

Moving the Needle

Regional Coalitions as Catalysts
for Sustainable Development



JUNE 2010

 **Urban Land
Institute**

 **Foundation**

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About ULI

The mission of the Urban Land Institute is to provide leadership in the responsible use of land and in creating and sustaining thriving communities worldwide. ULI is committed to

- ▷ Bringing together leaders from across the fields of real estate and land use policy to exchange best practices and serve community needs;
- ▷ Fostering collaboration within and beyond ULI's membership through mentoring, dialogue, and problem solving;
- ▷ Exploring issues of urbanization, conservation, regeneration, land use, capital formation, and sustainable development;
- ▷ Advancing land use policies and design practices that respect the uniqueness of both built and natural environments;
- ▷ Sharing knowledge through education, applied research, publishing, and electronic media; and
- ▷ Sustaining a diverse global network of local practice and advisory efforts that address current and future challenges.

Established in 1936, the Institute today has more than 29,000 members worldwide, representing the entire spectrum of the land use and development disciplines. ULI relies heavily on the experience of its members. It is through member involvement and information resources that ULI has been able to set standards of excellence in development practice. The Institute has long been recognized as one of the world's most respected and widely quoted sources of objective information on urban planning, growth, and development.

Patrick Phillips
Chief Executive Officer
Urban Land Institute

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“The Urban Land Institute recognizes that two valuable tools—regional visioning exercises and smart growth alliances—can help set the nation’s metropolitan areas on the road to a healthier, more sustainable future.”

Patrick L. Phillips
Chief Executive Officer
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Foreword



How will America's metropolitan areas accommodate the growth that is forecast to occur in the first half of the 21st century? Will elected officials, business and institutional leaders, and other stakeholders in a region work together to identify common ground and plan for land use and development that leads to an economically and environmentally sustainable future? Or will individual cities and counties within a region continue to compete with one another for jobs and resources, resulting in a continuation of the 20th-century pattern of sprawling, unconnected, and unsustainable growth? The Urban Land Institute (ULI) recognizes that two valuable tools—regional visioning exercises and smart growth alliances—can help set the nation's metropolitan areas on the road to a healthier, more sustainable future.

Regional visioning has emerged as a dynamic and important tool for building regional consensus related to growth issues. ULI has long been at the leading edge of the effort to “think regionally, act locally.” In October 2002, ULI Los Angeles, in partnership with the University of Southern California Lusk Center for Real Estate, conducted the first-ever “Reality Check on Growth” exercise.

ULI's Reality Check is a collaborative visioning process that ULI district councils and their partners can use to plan, build upon, and implement regional exercises and land

use visions. It is a hands-on exercise. Participants work in small but diverse groups of eight to ten regional leaders (including members of the public, private, and nonprofit sectors, from all parts of the region). Using colored chips or plastic bricks, they allocate expected growth on large-scale regional maps, while identifying common goals and guiding principles to help answer the questions, “How should we grow?” and “Where should we grow?” Each group creates its own scenario of where it believes future jobs and housing would best be located to maintain or improve the region's quality of life and economic prosperity. Since 2002, a dozen of these typically day-long events have been held in regions throughout the United States.

Over the years, ULI district councils and their partners have adapted the Reality Check format to meet regional needs and have expanded the exercise to address a variety of challenges, including transportation and climate change. In the most recent exercises, participants have allocated transportation infrastructure using different colors of yarn for roadways and transit corridors and have projected the implications of proposed land use patterns for greenhouse gas emissions.

The goals of these events are to create regionwide awareness of the level of growth that is expected; to recognize the legitimate viewpoints of stakeholders; and to lay the

foundation for the development of a concrete list of next steps in planning for sustainable growth that will meet the region's future needs. Reality Check exercises typically conclude with a consensus that a new approach is needed to meet the challenges of future growth and that all stakeholders must remain engaged in the regional visioning and planning process. Often, the diverse stakeholders brought together by a Reality Check exercise decide to create a formal alliance to continue and expand upon their efforts. In other cases, such coalitions predate—and sponsor—Reality Check exercises. These coalitions have come to be known as smart growth alliances (SGAs).

Over the past eight years, ULI has worked with SGAs throughout the United States. Through a range of initiatives, SGAs have informed public officials and stakeholders that land use decisions are key to long-term goals for energy, climate change, housing, infrastructure, and environmental quality. SGAs have mobilized community support for regional solutions to sustainable development and have provided technical assistance to public officials who seek to implement plans for economic, environmental, and social sustainability. To further support these kinds of alliances, ULI has created a forum, with funding support from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The mission of the Smart Growth Alliances Information Network (SGAIN) is to support the work

of the network's members and to give their leaders opportunities to learn from each other as they develop programs to promote and recognize smart growth in their regions. Members of the network have been meeting annually at an information-sharing forum since 2007.

This report offers a glimpse of how eight SGAs and other coalitions are influencing land use and development patterns—as well as decisions about investments in infrastructure and other capital improvements—in their regions. It provides some important lessons for other regions.

Patrick L. Phillips
Chief Executive Officer
Urban Land Institute

EXAMPLES OF REGIONAL COALITIONS AS CATALYSTS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The process of implementing sustainable development patterns will take 20 to 50 years. This process begins with a vision of where and how future development should occur. Implementation will involve a comprehensive strategy that cuts across jurisdictional and functional lines.

These examples show how some smart growth alliances and other coalitions have jump-started the process of moving their regions toward more sustainable development patterns.

Objective

Make the case for housing choice or other smart growth policies

Demonstrate broad-based support for a sustainable growth strategy

Articulate a preferred vision and plan to guide future development

Establish a forum where public officials can address regional issues

Advocate for shared goals to promote sustainable land use strategies

Incorporate preferred growth vision in official long-range transportation plan

Follow through with technical assistance and other aid

Support smart growth development and conservation

SGA

ULI Minnesota and Regional Council of Mayors Housing Opportunity Project

Moving Az One

Vision North Texas

Myregion.org

ULI Seattle and eight partner organizations

Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG)

ULI Baltimore and Baltimore Metropolitan Council

Washington Smart Growth Alliance

Initiative

Housing Initiative Opportunity City Program

A Reality Check for Central Arizona

North Texas 2050

Central Florida Congress of Regional Leaders

Quality Growth Alliance

Compass Blueprint

Growing Cooler Workshops

Smart Growth and Conservation Recognition Programs



Outcome

Elevated awareness and local interest in adopting incentives for developers to build mixed-income and multifamily housing near transit and job centers.

Agreement among major public, private, and nonprofit stakeholders that a “connected centers” strategy will enable the region to grow responsibly and sustainably.

Clearly articulated vision for sustainable growth and an action plan that identifies the tools and techniques needed to achieve that vision.

Forum where locally elected officials engage in dialogue about the region’s problems and agree on regional strategies that guide local action to support sustainable development.

Multistakeholder alliance that provides a barometer of public support for smart growth policies and that has supported planning along rail corridors for smart growth development.

Long-range regional land use and transportation plan and program that support sustainable growth, as well as more than 100 smart growth demonstration projects.

Consensus on issues affecting regional growth and on a regional growth map.

“Seal of approval” for smart growth projects and conservation priorities in the National Capital Region.

Next Steps

The coalition is continuing this program and will explore and evaluate additional opportunities to create and support a regional housing strategy that promotes a full range of housing choices and improves economic sustainability

Moving Az One will work with local governments and other groups to reach agreement on a more detailed strategy that sets priorities for how and where infrastructure investments should be made to accommodate future growth. It also plans to partner with the Maricopa Association of Governments to apply for a HUD Sustainable Communities Planning Grant.

Partners will continue to provide technical assistance to localities on steps to implement the vision. ULI North Texas and the North Central Texas Council of Governments plan to apply for a HUD Sustainable Communities Planning Grant. Vision North Texas

The congress is working on a regional water strategy, advocating for regional-scale transportation and land use planning, and exploring sustainable economic development issues within the 13-county Tampa Bay–Central Florida super region.

The alliance is implementing a smart growth recognition program and will participate as a regional leader with the Puget Sound Regional Council’s plans to leverage current investments in transit to encourage smart growth development near transit stops.

SCAG will continue to support development of demonstration sites and to provide technical assistance to local officials planning for and implementing SB 375, which mandates regional sustainable communities strategies.

The partnership is using this map as an initial framework for regional land use and transportation planning, with the goal of developing consensus on a long-range preferred development scenario.

The alliance will continue its recognition programs and will participate in regional collaboration sessions with the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments.

Overview: Moving toward a More Sustainable Future

This report showcases the catalytic role that smart growth alliances (SGAs) and other multistakeholder, multijurisdictional coalitions can play in the creation and adoption of regional land use and transportation plans and policies for achieving a region's long-term goals for economic, environmental, and social sustainability. SGAs have evolved from two premises: The land use and development patterns typical of the past 50 years are not sustainable over the long term, and land use and transportation policies must be changed to reduce problems of air quality, traffic congestion, and lack of affordable and workforce housing near major job centers. All these problems erode a region's competitiveness in today's increasingly global marketplace.

Throughout the United States, SGAs and other coalitions have helped public officials—as well as civic and business leaders—recognize that continuing urban sprawl and “business as usual” land use and development practices is not economically, environmentally, or socially sustainable. Although most land use decisions still are made at the local level, local officials must recognize that continuing to compete for resources with other municipalities within their region ultimately will weaken the entire region. This recognition will enable local officials to begin a dialogue with one another—and with other stakeholders—that will encourage and help them to make decisions that will be in the long-term best interest of the entire region—to “move the needle” in the direction of a more sustainable future.

Regional Coalitions as Catalysts

This report provides advice and guidance for individuals and organizations who are interested in establishing and maintaining coalitions that are committed to smart growth principles and to the implementation of plans and policies that will lead to economic, social, and environmental sustainability for their regions for generations to come. Eight sections profile initiatives by eight such groups. They include examples of how SGAs can accomplish the following objectives:

■ **Make the case for change.** Residents and elected officials are not always aware of the reasons why a region's current pattern of development threatens long-term sustainability. As nonpartisan organizations, SGAs can present independent analyses that make a credible case for change. In Minnesota's Twin Cities region, for example, the Housing Initiative Opportunity City Program has demonstrated how a supply of mixed-income and multifamily housing near transit and job centers is critical to sustainability and has convinced elected officials to change municipal policies to reflect that reality.

■ **Demonstrate broad-based support for a sustainable growth strategy.**

Elected officials are more willing to endorse smart growth policies when they are confident they will have political support. Alliances like central Arizona's Moving Az One have successfully used the Reality Check visioning exercise to reveal agreement on a set of values shared by leaders

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR SGAS

SGAs typically are founded on a set of guiding principles that mirror the Livability Principles adopted by the Interagency Partnership for Sustainable Communities (among the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Department of Transportation, and the Environmental Protection Agency):

- **PROVIDE MORE TRANSPORTATION CHOICES.** Develop safe, reliable, and economical transportation choices to decrease household transportation costs, reduce our nation's dependence on foreign oil, improve air quality, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and promote public health.
- **PROMOTE EQUITABLE, AFFORDABLE HOUSING.** Expand location- and energy-efficient housing choices for people of all ages, incomes, races, and ethnicities to increase mobility and lower the combined cost of housing and transportation.
- **ENHANCE ECONOMIC COMPETITIVENESS.** Improve economic competitiveness through reliable and timely access to employment centers, educational opportunities, services, and other basic needs for workers, as well as expanded access to markets for businesses.
- **SUPPORT EXISTING COMMUNITIES.** Target federal funding toward existing communities—through strategies like transit-oriented, mixed-use development and land recycling—to increase community revitalization and the efficiency of public works investments and safeguard rural landscapes.
- **COORDINATE AND LEVERAGE FEDERAL POLICIES AND INVESTMENT.** Align federal policies and funding to remove barriers to collaboration, leverage funding, and increase the accountability and effectiveness of all levels of government to plan for future growth, including making smart energy choices such as locally generated renewable energy
- **VALUE COMMUNITIES AND NEIGHBORHOODS.** Enhance the unique characteristics of all communities by investing in healthy, safe, and walkable neighborhoods—rural, urban, or suburban.

Source: EPA, www.epa.gov/dced/partnership.

from the public, private, and nonprofit sectors that indicates support for sustainable land use strategies.

■ **Articulate a preferred vision and a plan to guide future development.** Alliances like Vision North Texas have given stakeholders the ability to analyze the implications of alternative land use scenarios for their region, as well as a consensus-building process that enables them to articulate a preferred vision of the future. The preferred vision provides a starting point for discussions with public officials about adopting land use plans and policies that will result in more sustainable development in the region.

■ **Establish a forum where public leaders can address regional issues.** Locally elected officials typically lack the civic infrastructure necessary to examine regional solutions that address social, economic, and environmental issues. The Regional Council of Mayors in Minneapolis (led by ULI Minnesota) and the Central Florida Congress of Regional Leaders (led by Myregion.org) are examples of forums of locally elected officials who meet regularly to address regional issues for the purpose of coordinating their local plans and policies to improve the region's sustainability.

■ **Advocate shared goals that promote sustainable land use strategies.**

Although their members may not agree on every issue, SGAs can provide a barometer of public support for smart growth policies. Alliances like the Quality Growth Alliance in Washington state's Puget Sound region

have supported planning for smart growth development along rail corridors that transcends local boundaries.

■ **Incorporate the preferred growth vision in official long-range transportation plans.** Because a region's road and transit network heavily influences where new development will take place, the region's investments in transportation must be based on a vision of a sustainable land use pattern. The Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG), a metropolitan planning organization, has incorporated a vision of sustainable development in its official Regional Transportation Plans and has used these plans to set priorities for federal investments in transit.

■ **Follow through with technical assistance and other aid to local jurisdictions to achieve regional goals.** Alliances have provided support for local officials to examine new tools for implementing smart growth strategies. ULI Baltimore and the Baltimore Metropolitan Council, for example, are using state-of-the-art modeling software and data to build consensus on issues that affect regional growth.

■ **Support private sector projects that meet smart growth criteria.** Both the Quality Growth Alliance in the Seattle area and the Washington Smart Growth Alliance in the National Capital Region are recognizing proposed projects in the pre-entitlement stage that meet smart growth criteria. By offering testimony in support of these projects at public hearings, the SGAs are able to promote best practices for sustainable development on a project-by-project basis.

How Effective SGAs Operate

This report illustrates many lessons that have been learned by pioneering SGAs and other multistakeholder, multijurisdictional regional coalitions.

■ **Effective alliances establish a distinctive brand.** Every alliance needs a distinctive brand to garner the attention of decision makers. Many SGAs—including Vision North Texas and the Quality Growth Alliance—establish their brand by holding a large-scale, highly visible regional visioning workshop, such as a Reality Check exercise, and agree to advocate for the region's future based on the outcome of that visioning exercise. This kind of well-publicized consensus-building initiative clearly communicates the SGA's nonpartisan mission to protect the region's future quality of life and economic prosperity. In each case, the visioning workshop demonstrates that the region's stakeholders—elected officials, business leaders, academicians, representatives of environmental organizations, and other civic leaders—share many values and goals. Ultimately, they all want to maintain and improve the region's quality of life, jobs, and housing. The SGA brand is a commitment to advocate on behalf of those shared values and sustainable development goals.

■ **Effective alliances maintain an active, balanced, and diverse steering committee.** One reason SGAs have been given a place at the decision-making table is that they have maintained their credibility as representatives of diverse sectors of the community. Yet, keeping a coalition of diverse interests together and focused on common goals can be difficult. Successful

alliances offer two pieces of advice. First, alliances must be sure to include the private sector. Any long-term regional plan requires buy-in from business leaders and the real estate development community, and these stakeholders will be more likely to buy into the process if they are involved from the start. Second, alliances must strive to hold diverse interests together by focusing on shared values and long-term objectives. One way is to craft a program of work, roles, and responsibilities for each alliance member that makes the most of its unique capacities and capabilities. The Washington Smart Growth Alliance and the Quality Growth Alliance offer two models of how to find and maintain common ground.

■ **Effective alliances protect the alliance's nonpartisan status.** Successful alliances typically do not lobby, but they do advocate regional approaches to growth and development that are consistent with the values and objectives derived from consensus-building visioning processes. They—and their members—study, support, promote, and provide testimony on behalf of proposed legislation or plans that address growth and economic development in ways that will benefit the region. They also support plans and proposals that involve multi-jurisdictional cooperative efforts. The Central Florida Congress of Regional Leaders is working on identifying a water policy that it hopes will be a model for the region. Members of the Quality Growth Alliance's Climate Change Committee have informed the Washington state legislature's Local Government and Housing Committee about the role that land use plays in reducing car trips. That testimony highlighted the finding that concentrating growth in urban centers

connected by a reliable transportation network can lead to significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

■ **Effective alliances set a strategic program of work.** Alliances must identify ways to keep the momentum going after a visioning exercise or other initial effort. Many regions will continue to grow indefinitely, and SGAs have the capacity to keep a region focused on progress toward a long-term vision. Some, like Vision North Texas and Myregion.org, hold summits to keep stakeholders involved and publish reports like “North Texas 2050” and “How Shall We Grow? A Shared Vision for Central Florida,” which describe agreed-upon goals and identify the tools and techniques needed to achieve them.

■ **Effective alliances offer technical assistance.** Another way SGAs can follow up on their initial efforts is by offering technical assistance to support local implementation of regional plans. Alliances can offer the support of their staff or partners to local governments—particularly planning departments—that are suffering from layoffs and other budget constraints. Coalitions also can offer grants to support research and planning efforts. The alliance of ULI Minnesota and the Regional Council of Mayors jointly launched the Housing Initiative Opportunity City Program, which offers support and resources to local municipal officials who seek to expand the range of housing choices in their communities, through peer-to-peer learning, technical assistance, and dissemination of best practices.

■ **Effective alliances bring value to the discussion.** Alliances gain the respect of both public officials and the community

when they bring resources to the table, including funding, professional and academic expertise, and—perhaps most important—the ability to develop and maintain consensus among a diverse group of stakeholders. Alliances become even more effective players when they undertake robust analyses of the effects on agreed-upon sustainability goals of both existing conditions and alternative land use visions. Many coalitions have accomplished this objective, at minimal cost, by including regional councils of government among their members. Vision North Texas and Moving Az One have benefited from the research capabilities and modeling resources provided by the North Central Texas Council of Governments and the Maricopa Association of Governments, respectively.

■ **Effective alliances organize and plan for the long term.** It will take 20 to 50 years to fully implement regional strategies designed to achieve economic, social, and environmental sustainability. The challenge for SGAs is to keep a region and its local governments focused on implementing a long-term vision. The long-term nature of moving a region in the direction of sustainability requires SGAs to concentrate on their own financial and organizational sustainability.

Conclusion

The objectives and lessons described here are drawn from the eight profiles of alliances and initiatives presented in the next section. These profiles demonstrate that SGAs can serve—and have served—as catalysts for local governments to coordinate land use plans and policies that support a region’s economic, social, and environmental sustainability. SGAs can provide an effective vehicle for spurring local officials to “think regionally and act locally.” This report offers guidance to regions that are interested in organizing multistakeholder, multijurisdictional alliances with similar objectives.

ULI Arizona and Moving Az One

A diverse multistakeholder alliance in the Phoenix area leverages a visioning process to reveal multijurisdictional consensus on a sustainable growth strategy.

Creating a vision for sustainable regional land use, transportation, and environmental strategies—and the political will to implement that vision—is the first step in any regional smart growth effort. Multistakeholder, multijurisdictional alliances are essential to this effort. One such alliance, Moving Az One (pronounced “Moving As One”), has brought together government, business, and community leaders, and residents throughout central Arizona in two Reality Check exercises and a multitude of other efforts to envision what the future of the region could and should be. The alliance has kept the visioning process moving forward for more than four years. The emerging preferred growth strategy has attracted leaders’ attention as a cost-effective, responsible way to expand the economy with minimal drain on tax revenues.

Initiated by ULI Arizona, Moving Az One is a collaboration of the district council and 20 public, private, and civic organizations and companies. These partners include AECOM, the American Planning Association, Arizona State University, Land Advisors, the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, the Maricopa Association of Governments, the Nature Conservancy, Pinnacle West, the Salt River Project, the Sonoran Institute, Sunbelt Holdings, the U.S. Department of the Interior’s Bureau of Land Management, Wells Fargo, and Westcor, among others. The SGA was launched in 2006 to bring together a diverse group of citizens, public officials, and business leaders to discover shared aspirations and identify long-term

challenges. More than 5,000 people have taken part in the two Reality Check exercises, as well as hands-on outreach events, a Harris Interactive core values survey, and guiding principles surveys. Overwhelmingly, participants have expressed a common desire to build out the region in a manner that creates a prosperous and sustainable future.

Coalition as Catalyst

Central Arizona is a 13,000-square-mile (3.4 million-ha) region that includes the city of Phoenix, Maricopa County, and northern Pinal County—an area larger than New Jersey. It is projected to gain more than 6 million new residents by 2050. How the region plans for that growth today will determine how central Arizona grows and the impact that growth has on the region’s residents, economy, and environment.

In May 2008, “Az One, A Reality Check for Central Arizona” brought together 270 diverse stakeholders selected from 1,100 nominees to consider how the region could and should grow. Participants were divided into 30 groups, each with a mix of government, business, and community leaders. Before the exercise began, each group was asked to define what it thought would be its guiding principles. The groups then spent the morning using these principles to create a growth concept, by placing red and yellow plastic bricks on table-sized regional maps to represent projected growth in households and jobs, and by using different colors of yarn to show where and what kind of new transportation corridors should be created. That afternoon, the small-group participants gathered with others to



learn about key concepts of regional visioning, hear a quick summary of the morning's exercise, and provide feedback through a keypad polling session.

From the 30 scenarios created during the initial four-hour session, three common growth patterns emerged. What also emerged was a clearer set of guiding principles that influence stakeholder attitudes about transportation, housing, open space, employment centers, and the use of state trust lands. Before the exercise began, for example, 25 of the groups listed "conserve open space as a cornerstone of the region"



as one of their guiding principles; after the event, all 30 said they wanted to "preserve open space as a cornerstone of the region." Similarly, before the exercise, 18 of the groups listed "maximize the efficiency of transportation networks to encourage future growth in areas that are already developed and reduce sprawl" as a guiding principle; afterward, 27 said they wanted to "support the current investment in infrastructure by encouraging growth along existing transportation corridors." The most important lesson

that many participants took away from this Reality Check exercise was the understanding that there is broad consensus in the region on these guiding principles. "I was surprised that I didn't have to do a lot of influencing. Everybody seems to feel the same way because sustainability is protecting our assets. You don't build another Camelback Mountain or Piestewa Peak," said Paul Barnes, then president of the Greater Phoenix Neighborhood Coalition.

After the event, a research team led by Arizona State University and the Maricopa Association of Governments analyzed the 30

maps in terms of land consumption, new transportation requirements, infrastructure capital costs, increases in automobile travel, impacts of increased travel on household budgets, and environmental integrity. The results of this analysis showed that small land use efficiencies can add up to big differences when accounting for the collective impact of 6 million new residents and 3 million new jobs. The Moving Az One research committee determined that small shifts in the types of housing created—and in where

that housing is located in relation to jobs—could greatly reduce land consumption, infrastructure costs, commuting time, and carbon emissions.

Following the initial Reality Check exercise, Moving Az One began an 18-month public outreach and education process, through which it invited the region's residents to learn about the impending growth and share their views about how the region should grow. "We're not telling people we need trains or highways," said Drew Brown, then-CEO of DMB Associates and cochair of the Reality Check event. "We're educating them on what a diverse group of 270 people thought and asking for their opinion." This outreach effort engaged the public in the regional visioning effort, helped identify core values within the community, and built consensus for the guiding principles that emerged from the May 2008 event.

Revisiting the Vision

One year after the first Reality Check event, Moving Az One invited the 270 original participants to a second, more in-depth regional visioning exercise. In May 2009, participants gathered for "Reality Check Revisited," to create a more refined and focused vision. The economic and development landscape clearly had changed since the first event. The price of gas had shot up, the region's light-rail line was up and running, and the global economy was in a recession—and all these things would have an impact on participants' vision for the future.

The session began with a presentation of the results of the first exercise and research findings. With the facilitation of professional planners, participants then worked

on regional maps, placing flags to identify existing and future growth areas. After marking both areas, many groups went back and removed flags from some existing growth areas, as they determined that growth was more appropriate in other places. They also were asked to consider tradeoffs, infrastructure issues, open space, legislative challenges, and other issues.

The Moving Az One research team converted all the results from both Reality Check events into a digital map and studied them in detail. Overall, the analysis confirmed that participants were acutely aware of the many issues related to planning for growth and shared a broad interest in guiding future growth in new ways. The results of “Reality Check Revisited” confirmed and expanded upon the results of the 2008 exercise, revealing strong interest in a new approach to the region’s land use pattern and transportation system—a clear vision for the future. Moving Az One has called this approach a “connected centers strategy.” The strategy calls for a growth pattern that differs from what would occur through current, business-as-usual

growth, with a greater emphasis on creating more connected, compact, and pedestrian-friendly centers. These centers should be considered high-priority investment areas and would most appropriately be located along transportation corridors that connect them with other centers.

Although the concept of centers is not new, most of central Arizona’s existing centers were planned and developed in isolation. With multijurisdictional cooperation and coordination, centers—and the connections between them—can be developed in ways that will enable them to reach the critical mass needed to fully capture the benefits of economies related to mixed-use development and associated transportation efficiencies. Such cooperation and coordination also will enable the region’s centers to develop as complementary, rather than competing, entities. Diverse centers of different sizes and functions will provide economic development opportunities for a variety of companies, as well as a wide range of housing choices.

Although more work is needed to refine the connected centers strategy, Moving Az One views the support for this strategy as a breakthrough. The support reflects a common desire across groups of stakeholders to address problems on a regional basis and take advantage of the emerging market forces of changing demographics, desire for new housing types, and energy opportunities. “Reality Check and Moving Az One have been catalysts for viewing the future of the region in a significantly different way,” says Walter Morlock, director of community outreach at ULI Arizona.

Taking the Next Steps

Moving Az One is now building on this consensus by proposing to research, develop, and articulate a clear strategy for connected centers. The alliance plans to use this strategy, working in partnership with local and regional planners, to define a final blueprint for the future of central Arizona. One goal of the connected centers strategy is to provide a broad context in which it is possible to make local and regional decisions that foster a vi-



brant economy and a high quality of life regionwide. Ultimately, local jurisdictions will be responsible for ensuring that centers reach their full potential. Therefore, an important next step in the connected centers strategy will be to provide information to help jurisdictions evaluate local planning, zoning, and capital improvement programs that support growth in connected centers as an ongoing, collaborative process involving local and regional leaders, community leaders, and other stakeholders. Moving Az One expects this process to continue through the end of 2011 and beyond, and hopes that its efforts will serve as a model for other regions.

“Creating a blueprint for sustainable communities is, in part, about recognizing where consensus exists to spend our tax dollars wisely and efficiently,” notes Morlock. “One main goal of these efforts is to maximize our current and future infrastructure investments to support economic development.”

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ULI Minnesota and the Regional Council of Mayors

A regional leadership council in the Minneapolis–St. Paul area makes the case for modifying local housing policies to facilitate development of more housing near employment centers.

A regional housing strategy is a critical element of a regional sustainable development strategy. The Regional Council of Mayors and ULI Minnesota designed the Housing Initiative Opportunity City Program to promote and support a full range of housing choices—that is, a diverse mix of housing types, sizes, and prices—in connected, livable communities in Minnesota’s Minneapolis–St. Paul region. The initiative builds on collaborative relationships between the two groups, as well as with many other public and private sector partners, to implement tools and strategies that promote economic stability and regional prosperity. Launched in 2007, the Housing Initiative is made possible by financial support from the Family Housing Fund, which provided seed capital as well as substantial annual funding.



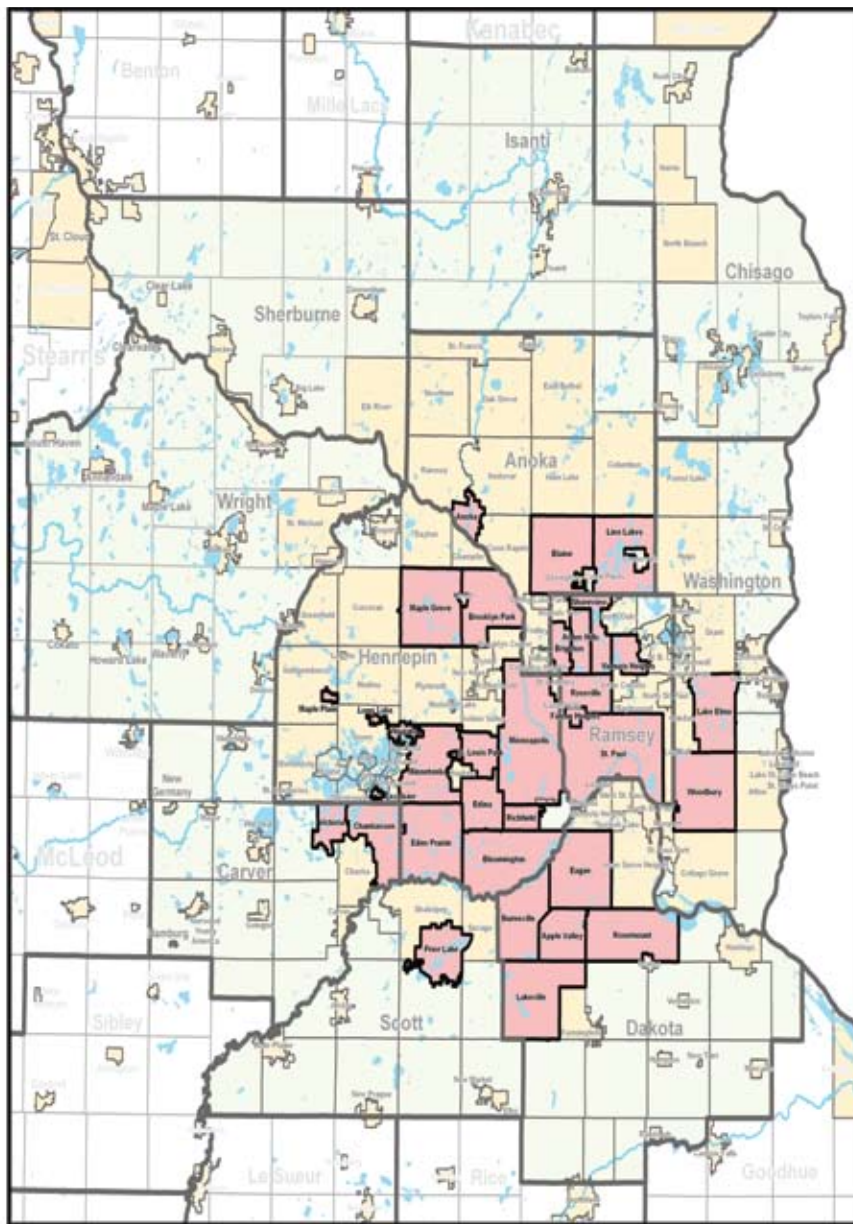
Coalition as Catalyst

In 2004, ULI Minnesota established the Regional Council of Mayors with a ULI Community Action Grant and matching funds from Target Corporation. The Council’s purpose, as stated in its strategic plan, is “to provide a forum to strategically engage regional mayors and land use professionals in a nonpartisan process to seek equitable and sustainable regional solutions that will provide learning, tools, networking, and action to align development, design, and policy for maximum human and economic return.” The Council, which includes representatives from Minneapolis, St. Paul, and 34 other municipalities in the Twin Cities’ developed and developing suburbs, has become a model for similar groups in other regions.

This collaborative partnership provides a nonpartisan platform focused on strategies to raise the region’s overall economic competitiveness and quality of life. It is nationally recognized as an important leadership group that brings together the region’s most influential mayors.

Over the years, the Regional Council of Mayors has continued to partner with ULI Minnesota to carry out four key strategies: to convene, by bringing mayors and other leaders together around issues of regional significance; to educate, thereby equipping mayors to lead and support learning across sectors; to engage, by supporting civic outreach strategies; and to effect change, by seeking solutions that support a “better way” for collective regional action. Both organizations are focused on four priority areas—housing, the environment, jobs and economic development, and transportation—and on the alignment and integration of those elements in policy and planning efforts.

In 2007, the two organizations jointly launched the Housing Initiative’s Opportunity City Program, a comprehensive, centralized, sustainable learning community that provides support and resources to local municipal officials who seek to provide a full range of housing choices in their communities. The program does so through peer-to-peer learning, technical assistance, and dissemination of best practices. One of its primary goals is to create a new way of thinking about how housing is connected to and integrated within a community. It aims to help city officials understand that housing is an important asset and that cities need to



Participating Cities
Regional Council of Mayors



- Participating Cities
- Township Boundary
- Other Cities
- Lakes
- RCM Counties
- Rivers

ULI Minnesota



be much more intentional in how they plan and provide incentives for various types of housing, based on demographic data about existing residents and the demographic groups that they want to attract and retain. In addition, it aims to raise awareness in suburban communities about the value of housing choice and of more compact, denser development that is connected to jobs, transportation networks, and other amenities—development that will help those communities remain competitive into the future, as both demographics and housing and job markets change.

“Two themes stand out in my mind,” says Caren Dewar, executive director of ULI Minnesota. “If you’re not intentionally providing housing for young families, it’s going to have a significant impact on your schools. And if you’re not providing housing options for seniors, they’re going to stay in their existing homes, which doesn’t allow the community to regenerate.”

Five diverse communities—Brooklyn Park, Minnetonka, Richfield, Rosemount, and Shoreview—participated in the Opportunity City Pilot Program. Each provided \$5,000 in matching funds and the commitment of its mayor and city manager or administrator to enter into a collaborative process. The process consisted of a comprehensive audit of the city’s housing and land use policies and investment strategies; site analysis assistance; and reports on community change and other trends at the regional, county, and local levels. In tandem with the pilot program and in partnership with the Center for Housing Policy, ULI Minnesota and the Regional Council of Mayors developed a set of Web-based

housing tools that demonstrates principles and best practices for preserving and producing a full range of housing choices.

Lessons Learned

“The housing information we received [from the Opportunity City Pilot Program] was different from other data we’ve had over the years,” comments Shoreview Mayor Sandy Martin. “It gave us a better picture of where people move when they move out of rental units. It concerns us that only 20 percent are able to stay in the city. We need to do a better job of making people aware of the affordable housing options that we have in the community and work toward developing programs that benefit first-time homebuyers.”

“We had a lot of people telling us how wrong we, as policy leaders, were regarding the need for multifamily housing,” notes Brooklyn Park Mayor Steve Lampi. “After the Opportunity City process, there was an acknowledgment that we do need quality rental and multifamily housing. The Opportunity City process has changed the dialogue and opened conversations regarding the need for a mix of housing options.”

The pilot program produced several overarching lessons that will be incorporated into future phases. The first was the importance of developing some common principles. ULI Minnesota and the Regional Council of Mayors have developed a set of 11 community site principles that support a full range of housing choices and draw on best practices to maximize land uses efficiently, connect housing to jobs, and provide access to transportation networks. Applying these principles to development and redevelopment sites will create economic benefits and long-term sus-

tainability, both for individual cities and for the region as a whole.

The second lesson is the value of the dialogue that emerged among the policy leaders in each city as they studied and discussed the demographic information that they received. The data showed them what was happening in their communities and enabled them to form conclusions about how to address those changes. They saw how their communities were changing, rec-



ognized that their policies often were not aligned with those changes, and came to understand the connection between providing housing and attracting workers and young families. This process of talking about the information, considering the tools and strategies already in place, and thinking about how they can be used—or adapted—to make changes raises awareness among policy makers and enables them to make recommendations to effect change. “In the next phase,” says Cathy Bennett, coordinator of the Housing Initiative, “we will involve policy leaders in the process earlier and will encourage them to bring others into the discussion, to enable them to gain a broader understanding and awareness throughout the process.”

Taking the Next Steps

The Opportunity City Pilot Program identified a number of trends that led to recommendations regarding the region’s capacity to support a full range of housing choices. It also produced strategies that are uniquely suited to the collaborative partnership network of the Housing Initiative. These strategies, many of which the Housing Initiative already has begun to implement, include the following:

- Continue to convene city managers, community development directors, and officials from county housing and redevelopment authorities to identify opportunities for information sharing and collaboration.
- Stress the importance of adapting redevelopment tools to better support economic growth.
- Demonstrate model land use policies across municipal boundaries.
- Contribute to the Minnesota Preservation Plus Initiative, to expand the resources available for the preservation and renovation of aging suburban apartments.
- Raise awareness about the value of density and how it is linked to quality-of-life issues.
- Integrate the housing plus transportation calculator (a computer program that enables homeowners and renters to evaluate the cost of housing and transportation associated with a location) for the Twin Cities, and work with ULI on messaging strategies to increase awareness and use of the calculator.

- Partner to establish a working group to explore the development of innovative financing products that address changing market preferences and demographic trends.
- Continue to partner with the Center for Housing Policy to develop and maintain the online Minnesota Housing Tool Box.

The second phase of the Opportunity City Program began in January 2010. It is being implemented in three contexts: in two very different suburban cities (Anoka and Eagan); in a collaborative effort that brings together a cluster of school districts and cities; and along the Southwest Corridor, a future light-rail transit line. The line will run between Minneapolis and Eden Prairie and provide an important connection to other regional systems, including the Central Corridor and Hiawatha light-rail lines and the Northstar commuter rail line.

The cluster collaborative aims to bring together city and school district officials in a discussion of how the two groups can work together to make better, more integrated decisions—decisions about enrollment and school needs as well as decisions about land uses and housing needs—that will result in more competitive and more successful cities. The lessons learned from the pilot program will be applied along the Southwest Corridor. There, the Opportunity City Program has the full support of the Housing Initiative's partners—as well as that of the cities along the corridor and of Hennepin County—to conduct an innovative land use inventory and site assessment. The work will be completed before the line is designed, so that land uses will inform the engineering of the line in ways

that will maximize support for a full range of housing choices, connected to jobs and amenities, along the corridor.

ULI Minnesota and the Regional Council of Mayors continue to explore and evaluate additional opportunities to expand the work of the Housing Initiative—through the development of new partnerships and model programs—to create and support a regional housing strategy that promotes a full range of housing choices. The collaboration's strong tradition of effective partnerships and integrative work led the Brookings Institution to select the Twin Cities region to participate in its Metropolitan Business Plan Initiative, which is designed to highlight the emergence of metropolitan areas as the dominant source of economic and cultural power in modern America. The work will leverage existing regional efforts and offer concrete recommendations for federal policy and funding reform to maximize the potential of metropolitan areas throughout the United States.

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Southern California Association of Governments

A collaborative, multi-stakeholder effort results in a vision that is incorporated in the 2004 and 2008 Long-Range Transportation Plans—and a program to make those plans a reality.

Southern California's sprawling, automobile-oriented growth pattern has left the region with some of the worst traffic congestion and air pollution in the United States. As the six-county region continues to grow, a coalition of local governments—in collaboration with the business, environmental, and academic communities—has reached a consensus vision of how to accommodate that growth while preserving or improving mobility, livability, prosperity, and sustainability. A planning program known as Compass Blueprint is working to transform that vision into reality.

Conceived in 2002 as a collaborative effort to reconsider how and where the region will grow in the future, the Southern California Association of Governments' (SCAG) Compass Blueprint program works with local governments and other groups to focus growth in existing and emerging centers and along major transportation corridors, create significant concentrations of mixed-use development and walkable communities, target growth around existing and planned transit

stations, and preserve existing open space and stable residential areas. The program also is leading the way in implementing new state laws aimed at curbing greenhouse gas emissions, the first such laws in the nation.

“Compass Blueprint is a highly innovative program that was put together by a collaborative effort of SCAG and the subregions,” says Jon Edney, former SCAG president and El Centro city councilmember. “It provides a tremendous opportunity for us to grow together, considering our infrastructure needs, connectivity between housing and transportation, goods movement, and jobs and the economy.”

Coalition as Catalyst

The 38,000-square-mile (9.9 million-ha) Southern California region comprises Imperial, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Ventura counties. Since the late 1990s, the region has been projected to grow by 6 million new residents and 2.2 million new jobs by 2020. In 2000, a number of groups concerned about how the region



could best plan for this growth—including SCAG, the municipal planning organization for the region, and ULI Los Angeles—began exploring ways to conduct integrated, proactive regional planning that would engage the public as well as local governments.

In October 2002, ULI Los Angeles, in partnership with the University of Southern California (USC) Lusk Center for Real Estate, conducted the first-ever Reality Check regional visioning exercise. The goal of this exercise, called “Reality Check on Growth,” was to raise awareness of the impending population increase that was forecast for the region—and the need to plan for that growth. Other partners in the exercise included the Southern California Transportation and Land Use Coalition, the USC Casden Real Estate Economics Forecast, and the USC Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Research Laboratory. The event was attended by 200 carefully selected political, business, development, community, and environmental leaders, as well as almost 100 staff members (including GIS technicians) and others. The exercise resulted in a series of growth models that present alternative visions of how the Los Angeles region might accommodate new residents and jobs. Many participants agreed that more infill development and higher housing densities would be needed, and some envisioned dense urban infill development in transit corridors.

In partnership with ULI and other groups, as well as the region’s 189 local governments, SCAG then held a series of 20 subregional public planning workshops and five region-wide events to further refine the strategy for the region’s future growth. More than 1,300 stakeholders attended, including members of



the public. Building on the results of these workshops, SCAG created a series of alternative growth scenarios, which it evaluated with quantitative modeling and policy analysis techniques. It then supplemented the scenarios with detailed maps, descriptions, and statistics. Through the Internet, newspapers, telephone surveys, and regionwide events, SCAG asked the public to weigh in not only on the scenarios but also on the underlying policies and actions that will make them

work. From this multiyear process, a consensus vision for growth called Compass Blueprint emerged. It continues to evolve.

Applying Innovative Strategies to Accommodate Growth

The Compass Blueprint “Growth Vision,” which is reflected in the area’s 2004 and 2008 Regional Transportation Plans, demonstrates

that although increased residential densities are essential, it is not necessary to increase density everywhere. The vision embodies the principle that small, incremental, and strategic changes in relatively limited geographic areas can yield great benefits, to individual cities and neighborhoods as well as to the entire region.

In fact, SCAG and its partners determined that it is possible to accommodate all the projected growth by increasing density around key transportation nodes and in existing and emerging centers, resulting in higher densities and more intensive redevelopment on only about 2 percent of the region's land. Transportation modeling of various growth scenarios indicates that future development consistent with the vision can more than double air quality and congestion mitigation benefits, compared with previ-

ous plans. The program has given municipal and private sector leaders an understanding of key opportunities and new tools to help their smart growth efforts succeed.

Compass Blueprint aims to increase the region's mobility by encouraging transportation investments and land use decisions that are mutually supportive. This includes locating new housing near existing jobs and new jobs near existing housing. The alliance also aims to increase mobility by encouraging transit-oriented development and promoting a variety of travel choices.

Compass Blueprint will enhance the livability of the region's communities by promoting infill development and redevelopment to revitalize existing communities; mixed-use devel-

opment; and "people-scaled," walkable communities. It also supports the preservation of stable neighborhoods.

The alliance expects to increase the region's prosperity by providing a variety of housing types in each community, to meet community housing needs; supporting educational opportunities that promote balanced growth; and supporting local and state fiscal policies that encourage balanced growth. It also encourages civic engagement and works to ensure environmental justice for regional residents, regardless of race, ethnicity, or income.

Compass Blueprint plans to promote sustainability for future generations through four approaches:



- Developing strategies to accommodate growth that uses resources efficiently while minimizing pollution and greenhouse gas emissions;
- Preserving rural, agricultural, recreational, and environmentally sensitive areas;
- Focusing development in urban centers and existing cities; and
- Using green development techniques.

Funding for Compass Blueprint comes primarily from the federal government through regional transportation planning funds administered by the Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration. Additional funding comes from the California Regional Blueprint Planning Program of the state's Business, Transportation and Housing Agency.

Since SCAG adopted the "Growth Vision" in 2004, Compass Blueprint has been focusing on implementation efforts in partnership with local governments. SCAG is doing this primarily through demonstration projects in which it provides technical assistance to local governments for planning that is consistent with the vision. Its goals are to demonstrate the local benefits of planning that is consistent with regional goals and to create models that can be replicated throughout the region. Expert consultants and SCAG staff members provide cities with free planning services and tools, including help with public involvement processes, redevelopment and economic development strategies, economic feasibility analyses, urban design solutions, transit studies, development of code amendments, photo and video visualizations, transportation modeling, parking analyses, financing strategies, and scenario planning.

As of mid-2010, Compass Blueprint has completed approximately 100 demonstration projects. Two examples: In the Los Angeles Expo Line Light-Rail Station Areas project, Compass Blueprint explored opportunities along the newest extension of the Metro Rail system in the city of Los Angeles and demonstrated the potential for increased connectivity; economic development; compact, walkable, transit-oriented development; and an increase in mixed-use development and higher residential densities. In the Arrow Highway Corridor project, Compass Blueprint worked with representatives of six jurisdictions in the San Gabriel Valley to prepare land use, economic, design, and implementation strategies for the land surrounding the highway, which is located at the edges of several cities and thus has been subject to different zoning and streetscape design policies. Additional demonstration projects are underway.

Recognizing that SCAG will never have the resources to complete all the necessary local planning through demonstration projects, Compass Blueprint recently initiated "Toolbox Tuesdays," a monthly series of free classes for local government planning staff. These classes cover the cutting-edge tools and issues developed in the demonstration projects and build the capacity of local planning staffs to carry out innovative planning.

Implementing SB 375

Compass Blueprint also is leading the way in Southern California in implementing new laws aimed at curbing greenhouse gas emissions. California's Assembly Bill (AB) 32 mandates significant reductions in such emissions across all sectors; its Senate Bill (SB) 375 requires metropolitan planning

organizations to prepare "Sustainable Communities Strategies"—growth scenarios and associated transportation and land use strategies that can reduce such emissions from cars and light trucks. SB 375 was inspired by the regional sustainable growth planning that SCAG and its partners—as well as other groups in other parts of the state—have been engaged in for the past decade. The Compass Blueprint program continues to be a prime venue for the ongoing sustainability planning required under AB 32 and SB 375.

"This is an opportunity to do so much more than comply with a new state law," says SCAG Executive Director Hasan Ikhtrata. "More than anything, we are looking forward to working with communities in the region to identify locations where we can apply these innovative strategies. This will help to lower greenhouse gas emissions but, just as important, will also contribute to more livable, more prosperous communities."

Several ULI district councils in Southern California continue to partner with SCAG to identify and implement sustainable development solutions. They participate in SCAG's annual Compass Blueprint Awards program, which recognizes outstanding examples of local planning that support shared regional sustainable development goals.

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ULI Baltimore and the Baltimore Metropolitan Council

**Multistakeholder,
multijurisdictional
land use planning
sessions foster regional
collaboration among
local officials to address
urban development and
climate change issues.**

Reducing greenhouse gas emissions and slowing climate change are critical goals of sustainable development, goals that cannot be reached by individual municipalities acting alone but that must be addressed by regional—as well as state, national, and international—efforts. ULI's publication of *Growing Cooler: The Evidence on Urban Development and Climate Change* (by Reid Ewing, research professor at the University of Maryland's National Center for Smart Growth, and others) in early 2008 provided the impetus—and the title—for three regional planning sessions held that year in Maryland. The effort has fostered multijurisdictional, multistakeholder cooperation and regional leadership to address the issues of urban development and climate change.

Breaking new ground in cooperative regional planning, more than 40 officials from six Baltimore-area jurisdictions (Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Carroll, Harford, and Howard counties and the city of Baltimore) gathered at three "Growing Cooler" workshops—a series of interactive regional planning re-

treats. They used state-of-the-art modeling software to build consensus on issues affecting regional growth. The workshops were cosponsored by ULI Baltimore and the Baltimore Metropolitan Council, a regional planning organization that comprises elected executives from the city of Baltimore and five surrounding counties.

The partnership's primary objective is to overcome multijurisdictional differences and competition. The workshops brought together county planning directors and other stakeholders to develop agreement on a common land use map that would provide a basis for analyzing future land use scenarios. ULI Baltimore provided the majority of the funding, which it acquired through contributions and a ULI Community Action Grant.

Coalition as Catalyst

Maryland has long been a leader in the field of smart growth. In 1997, then-Governor Parris Glendening launched the Smart Growth and Neighborhood Conservation Initiative, an effort to use state funds as in-



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centives to direct growth into appropriate areas. The program built on the foundation of nearly a half-century of progressive land use measures in the state.

In 2005, recognizing the need to create an integrated strategy for managing growth, development, and preservation, three organizations concerned about the state's future—ULI Baltimore, the National Center for Smart Growth at the University of Maryland, and 1,000 Friends of Maryland—began partnering to address this need. The partnership's first effort, "Reality Check Plus: Imagine Maryland," was a two-year, statewide initiative to gather input on land use issues from a broad spectrum of citizens. "Reality Check Plus" consisted of a series of growth visioning exercises held in each of the state's four regions in May and June 2006. Participants—invitees from business, civic organizations, and the public sector—focused on allocating growth within their regions. These were the first Reality Check exercises ever held in rural areas. Maryland's initiative was the first to conduct

Reality Check exercises in each of a state's regions with the goal of developing a statewide vision for growth.

The final report from the exercises, titled "Today's Vision, Tomorrow's Reality," was released in September 2006. It assessed how state policies should be changed to support regional visions and laid out next steps for implementation. ULI Baltimore then formed a regionalism committee to keep this initiative moving forward; the Growing Cooler workshops evolved indirectly from this effort.

Focusing on the Baltimore Region

Regionalism committee members wanted to collaborate with the region's elected county managers on the smart growth issues that arose during the Reality Check exercise. "The committee concluded that in order to share the information gained from the Reality Check exercises and to adopt smart growth land use practices, we would need the involvement of elected officials," recalls

Jud Malone, the Columbia, Maryland-based consultant who chairs the committee. "As we discussed ways to gather this audience, we realized that the people we needed already came together through the Baltimore Metropolitan Council."

The committee therefore approached Larry Klimovitz, the Council's executive director, with a proposal for a joint project that would engage elected officials in environmentally smart regional planning. But the Council's management team suggested that a more effective approach would involve working first with county planning directors and senior-level planners. Those people, Klimovitz explains, "are on the front lines of finding solutions for existing regional issues like transportation and air quality" and thus would have "the information needed to present environmentally sound solutions to elected officials."

As the partnership proceeded to plan the workshops, it sought input from prospective participants. Planners unanimously emphasized the need to have access to real information. They were not interested in discussing issues in the abstract; rather, they wanted productive workshops that would use real maps as well as real data to produce tangible results.

To achieve these objectives, the organizers brought in Criterion Planners, a national urban and regional planning firm that focuses on community planning and sustainability. The firm provided the workshops with its proprietary interactive GIS planning tools, calibrated with local maps and detailed data about existing regional conditions. Criterion designed this software to remove politics and subjectivity from community planning and to



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support the process with objective information. To prepare for the Growing Cooler workshops, the firm obtained data from the Council and the state department of planning, and consolidated them into a single set of maps that uses the same terminology and definitions for current and planned land uses across the entire region. The maps were divided into 120-acre (49-ha) cells, with no jurisdictional boundaries. The results, according to Malone, were worth the effort: “When participants walked into the very first workshop, they were blown away by maps with detailed layers of information that they could factor into their planning.”

At the three full-day workshops, which were held in Baltimore in September and October 2008, participants worked in four groups, each of which included one or more representatives from each county as well as a facilitator and a GIS operator. The groups were charged with designating how parts of the region should be preserved as open space or designated for growth, using a six-level scale. A computer model that measures the regional implications of different land use and transportation plans in terms of vehicle miles traveled (and the corresponding increases or decreases in carbon emissions), as well as more than 50 other metrics, helped participants evaluate and refine their plans. The sessions were not open to the public because, as Malone notes, “We wanted to make sure that the planning directors had the freedom to be planners, without any expectations on the part of the public; to be able to talk openly and freely with each other without constantly having to keep their ‘political antennae’ up.”

The same participants attended all three workshops. At the first one, they discussed

and agreed on which areas were to be preserved as open space and which would be developed or redeveloped as urban infill. At the remaining two, they examined all other growth areas.

Malone recognizes the benefits of the workshops’ collaborative, multisession approach: “It took awhile for the planning directors to learn how to talk with each other, because all of the different jurisdictions have different

street or two counties away,” adds Klimovitz. “Planners could see how development and land use decisions would affect the region’s carbon footprint, greenhouse gas emissions, water supply, and need for multimodal transportation. The software also gives planners a tool for running ‘what-if’ scenarios to determine how to best allocate limited resources.”

Even participants who originally were skeptical about the workshops became enthusi-



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zoning terminology. What we gave them was the means to translate their land use terminology into a common, more generic language, so they could begin to see similarities and talk about land use at the regional, rather than the jurisdictional, level.”

“By working through this process together and using the software to model changes, participants could see how their actions would impact their neighbors across the

astastic about the process. Although organizers feared attendance might fall off after the first session, all participants returned to the second and third workshops. Malone found the high level of agreement achieved during the workshops encouraging: “In the end, we produced a map on which they are in 100 percent agreement, at least at a very coarse level, on what type of growth ought to occur in the region and where it should occur. That’s a pretty remarkable accomplishment!”

This map is now being used as an initial framework for future land use and transportation planning in the regional context by the Baltimore Metropolitan Council.

Moving Forward

In the year and a half since the Growing Cooler workshops were held, the planning directors who participated presented their findings to their county executives and the mayor of Baltimore, who serve as the executive board of the Council, and got their endorsement to continue work on this regional planning effort. At the same time, the Baltimore Regional Transportation Board, which has the same members as the Council, presented a long-term transportation plan that increased funding for highways and decreased funding for transit. Public outcry in opposition to this plan was so intense that the Board, recognizing that its priorities were misplaced, has undertaken a long-range land use and transportation visioning process. The initiative, known as “Imagine 2060: The Region We Create,” will facilitate a dialogue about how to plan for the future of transportation and land use in the Baltimore region.

Imagine 2060 engaged the public in a series of six regional workshops in April and May 2010. It is now conducting technical analyses of the impacts of alternative transportation and land development scenarios. The GIS tools and regional map developed during the Growing Cooler workshops are the baseline for looking at these land development scenarios. The goal is to develop consensus on a preferred scenario for the vision—one that will serve as a guide for investments in the 2011 long-range transportation plan and that will inform that plan

for the next 50 years. As the Imagine 2060 initiative moves forward, ULI Baltimore and the Baltimore Metropolitan Council are committed to continuing the effort that began with the Growing Cooler workshops, by keeping the dialogue between jurisdictions open, working on regional definitions of their goals, and exploring how local governments can use the framework.

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Myregion.org

A regional coalition establishes a forum for local public officials to discuss regional issues and agree on regional strategies that guide local action for sustainable growth.

Local governments and government officials often are at odds with each other over growth issues. But some are beginning to take a more regional approach, forming coalitions of local leaders and exploring new techniques for working together to plan for and accommodate growth in ways that benefit both individual municipalities and the region as a whole. The Central Florida Congress of Regional Leaders—an organization of elected officials from the seven-county Orlando area—is one such trend-setting coalition.

Central Florida comprises seven counties—Brevard, Lake, Orange, Osceola, Polk, Seminole, and Volusia—as well as 86 cities and seven school districts. Several decades of heavy growth, coupled with a lack of region-wide planning, have led to massive urban sprawl. Because the population is expected to more than double in the next 40 years—from roughly 3.5 million in 2009 to 7.2 mil-

lion by 2050—the region is attempting to coordinate public plans and policies in order to grow more sustainably.

Coalition as Catalyst

By the late 1990s, it was becoming clear to many in central Florida that the area’s network of municipalities needed to reposition itself as a region in order to compete more effectively in the global marketplace. Yet there was no mechanism for regional dialogue or collaboration. To fill this gap, the Orlando Regional Chamber of Commerce (now known as Orlando, Inc.) and the East Central Florida Regional Planning Council convened regional stakeholders in 2000 to launch a unique initiative known as Myregion.org. The initiative’s goal is to help central Florida create a better future for its residents by training regional leaders, developing educational support materials to guide them, identifying key issues and opportunities, and nurturing an understanding of what regionalism is and how it works.

Between March 2006 and August 2007, Myregion.org, partner organizations (including ULI Central Florida), and sponsors engaged in an 18-month campaign called “How Shall We Grow?” that aimed to create a shared vision for central Florida’s future. The campaign engaged nearly 20,000 citizens in the visioning process through presentations, community workshops, and information sessions, as well as a large-scale public awareness education campaign. It also engaged public officials through several regional advisory groups and committees. Three of these groups later formed an umbrella organization, the Joint Policy Framework Committee. Using public input and analyses of growth projections and scenarios,



MYREGION.ORG

this committee developed a geographical vision for central Florida in 50 years, a set of principles to guide future growth, and a preferred development scenario. The plan was presented in a widely circulated publication, “How Shall We Grow? A Shared Vision for Central Florida.” This vision incorporates six regional growth principles:

- Preserve open space, recreational areas, farmland, water resources, and regionally significant natural areas.
- Provide a variety of transportation choices.
- Foster distinct, attractive, and safe places to live.
- Encourage a diverse, globally competitive economy.
- Create a range of obtainable housing opportunities and choices.
- Build communities with educational, health care, and cultural amenities.

Myregion.org summarizes these principles into four themes, which it calls its “four Cs”: conservation, countryside, centers, and corridors.

A regional summit in August 2007 concluded the How Shall We Grow? campaign. (Since then, Myregion.org has gone on to tackle a broad range of regional and super regional planning issues.) At the summit, the Joint Policy Framework Committee unveiled the Central Florida Regional Compact, in which committee members pledged to

- Develop or update strategic regional policy plans, community visions, local government comprehensive plans, transportation plans, resource agency plans, and

economic development plans with more specific goals, policies, and programs for managing long-range growth and guiding infrastructure investments consistent with the vision;

- Consider the vision and the six regional growth principles in future updates of these plans; and
- Coordinate local and regional plans with those of neighboring and overlapping government entities, as well as with key statewide plans.

In December 2007, the Joint Policy Framework Committee was renamed the Central Florida Congress of Regional Leaders, a group that met for the first time in February 2008. This group is now encouraging the implementation of the regional growth vision by developing common policies and practices around the six regional principles of growth. The group consists of 16 members: the county chair or mayor (or a commissioner or council member designated by the chair or mayor to serve on his or her behalf) from each of the seven county commissions or councils; one city mayor from each county; and two representatives of the Central Florida Public School Boards Coalition. All members sign the Central Florida Regional Compact, pledging that they will continue working together to address the key regional issues facing central Florida. The Congress meets four times each year.

Establishing Priorities

In the two years since its creation, the Central Florida Congress of Regional Leaders has provided direction and support on a

number of key regional issues and initiatives. Remarkably—given the slow pace at which governments often act—more than 60 percent of the region’s 93 jurisdictions already have applied elements of the regional growth vision in their comprehensive plans, and more than three dozen organizations and businesses are using themes consistent with the vision in their work.

Members of the Congress also are learning from one another, sharing best practices and experiences in ways that benefit all. “I can point to numerous examples where Congress members took back to our cities and counties solutions that we gained from our informal conversations,” says Tavares Mayor Nancy Clutts, a former member of the Congress, “including tiered utility rates, landscape ordinances, impact fee waiver language, joint meetings with cities sharing common boundaries, and many more.”

The Congress’s focus during its first year was on organizational issues. After many presentations and discussions, the leaders decided to focus on water and transportation for the next few years. In particular, the Congress identified water issues as its number one priority for 2009 and 2010. “The problem we face,” it declared, “is how we should plan together as a region to conserve, reuse, and equitably apportion our water resources sufficient to protect the environment and meet future population, industry, and agricultural demands.”

The Congress is working in partnership with the region’s three water management districts, the University of Central Florida’s Metropolitan Center for Regional Studies, and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection

toward two simple goals: to create a regional water strategy and to avoid the use of public money to litigate water issues. Myregion.org is managing this project, and ULI Central Florida is providing technical assistance. A 40-member steering committee of experts from the public and private sectors has been meeting since July 2009.

Stakeholder meetings to discuss water issues were held in all seven counties in 2009 and early 2010. "Working with county staff and business leaders in each county, as well as with our own steering committee, we invited a broad mix of municipality staff, elected officials, and people from private organizations—a whole gamut of people who really wanted to come together and talk about water issues, within their own counties," notes Shelley Lauten, president of Myregion.org. "Our goal was to 'bubble up' the common issues that we were hearing across all seven counties."

At its December 2009 meeting, the Congress reviewed and discussed the themes that emerged from the stakeholder meetings. Future efforts include a forum on water supply and demand issues in June 2010, followed by a presentation to the Congress. "Within the next few months," says Congress Chair Gary Bruhn, mayor of Windermere, "we will discuss a water policy that we hope will be a model for the region."

The Congress identified transportation as another major issue facing the region. At a February 2009 "Connecting the Dots" event, James Sellen, principal of VHB MillerSellen and a ULI Central Florida vice chair, briefed Congress members on the preliminary results from a ULI Central Florida workshop held the day before, at which more than 150

participants identified barriers and proposed solutions to the region's transportation and land use issues. At the December 2009 meeting, members were updated on a new initiative, "Connecting for Global Competitiveness: Tampa Bay–Central Florida Super Region." This initiative, which began in January 2010, aims to quantify the value to the overall economy of working together as a 13-county super region. It will emphasize the value of transportation alternatives, including the proposed Tampa Bay–Central Florida high-speed rail line as well as SunRail, the 61-mile (98-km) central Florida commuter rail line that is expected to begin carrying passengers in 2013. Congress members continue to be advocates for regional-scale thinking on transportation and for regional solutions, both within their communities and regionally.

Moving Forward

Since their first meeting, members of the Central Florida Congress of Regional Leaders have emphasized the importance of creating a platform for communicating issues of regional importance to the state legislators representing central Florida. This emphasis led to the first-ever Central Florida Legislative Delegation meeting, which was held in December 2009. In coming years, the Congress expects to continue its efforts to develop regional consensus on issues and to advocate for those issues.

"The Congress of Regional Leaders offers a permissive, safe forum at which seasoned leaders can connect around common issues, engage in frank exchanges and productive collaboration, and generate resources that result in a stronger contingency of central Florida leadership," notes Clutts. "This, in

turn, benefits constituents across all geographic and political boundaries."

"The fact that we are talking about regional issues such as transportation and water is a giant step from where we were just a few years ago," comments Bruhn. "Going forward," he adds, "I see the Congress continuing to be an open forum at which leaders and citizens share their ideas, concerns, and solutions—a place where we can identify issues that will impact all of us in the region. I see us educating and providing expertise and direction on best practices and lessons learned."

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Vision North Texas

A multistakeholder alliance in the greater Dallas–Fort Worth area makes the case for “think regionally, act locally” with a clearly articulated vision and action plan.

Creating a regional vision is an important step on the road to a sustainable regional development strategy. The next step—a plan for action that will transform the vision into reality—is equally important. Vision North Texas—a private, public, and academic partnership created to serve as a forum for dialogue and action on growth and development issues in the greater Dallas–Fort Worth area—has created both a vision and an action plan, a “playbook” that identifies the tools and techniques needed to produce action to achieve its vision for a sustainable future. The plan also aims to coordinate the use of these tools and techniques, to break down the “silos” that separate planning efforts and investment strategies for housing, education, transportation, health care, and so forth—and for different municipalities within a region.

In many parts of the United States, regional planning efforts typically are initiated by local councils of governments as a result of mandates from the state government. Texas, how-

ever, is quite averse to such top-down directives. “One of the things I find most notable about our efforts,” notes Karen Walz, Vision North Texas project manager, “is that we’ve created this plan out of the interest and support of people within the region, not because someone else told us that we had to do it. This is a fine example for other regions in states that do not have a state mandate, funding, or programs for regional planning.”

Coalition as Catalyst

North Texas, the 16-county area surrounding Dallas and Fort Worth, is the fourth-largest region in the United States, with more than 150 cities and a population that is projected to nearly double by 2050, from 6 million in 2008 to almost 12 million. Soon after local ULI members formed the district council now known as ULI North Texas in early 2004, its chair, John Walsh, president of TIG Real Estate Services, Inc., challenged members to propose innovative projects that would have a positive impact on the region and help build the fledgling group’s reputation as an innovator without duplicating the efforts of other area organizations. Fernando Costa, then planning director for Fort Worth, took up the challenge, proposing that the district council lead a visioning effort that would help the region deal with its rapid growth. ULI North Texas agreed to take on the effort and, that same year, formed the Vision North Texas regional planning committee. ULI North Texas, the North Central Texas Council of Governments, and the University of Texas at Arlington all are charter sponsors of Vision North Texas and have maintained their commitment to and support for the visioning process.



VISION NORTH TEXAS

Beginning with a one-day Reality Check exercise in April 2005, Vision North Texas has engaged diverse stakeholders from all parts of the region and all walks of life in a long-term discussion about how the region will accommodate growth. After five years and more than 150 presentations, workshops, research efforts, and debates the group has reached a number of conclusions.

“What really surprised us,” comments Costa, now an assistant city manager for Fort Worth, “was the degree of consensus that emerged from the process. There was some concern at the outset that we’d hear such a wide range of opinions that no clear consensus would emerge. Yet quite the opposite was true. People expressed support for certain ideas that conventional wisdom previously suggested would be infeasible, basic ideas like increasing density, mixing residential and commercial uses, and public transportation. We don’t fool ourselves into thinking there won’t still be resistance to some of these ideas; we know

there will be. But we believe that the best approach to that resistance is education and the provision of examples that people can experience firsthand.”

“North Texans want a future that is better than the one forecast by a continuation of ‘business as usual’ trends,” according to “North Texas 2050,” a document released in early 2010 that describes the preferred future envisioned by Vision North Texas participants and proposes actions to achieve that vision. In fact, reports Costa, the mantra that has grown out of Vision North Texas is “business as usual is dead”—a phrase that was coined by University of Texas Arlington dean of architecture, Donald Gatzke, as a concise way of saying, “We have to start doing things differently.”

“North Texas 2050” is the result of a collaboration of many experts from many fields, as well as input from interested residents and direction from regional leaders. The docu-

ment contains two major sections. The first, “A Vision for North Texas,” describes the preferred future envisioned by Vision North Texas participants. It describes a region that

- Contains diverse neighborhoods, mixed-use centers, and communities that appeal to people of all income levels and at all stages of their lives;
- Is a preferred location for the employees and businesses that make up the broad-based and innovative local economy;
- Offers residents and businesses access to resources and opportunities that will lead to their long-term success;
- Protects, manages, and enhances critical natural areas and uses energy and natural resources responsibly; and
- Supports resilient and effective responses to change through collaboration and cooperation within the region.

This section offers 12 guiding principles for the region’s growth and development that provide a more precise description of the region’s preferred future. It identifies five types of areas (natural, rural, separate community, outer tier, and inner tier), each with its own challenges and opportunities, and two types of centers (employment centers and mixed-use centers) that are focal points for the region and its communities. This section also recommends a pattern for physical development and a framework for investment that will enable decision makers throughout the region to apply these principles to their properties, businesses, and communities.

