials pulling back on top-down regulatory approaches to planning, it seems unlikely that New England will see much movement promoting Oregon and New Jersey models. However, there are efforts in several states to strengthen planning requirements, such as bills in New Hampshire to recodify required elements of a master plan, and require those same elements be incorporated into regional development plans. In Massachusetts, the Livable Communities Act, which has passed the Senate and is pending in the House, would for first time ever articulate state policies regarding growth and sprawl. The Act also would provide planning funds to local communities, and require that local zoning conform to these plans. Advocates see opportunities in these initiatives and in other efforts to more closely align planning and zoning requirements.

Supporting Sustainable Private Economic Use of Land. As the region's farms and woodlot owners struggle with survival in the face of sprawl development and intense competition from industrial scale farming, smart growth advocates need to work more closely with farm groups, land trusts, conservation organizations, and others interested in protecting working landscapes and maintaining viable farm operations. Efforts such as CLF's coalition-building to develop and secure a consensus-backed farm conservation bill in Massachusetts, to enhance farm viability policies in Vermont, and to tap into funding streams available through the newly enacted federal Farm Bill offer opportunities to promote the smart growth-working lands connection.

Dismantling Barriers Using Legal Intervention Where Necessary. Given the modest political muscle of the smart growth reform movement in many parts of New England, there will be places where legislative reform proves impossible and legal intervention becomes essential. Highway expansion and by-pass proposals such as Vermont's Circ Highway in Chittenden County, inappropriate big box development proposals, and sprawl-inducing water and sewer infrastructure extensions are but three examples. Funds will be needed to support local citizen interventions, as well as precedent-setting projects throughout the region.

Taking Advantage of an Election Year and the Honeymoon Period. Each of the five states is in the midst of gubernatorial campaigns and other critical races. Many see this next eighteen-month window as the time to raise the level of discussion and debate on smart growth issues. White papers, candidates forums, candidate endorsement of policy platforms, conferences, and other public events provide opportunities to underscore the importance of these issues in the public's eye and get candidates on the record as to how they would demonstrate smart growth leadership. The Massachusetts Environmental Collaborative co-sponsored a debate at the Kennedy School of Government with democratic gubernatorial candidates that was aired live on New England Cable News. Smart growth and land use issues were one area of questioning. Maine's Service Center Coalition is considering hosting a candidates forum this fall. On the Move has had its transportation justice platform endorsed by three gubernatorial candidates. Beyond the elections season, activities such as leadership institutes for elected officials and briefings with New England's Congressional delegation offer opportunities to nurture leadership on smart growth among our elected officials. Non-partisan education needs to be on the agenda.

Barriers to Success

Home Rule. New England's tradition of home rule and lack of regional government presents arguably the greatest barrier to meaningful smart growth reforms. In many states, the municipal associations and local governments are vehemently opposed to measures that would promote traditional neighborhood development and less costly housing through increased densities and other approaches. Coupled with excessive reliance on the local property tax, this system leads to competition rather than cooperation. Recognizing the costs associated with residential development, many communities compete against each other for industrial development, at the same time discouraging middle and lower income housing, which tends to cost more in services than it raises in revenues. Legislative initiatives can minimize that competition such as in the case of Vermont's Act 60, which created a statewide property tax for education.

Working in Silos. Many who need to be part of the smart growth reform movement do not have a history of working together. Not only does the public interest community often work in silos (conservation, affordable housing, economic development, transportation, workforce development), but it also works at multiple scales (neighborhood, region, state). This fragmentation by issue-area and scale, exacerbated by divisions of race and class, plus the sheer diversity and complexity of the many components of smart growth, could impede critical coalition-building in the years ahead. Neutral and "safe" places to bring people together will prove essential. Philanthropy can help provide such places, as

it has done in Vermont with the Smart Growth Collaborative, in New Hampshire with the Smart Growth and Livable Communities Partnership co-led with the New Hampshire Center for Policy Studies, in greater Boston through the Barr Foundation's smart growth learning cluster and The Boston Foundation's indicators work, and in Essex County through the Community Foundation's Environmental Stewardship Initiative.

Language and Communication. Like "sustainability" smart growth suffers from vagueness and lack of definition in the public's mind. Likewise, many people from elected officials to environmental justice advocates are uncomfortable with the very term, finding it elitist or anti-growth. Because it encompasses such a large and complex suite of issues – many things can fit under the smart growth banner. If the smart growth community does not come up with clear language and messages that speak to community development and social equity goals, as well as conservation and quality of life issues, it will not engage stakeholders that need to be engaged. At the same time, because it is so broad, the movement risks dilution and lack of clear strategic thinking if it tries to be all things to all people. It behooves advocates to be clear and targeted in language and strategy.

Known Resource Needs

Message Development. Sprawl is an issue that touches on many sectors. Finding the right words to communicate about this problem, and target messages to the right audience can be challenging. The smart growth community would be well served by professional assistance in this area – better opinion research, message development, and communications strategies. Beyond technical assistance, smart growth advocates need to carefully identify the best messengers for this communications activity. There are opportunities to learn from others in New England and across the country, and to think about approaching this work at a larger regional level. There has been excellent message development work done nationally by pollsters Belden & Russonello, and fine communications materials produced by Smart Growth America, the Sprawl Watch Clearinghouse, and the Smart Growth Network that should be tapped and shared. There is particular need for developing messages that speak to important equity issues of concern to low income communities such as housing displacement, tenant rights, and density.

Showcasing Things that Work. Across New England, smart growth advocates and practitioners have started working on real world examples of good design and development, best site practices, green buildings, and historic re-use. Such demonstrations and models are essential to build public understanding and market interest in good growth. It is not enough to say of smart growth, "you'll know it when you see it." Practitioners have to show it. While many are excited by New Urbanist concepts, others find them alien to their rural roots. Harkening back to the power of choice, smart growth practitioners must work with local communities to provide people with interesting, well-designed choices that speak to the character and diversity of our communities throughout the region. Resources are needed to both support the community planning and design work to seed such demonstrations across the region, as well as document these process and best practices for sharing with others.

Building and Sharing the Toolbox. There are wonderful examples of valuable resources and tools that have been developed throughout New England and elsewhere in the country– best practices handbooks, build out analyses, cost of sprawl studies, fiscal impact analyses, Policy Link's Gentrification Toolkit, training curricula for municipal officials, visualization software and other decision support tools like GIS and other geospatial technologies. Resources are needed to both build these tools, and to share the tools with others in the region. The Internet and web provide powerful mechanisms for highlighting and distributing these tools at very little cost. Electronic newsletters, like those produced monthly by the Vermont Forum on Sprawl and the Preservation Trust, and Grow Smart Rhode Island's semi-annual print

newsletter, can put practitioners in touch with each other, and with important tools, resources, and innovations that can enhance their work.

Ideas in Development

Tax Reform. There are movements afoot in several states to examine changes to the overall tax structure to more effectively discourage sprawl and better support investment in growth centers. Two areas in particular are being examined: the local property tax, and mechanisms to increase tax revenues and reinvestment in urban areas and service centers.

It is widely believed that over reliance on local property taxes to support municipal services, particularly public schools, drives sprawl development in several ways. Growing communities that find their school costs increasing compete with neighboring communities for commercial and industrial development to build their tax bases. This new commercial development and additional school investments, in turn, attract additional residential development. Eventually, because many communities have figured out that small lot residential development costs more in services than it brings in tax revenues, many towns amend zoning by-laws to encourage large-lot, low-density development, which is seen as a net benefit to the tax base. This net tax benefit however exacerbates sprawl, consuming land at a much faster rate.

Property tax reform that shifts an increasing portion of education burden from the local level to the state is seen as one way of mitigating this municipal competition for commercial development (often referred to as fiscal zoning). For example in Maine's last legislative session, smart growth advocates tried to get through a tax reform package that would broaden the sales tax and decrease reliance on the property tax, to help even out education funding burdens. This measure failed, but smart growth advocates are regrouping to consider new tax reform strategies. Other states are wrestling with these questions of school funding and property taxes, most notably New Hampshire. Both Vermont and Massachusetts have taken major steps to reform school funding mechanisms in the last several years through Act 60 and the MA Education Reform Act. There could be real value in convening smart growth, tax experts, and education reform advocates from throughout the region to share past experiences, and consider future opportunities.

Maine has also considered a bill to provide a local option tax for service center communities (defined as any community where more people come in to work than leave to go to work). While this legislation did not succeed, more research and strategizing needs to be done to develop a fair tax reform package that can help communities offset the costs of servicing wider communities, while being careful not to create a tax that would drive people away from these centers. In New Hampshire, Professor Richard England has proposed consideration of a split rate taxation system for New Hampshire cities that would tax land values at a higher rate than capital improvements on real properties. He argues that such a system would encourage higher density development and greater revitalization in downtowns.²⁸ Emerging thinking and strategy on taxation and smart growth needs to be nurtured and connected across New England.

Building Stronger Bridges with Affordable Housing. One of the challenges in many areas of New England is to strengthen the linkages and working relationships between the affordable housing community and the conservation and land use communities. Several ideas are at an early stage, but hold promise. There is interesting work going on in Vermont to consider such tools as Housing Endorsement Criteria and Affordable Housing Certification to play a proactive, affirmative role in the development and siting of affordable housing. Such approaches have been implemented in other states with some success.

The newly formed Service Center Coalition composed of Maine Realtors Association, Maine Homebuilders Association, the Chamber of Commerce, the State Housing Authority, Maine Audubon, Maine Coast Heritage Trust, and The Nature Conservancy brings together a potentially influential coalition of interests to work on a joint policy platform of measures to promote downtown reinvestment

and redevelopment, including a broader range of housing options in downtowns and neighborhoods in Maine's service center communities.

Linking Land Conservation with Community and Regional Planning. Not surprisingly, the region that invented the land trust has witnessed an explosion of local and regional land conservation groups in the past decade. This sector is becoming increasingly sophisticated, partnering with public agencies, other nonprofits, and landowners to protect New England's rapidly disappearing natural areas. Land conservation may be the most remarkable success story to date in our efforts to preserve the character and ecological integrity of the region – from Vermont's family farms to Providence's Woonasquatucket Greenway. Despite the many success stories, opportunity rather than planning or conservation science has driven much of this work. Many land trusts focus on the individual parcel without thinking about the community's master plan. Very few participate actively in community and regional planning efforts. This is starting to change with efforts such as the Trust for Public Land's new emphasis on greenprinting in New England cities (planning for green infrastructure), the Minimum Impact of Development Partnership's Three Infrastructures Project (green, built, and social), and the Charles River Watershed Association's forays into ecological zoning. Better integrating land trust activities into broader community planning and biodiversity protection strategies seems an area ready for creative thinking and experimentation, perhaps in partnership with some of the state land conservation program staff – Land for Maine's Future Program, NH Land Conservation and Heritage Investment Program, Vermont Housing and Conservation Board, and others.

When Technology is No Longer a Limiting Factor. With a new generation of technologies such as distributed energy and alternative wastewater treatment fast approaching commercialization, many of the historical constraints to development could disappear. This presents smart growth advocates and conservationists with a new set of challenges and questions that the community may not be ready to respond to quite yet. Getting up to speed on the technical, ecological, and ethical questions is crucial.

MOVING AHEAD

Smart growth in New England is a movement in the making. Things are at an early stage, but the message is spreading and resonating with people from inner cities to transitioning rural areas. This message will spread under many banners -- agricultural preservation, rural heritage, community development, transportation equity, healthy communities, watershed protection, affordable housing, historic preservation. The movement requires engaged citizens and neighborhood residents, good data and analysis, coalition-building among diverse groups in the public interest community, an ambitious vision of what can be, strategic policy analysis, and ultimately strong communications and advocacy skills. As many don't like the current direction we are headed, it is incumbent upon them to change it by changing the rules of the game. New Englanders are using early twentieth century tools to meet twenty-first century challenges. It's time to capture the learning, innovation, and nodes of activity taking place across the region and knit these into a regional blueprint for smart growth in the twenty-first century.

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