



# Smart Growth Strategies for New England

## Conference Summary and Outcomes

Hynes Convention Center  
Boston, Massachusetts  
February 2, 1999



[www.epa.gov/region1](http://www.epa.gov/region1)

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UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY  
1 CONGRESS STREET  
SUITE 1100  
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02114-2023

April, 1999

Dear New Englander:

Thank you for your interest in the "Smart Growth Strategies for New England" conference, which attracted 1,000 participants who eagerly contributed their ideas and insights for shaping a smart growth agenda for New England. We hope the following summary of the day captures this creativity and energy.

You and those of us at EPA-New England treasure the character of our region - be it our classic villages with a town green and houses clustered nearby, with adjoining woods and open spaces, or the vibrant and walkable neighborhoods and converted mill buildings of our great urban centers. These are the reasons for holding the conference, and the reasons for bringing a wide range of partners to plan and sponsor the conference. To protect this character, to regenerate it in some of our cities and towns, and to create it in new developments - will require the kind of community spirit and collaboration that was so much a part of our conference.

As you will see in this summary, conference speakers described a number of successes that are already supporting livable communities in New England, as well as strategies and challenges needed to support future efforts. EPA-New England will be supporting these next steps through our "Smart Growth Action Plan." A description of the Plan is included in the conference summary, and the full text can be found on our web site (<http://www.epa.gov/region1/>).

On behalf of EPA-New England, I express my appreciation for your interest and efforts. We look forward to working with you. Should you have any questions, or need additional information, please do not hesitate to contact Rosemary Monahan at (617) 918-1087 or Tara Tracy at (617) 918-1697.

John P. DeVillars  
Regional Administrator



## A Message from the Honorable Howard Dean, Governor of Vermont

April, 1999

Dear New Englander:

It was a pleasure to address the attendees at the "Smart Growth Strategies for New England" conference. Issues surrounding unplanned growth are of concern to all residents of this unique corner of America.

Vermont has taken some significant strides toward protecting the social and economic integrity of our communities. We possess one of the most stringent statewide development control laws in the United States, Act 250, which requires all development projects over ten acres to undergo review by a District Environmental Commission. During the past legislative session we passed the Downtown and Community Development Act, which creates a number of incentives for municipalities to focus development in designated downtowns. Furthermore, during my administration we have conserved over 350,000 acres of farm and forest land to remain open to Vermonters for all time - most notably the recent acquisition of 133,000 acres of Champion Lumber Company forest land in Vermont's northeast kingdom.

While we have made enormous progress in our efforts to bolster Vermont's communities and landscape, there is still work to be done. During this legislative session we will build on the foundation of our Downtown Act, and create greater incentives for businesses to locate in our downtowns.

The fight against sprawl is far more than an effort to boost downtown economics or concentrate growth in designated areas. If we ignore the threats to communities posed by economic and social homogenization, we will forfeit those qualities that make New England, and communities everywhere, unique and vital; and in so doing we will jeopardize the very qualities that make this region such a wonderful place to live.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Howard Dean".

Howard Dean, M.D.  
Governor of Vermont

# Conference Overview

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The concept of the “Smart Growth Strategies for New England” conference grew out of discussions among staff and leaders of the US Environmental Protection Agency’s New England office and many of the agency’s partners in preserving and protecting this special corner of the country. The purpose of this 1-day conference was to provide attendees with an opportunity to hear about ways to foster economic growth while protecting natural resources and quality of life. Specifically, the conference’s agenda was comprised of a morning plenary session, followed by concurrent breakout sessions which focused on the barriers to and incentives for achieving smart growth. Using a working lunch format, the agenda then provided for the identification of specific actions needed to create and support livable communities in urban, suburban, and rural settings. The conference agenda closed with a plenary summarizing the lunchtime breakout sessions and a call to action. The speakers and chairs of all of these sessions represented the region’s leaders and experts from various facets of the development, planning, and conservation communities.

The conference planning committee was comprised of representatives of diverse organizations. The committee worked together in a cooperative and collaborative manner, reflecting the overall spirit needed to create and support livable communities in New England. With EPA-New England, the following organizations planned and co-sponsored the conference:

- National Association of Industrial and Office Properties
- National Trust for Historic Preservation
- The Nature Conservancy
- New England Chapters of the American Planning Association
- New England Governors’ Conference
- