



THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON
ENERGY INDEPENDENCE AND GLOBAL WARMING

Opening Statement of Rep. Edward J. Markey
Planning Communities for a Changing Climate:
Smart Growth, Public Demand and Private Opportunity
June 18, 2008

Fifty years ago, the launch of Sputnik challenged America to build a better scientific community. Today, skyrocketing gas prices and the threat of global warming challenge us to build green communities. Green communities offer relief from high gasoline prices and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. They employ renewable energy, rely on energy-efficient buildings, and adopt smart growth principles to reduce the distances between destinations and foster a diverse local economy. Through these actions, green communities reduce vehicle emissions, lower energy demand, and reduce the need for costly road and energy infrastructure. The result is reduced global warming emissions and lower taxes.

The growing demand for green communities overwhelms supply. With gasoline priced over \$4 per gallon, and a housing crisis hurting many areas of the country, young professionals, smaller families and aging populations seek the smart growth lifestyle in increasing numbers. Despite this shift, local and federal laws can make it simpler to build on whatever open land is available, scattering people, workplaces and resources far apart.

This hearing will examine whether the government can help communities return to a lifestyle that does not depend on long drives to work and hassle-filled drives to schools, grocery stores and shopping. Smart growth communities were once the norm across the country. Like many of you, I have lived for years in a green community – without even realizing it. When I grew up in Malden, Massachusetts, I walked to school. We took the bus around town. My parents did not buy a car until I was nine years old. Hard to think that Malden was “green” when we would take field trips to find a park, but the truth is that close-in experience was typical of many towns and cities in 20th century America.

How communities achieve smart growth principles varies widely. The Select Committee is fortunate to have two very different examples of attempts to build successful green communities. The rural community of Greensburg, Kansas, was destroyed by a tornado last May. Now, it is rebuilding using the highest green building standards, developing a wind power economy and retaining the businesses and neighbors integral to a close-knit community. Rural smart growth may not be a phrase heard often, but it should be. The small-town principles of walking to school, ten minute driving commute and shopping at local stores are identical to those of urban smart communities like Portland, Oregon.

Masdar City in Abu Dhabi represents the future of green communities. They are working with the private sector, engineers from MIT and American architects to build a city that will be a net exporter of energy. Masdar will incorporate basic services like schools and libraries with car-less streets, photovoltaic awnings and an academic and commercial center focusing on the latest energy technology. Despite having a century's supply of oil, Abu Dhabi has chosen to invest in a new clean-energy, climate-conscious economy by building a smart growth, zero net energy city.

Make no mistake--Masdar is our new Sputnik. It should be a wake up call to America and a challenge to each of us. The city of tomorrow, creating the technology of the future, is now underway in another country. We must rise to the challenge of building smart growth, energy efficient communities. We have the scientific ability to do so; and as the story of Greensburg will demonstrate, we also have the heart and the American spirit to make it happen.