The second section, “Action Package,” identifies the tools and techniques needed to



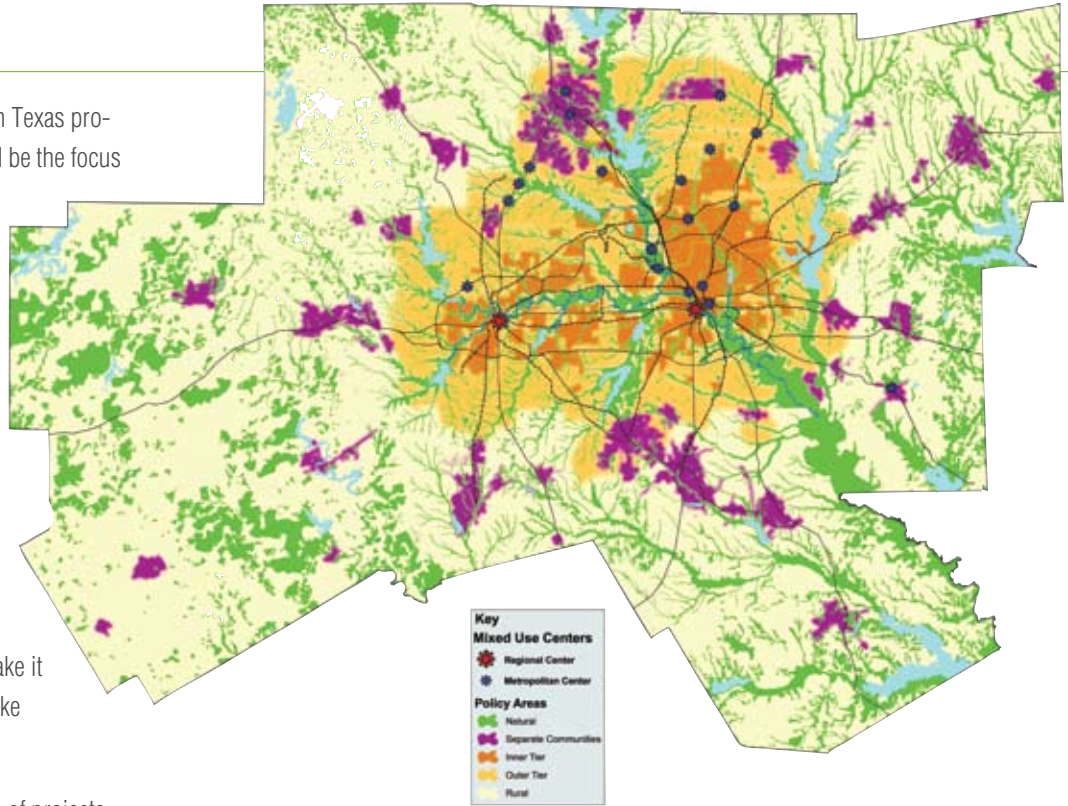
VISION NORTH TEXAS

achieve the vision. Vision North Texas proposes that these actions should be the focus of next steps to achieve the preferred future proposed in “North Texas 2050.”

Taking Action

The action package identifies a set of tools organized in eight groups:

- **Incentives**—such as tax abatements or fast-tracking of a project’s development review and approval process—that make it easier for decision makers to take action that supports the vision;
- **Best Practices**—examples of projects or programs that give decision makers a better understanding of things they have not done before, including a set of development best practice case studies;
- **Model Ordinances and Templates** that enable decision makers to implement a new tool more quickly because they provide standard examples that can be customized to the needs of a specific community;
- **Technical Assistance** that offers communities the expertise or resources that may be needed to put a new program into place;
- **Benchmarks and Indicators** that measure conditions at the beginning of a program and make it possible to measure and monitor activities over time, enabling decision makers to determine how much progress is being made;
- **New Institutions and Other Entities** that may be needed to produce results;



- **Regional Coordination and Collaboration** among jurisdictions, across areas of expertise, and among diverse stakeholders that will help implement the vision; and

- **Communication**, which will be needed to share the vision with all North Texans and to educate them about the choices that will lead to a better, more sustainable future.

From a long list of more than 200 potential action items, Vision North Texas leaders recommended the top 20 that they believe should receive the greatest amount of attention in 2010. These action items are organized in four categories:

- **Structure for North Texas 2050 Implementation**, which focuses on creating an action team, securing funding, engaging state and federal agencies, and defining indicators to use in measuring progress;

- **Alignment of Existing Regional Plans and Policies**, which includes updating the regional mobility plan, regional water plans, and the Trinity Common Vision (a regionwide plan for the Trinity River and the natural areas surrounding it);

- **Creation or Expansion of Specific Regional Coalitions**, including creating a North Texas Municipal Sustainability Forum and a Healthy Communities Municipal Coalition, expanding economic development and education collaborations, and including housing initiatives with regional sustainability efforts; and

- **Refinement of the Preferred Future**, which focuses on actions to refine the preferred physical development pattern through additional stakeholder discussions, complete the regional ecosystem framework, establish phasing priorities and secure funding for public investments, among others.

Continuing the Effort

An appendix to “North Texas 2050” lists all the potential action tools identified through the visioning process. The Vision North Texas Website presents detailed information about many of the proposed tools, including local and regional examples that can be tailored to meet the unique needs of individual communities.

“The challenge facing us now,” notes Walsh, “is to keep the momentum that we have today going, to apply the concepts that result from this process, allowing our region to execute better, more forward-thinking policies and provide opportunities to create a better regional community. We can’t help but believe that we can change, that we can make a better future.”

The effort continues. At a regional summit held on March 5, 2010, regional leaders shared their responses to the “North Texas 2050” recommendations and the steps they intend to take so that the vision for a preferred future proposed by this report will become reality. Participants shared their perspectives on the tools and strategies that they will use to create a future that will be better than “business as usual.” The publication’s final action item calls for the release of a progress report at another regional summit in early 2011, where the region’s stakeholders and decision makers will convene to review progress in implementing the vision and to decide on priorities for the future.

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Trinity River,
part of the
North Texas
ecosystem.

Washington Smart Growth Alliance

A pioneering smart growth alliance recognizes and promotes sustainable development and conservation in the National Capitol Region.

Recognizing what constitutes low-impact, smart growth development and encouraging and supporting projects that exemplify such development is an essential element in promoting sustainability. Recognizing which parts of a region should not be developed—in other words, where the region should focus its conservation efforts—also is an important element in guiding growth in smart, sustainable ways. Two pioneering programs of the Washington SGA address these two interconnected goals, by recognizing both smart growth development proposals and important regional conservation initiatives.

Founded as a collaborative partnership of five civic, business, development, and environmental organizations (the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, the Coalition for Smarter Growth, the Greater Washington Board of Trade, the Metropolitan Washington Builders' Council, and ULI Washington), the Washington SGA has as its mission to research, identify, and encourage land use development and transportation policies and practices that support smart growth in the Washington, D.C., region. The group's goals are to enhance regional cooperation; encourage mixed-use pedestrian- and transit-oriented development projects; promote housing and transportation choices for a range of incomes throughout the region, particularly as infill development; and respect and conserve significant environmen-

tal, cultural, and recreational resources. Two of the alliance's most effective programs—the Smart and Sustainable Growth Recognition Program and the Regional Conservation Priorities Program—recognize, respectively, proposed development projects that reflect the core characteristics of smart growth and regional conservation initiatives that contribute to more sustainable development patterns as well as to the region's quality of life.

Coalition as Catalyst

In the late 1990s, leaders of business, civic, environmental, and other nongovernmental organizations in the Washington, D.C., area began meeting at a series of off-the-record brown-bag lunches. Much to their surprise, they discovered that they were in fundamental agreement on about 80 percent of the issues facing the region. From these meetings grew a desire to create an institutional framework that would capture what Sam Black, senior counsel at Squire Sanders and member of ULI Washington—who now serves as chairman of the board and president of the Washington SGA—calls “this impulse of cooperation.”

The result was the Washington SGA. Each of the alliance's five founding partners agreed to pay annual dues to create a budget for the fledgling group. Recognizing that ULI Washington occupied a trusted “middle ground” among alliance members, the founding partners also agreed that a ULI Washington representative would chair the group, a situation that continues to this day. All founding partner organizations remain involved; two additional partners—Enterprise Community Partners and the ULI Terwilliger Center for Workforce Housing, joined the alliance later.



**WASHINGTON
SMART GROWTH
ALLIANCE**

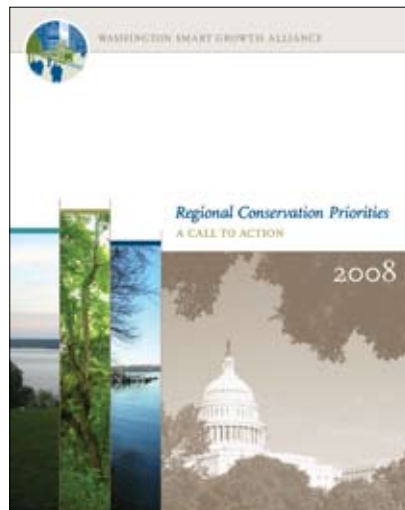
Recognizing Smart and Sustainable Growth

The first activity that the alliance decided to undertake was the creation of a jury that would evaluate real estate development proposals and recognize those that exemplify smart and sustainable growth characteristics. This concept grew into the Smart and Sustainable Growth Recognition Program, which provides formal recognition of and independent support for such proposals. It is the first program in the region through which prominent environmental groups (among others) endorse proposals for major development projects.

The program aims to encourage support for and approval of outstanding proposals by informing regulators, public officials, citizens groups, and others about the advantages the projects can bring to a community and to the region. It solicits applications from the region's development community and charges a fee (originally \$500, later raised to \$1,000 and then to \$2,500) for each application. Only developments that are—or soon will be—under review for development approval and that have not completed the entitlement process or broken ground may apply.

Black, who chaired the program's jury for the first few years, found the process invigorating. "At first," he notes, "we had no idea whether there'd be intense debate, whether jury members might not agree on anything, whether people might just get up in a huff and walk out of the room. We quickly realized that we had a consensus about what constituted low-impact, sustainable development. We never had any major disagreements."

The jury—which consists of primary and alternate jurors nominated by each member, as well as at-large members who provide geographic range and expertise in various disciplines—meets on a quarterly basis to evaluate each application against a set of objective criteria, and then sends a letter of recognition to developers whose proposed projects meet the program's demanding standards. These criteria include location; density, design, and diversity of uses (the "three Ds" of smart growth); transportation, mobility, and accessibility; environmental



conservation; housing affordability; and community benefits and participation. The jury operates by consensus; every member must agree that a project is worthy of recognition. All applications are strictly confidential; jury meetings are private, and jury members who may be involved with particular projects recuse themselves from the discussions of those proposals. Applicants not granted recognition are notified by a telephone call; only those granted recognition receive a formal letter.

The program has evolved over the years. In addition to raising the application fee, the Washington SGA added several tiers in 2007, to recognize projects at various stages. "Preliminary recognition" is granted to early-stage proposals for which few details have been determined. "Final recognition" is based on detailed design and specification data and graphics. It indicates that the development would, if built as planned, help the region accommodate growth in a manner that achieves sustainable economic, environmental, and quality-of-life objectives. "Exemplary recognition" is granted to developments that meet even stricter criteria.

The alliance strengthened its affordable housing criteria when Enterprise Community Partners joined in 2006 and has recognized numerous projects that include such housing. When the ULI Terwilliger Center joined in 2009, the alliance created two additional categories for particular types of developments. "Affordable Housing Distinction" recognizes projects that go beyond local requirements to provide housing for households earning less than 80 percent—and particularly those earning less than 60 percent—of area median income while also meeting the program's other criteria. "Workforce Housing Recognition"—a special category of recognition that will be conferred jointly by the alliance and the ULI Terwilliger Center—recognizes projects that provide homes for households earning between 60 and 120 percent of area median income. (Special consideration is given to the proximity of workforce housing to employment centers or transit nodes.) The alliance hopes to recognize the first projects in these two categories in 2010.

The Smart and Sustainable Growth Recognition Program has been a huge success since its early years, which conveniently coincided with a building boom. The Washington SGA received 20 to 25 applications each year and was able to use the income from application fees to fund both this program and some of its other work. From 2004 through 2008, the program recognized an average of eight projects per year. In addition to providing each recognized project with a letter of recognition and permission to use the Washington SGA logo, the alliance publicizes recognized projects on its Website and through press releases, testimony at public hearings and meetings, public presentations, and full-page advertisements in the *Washington Business Journal*. The program clearly has had an impact on development in the region. In several instances, jury deliberations resulted in changes to development proposals that ultimately resulted in their recognition—and their approval and construction.

Since the beginning of the current recession and building bust, the program has received few applications, and no proposals have been recognized since 2008. But the jury is prepared to resume its quarterly meetings—and to grant recognition to new projects—as soon as the market rebounds and applications pick up. The Washington SGA remains active, however, as its second recognition program has grown and evolved.

Recognizing Regional Conservation Priorities

Soon after the Smart and Sustainable Growth Recognition Program began, the Washington SGA's environmental members—recognizing that this program gives



WASHINGTON SMART GROWTH ALLIANCE

environmental approval to development projects—asked the alliance to institute a similar program that would provide business approval for conservation projects. Thus began what has evolved into a sister program, the Washington SGA Regional Conservation Priorities Program. The philosophy behind the program is grounded in the alliance's belief that conservation is more than just an amenity and that thoughtfully conceived conservation initiatives can shape future growth patterns and enhance land stewardship, air and water quality, and quality of life.

At an annual Conservation Summit held each spring, a diverse group of conservation, government, and business representatives from throughout the region comes together to identify a wide range of potential candidates. Nominations received from other interested parties, including local parks and recreation authorities, local governments, and environmental advocacy groups, may be

added to the list after the summit. In early fall, the jury makes its final selection of programs and projects. In December, at a press conference, the jury presents the product of its work—a high-quality, four-color booklet describing and providing additional information about each recognized initiative.

According to Deborah Miness Westbrooke, executive director of the Washington SGA, “One of the earliest lessons we learned from the conservation priorities program is that you can't ask a nonprofit group on a shoestring budget to pay an application fee.” This program therefore is funded from the alliance's operating income, which comes from member dues and foundation grants. In its early years, the program was largely subsidized by income from the smart growth recognition program.

“We also learned that there has to be a champion for each project,” notes Westbrooke. “What we're trying to do through our

recognition is to raise public awareness, to help this project get over a hurdle. In order to do that, we identify a champion for each initiative—either the organization that is planning it or a key sponsor—and list it in the publication, so that people know how to get more information about and provide support for the project.”

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Leading the Way

Westbrooke points out with pride that both recognition programs have been models for other SGAs across the country: “In areas of the country that don’t have as much smart growth happening, this is a novel idea, and one that other alliances are pursuing with great gusto. They have a lot of the same fears that we did, initially: What do you do if jury members disagree? I think they’re all going to find that there will be a general consensus about what constitutes smart growth for that region. And I hope they’ll be as successful with their programs as we have been.”

ULI Seattle and Eight Partner Organizations

A multistakeholder alliance in the Puget Sound Region advocates for shared goals to promote sustainable land use strategies.

A Reality Check exercise often is the first step in creating a broad-based multistakeholder alliance to generate political will for envisioning and implementing sustainable regional land use strategies. In Washington state's Puget Sound region, eight organizations that sponsored an April 2008 Reality Check exercise—the first to take greenhouse gas emissions into account—have formed such an alliance. The Quality Growth Alliance is committed to building on shared principles and fostering creative approaches not only to manage growth but also to leverage it as a regional opportunity.

The alliance members—ULI Seattle, the Puget Sound Regional Council, the University of Washington College of Built Environments, Enterprise Community Partners, the Cascade Land Conservancy, the Master Builders Association of King and Snohomish Counties, Futurewise (formerly 1,000 Friends of Washington), and the Washington chapter of the National Association of Industrial and Office Properties—may hold differing positions on some issues, but their focus as an alliance is on identifying areas of consensus and working together in those areas. The alliance has four major goals: to raise greater awareness of land use, transportation, and climate change issues; to provide expertise on these issues to communities; to research compact development

policy and best practices; and to highlight regional successes.

“The overall goal of the [alliance] is to elevate the debate about land use to a regional level, and to do that beyond the scope of traditional government,” notes Patrick Callahan, the alliance's first chair and a former chair of ULI Seattle, as well as founder and CEO of Urban Renaissance Group, LLC. “Historically, the debates about land use policy often occur over projects. They don't arise out of people asking ‘How do we want to grow?’ The [alliance] is asking the region that question—and we're asking everyone, not just the people on planning commissions and city councils.”

Coalition as Catalyst

The Puget Sound Regional Council expects the four-county Puget Sound region to grow by 1.2 million jobs and 1.5 million residents by 2040, requiring substantial new investment in infrastructure, transportation, and housing. Faced with the equivalent of the entire Portland, Oregon, metropolitan area moving to King, Kitsap, Snohomish, and Pierce counties, ULI Seattle and seven other groups interested in exploring how to guide this growth decided to hold the region's first Reality Check exercise. Under the leadership of ULI Seattle, they invited 250 community and business leaders representing a wide range of viewpoints to the day-long event in April 2008, at which they challenged the leaders to find ways to accommodate this growth and to identify the best places for transportation infrastructure investment.

Working in 30 small groups, participants spent the day identifying barriers and solutions to high-quality growth. Working with large maps

**Quality
Growth
Alliance**
A Framework for Sound Action



of the region, they identified communities in which growth should occur and the kinds of transportation links that should connect these communities. Participants in the visioning exercise reached consensus on a number of principles that they felt should guide the region. They agreed that the region should

- Create walkable, compact, complete urban centers;
- Invest in transportation and infrastructure;
- Protect and preserve the natural environment;
- Balance housing with jobs;
- Create a variety of housing options for all;
- Stimulate economic development;
- Support the goals of the Washington State Growth Management Act; and
- Create more transit-oriented development.

“What was most surprising about Reality Check was the consensus,” says Callahan, who also served as Reality Check cochair. “We had a broad cross-section of people representing conservation groups and development companies, yet they agreed on so much. The alliance is building on that consensus.”

In September 2008, the eight organizations released the results of the Reality Check exercise and outlined their coordinated plan to help the region accommodate growth by officially launching the alliance. They had spent the intervening months organizing the alliance, working out the roles of each partner organization, and crafting a detailed memorandum of understanding that spells out each partner’s financial and staffing contributions. The Quality Growth Alliance is not a stand-alone nonprofit organization; instead, it is a framework for collaboration among its member organizations, each of which makes a financial contribution based

on its financial capabilities, and each of which takes on particular elements of the alliance’s program of work.

The ULI Seattle staff team provides dedicated staffing for the Quality Growth Alliance and manages its meetings and day-to-day activities. Representatives of all eight partner organizations—including both staff and board-level members—meet each quarter to discuss their long- and short-term objectives and their respective roles. The alliance has organized itself around five committees, which consist of a steering committee and four committees that address public awareness, transit-oriented development, climate change, and visualization tools.

Developing a Program of Work

One of the alliance’s overarching goals is to establish itself as an effective vehicle for informing current debates on growth, transportation, and land use issues. Another of its key goals is to avoid duplicating efforts by the partners and to leverage partners’ existing work. Different member groups thus take on the responsibility to lead different efforts. For example, Futurewise—an environmental group that regularly lobbies the state legislature—took the lead in working with the alliance’s Climate Change Committee by asking the alliance to present data about the effects that locating jobs and housing near transit has on climate change. Committee members spoke to the legislature’s Local Government and Housing Committee in January 2009, presenting data that demonstrated the role that land use plays in reducing car trips and highlighting the finding that concentrating growth in urban cen-



TODD BRONK, ED/AV

ters that are connected by a reliable transportation network can lead to significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

Another partner, the University of Washington, has taken the lead in several initiatives, including the production of a report titled “From Barriers to Solutions and Best Practices: Urban Centers and TOD in Washington.” Released in September 2009, this report describes strategies that can overcome barriers to high-quality urban center and transit-oriented development (TOD) in the region. The guidance and conclusions it presents are intended to be an applied, useful tool for government staff, elected officials, developers, and others. This report was the second commissioned by the alliance from the Runstad Center for Real Estate Studies in the University of Washington’s College of Built Environ-

ments. (The first report compiled national and international resources on transit-oriented development and town centers in an annotated bibliography.) Both reports are available on the alliance’s Website.

The University of Washington also is taking the lead on one of the alliance’s largest and most exciting undertakings to date, Decision Commons. The goal of this multiphase project is to develop an advanced, three-dimensional visualization technology to facilitate the approval of sustainable, smart growth projects. Modeled after Arizona State University’s Decision Theater in Tempe, the software tool will help community leaders and residents envision what a proposed project would look like from the street level and will enable decision makers to evaluate the impacts of the proposed project on existing in-

frastructure and the environment, including greenhouse gas emissions and water consumption. Developing Decision Commons—which received a ULI Community Action Grant in November 2009—will require considerable additional funding. The Quality Growth Alliance has formed a technical advisory group to work with the university on this initiative and is seeking other sources of funding and in-kind contributions.

“Decision Commons has the potential to become a ‘game changer’ in how regions approach a wide range of growth issues,” comments Greg Johnson, former chair of ULI Seattle and president of Wright Runstad & Company. “It could be something that not only helps speed up the decision-making process but, more important, improves the quality of the decisions that regions make.”



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Moving Ahead

In April 2010, the Quality Growth Alliance launched its newest project, a recognition program modeled on that of the Washington SGA in Washington, D.C. This program aims to raise the bar for high-quality, sustainable projects by setting a regional standard of practice that is both aspirational and sustainable. Applications (which require a \$2,500 submission fee) are considered on a quarterly basis; the deadline for the first round of applications was June 15. A ten-member jury led by Bill Kreager, principal with the Seattle architecture firm Mithun and a ULI member, is evaluating and judging applications on seven distinct themes: location; density, design, and mix of uses; transportation, mobility, and accessibility; environment; mixed-income housing (for residential projects); community benefits; and community participation. The program offers three categories of recognition, depending on the stage of the development proposal and the amount of detail available to the jury.

All applications are kept confidential. The jury communicates its comments to the developers of proposed projects not accepted for recognition and encourages them to revise their proposals and reapply. Developers who receive recognition can use it to publicize their projects as they move through local approval processes, and alliance members have offered to testify before city councils, design review panels, and other groups on behalf of recognized projects.

Going forward, the Quality Growth Alliance is striving to build on its strengths and credibility as an alliance of diverse organizations that share much common ground. Keeping such a diverse group of organiza-

tions focused on common goals and working together can be challenging. "It's very easy for the alliance's member organizations to drift off on their own separate paths, and the actions of one organization sometimes will upset members of another," says Kelly Mann, executive director of ULI Seattle. "Diplomacy is critical; building relationships among the individual members of partner organizations is extremely important. It's easy to vilify an organization, but it's harder to vilify a person, someone you've worked with on a particular program over the course of a year or so. Building these links among our partner organizations has led directly to many sincere personal relationships that transcend people's other organizational affiliations."

"And even groups as diverse as the Master Builders Association and Futurewise agree on a lot of fundamental issues," she adds. "That agreement is powerful—to legislators, to other public officials, and to the general public. It gives the alliance greater credibility and strength with which to advocate for our common goals."

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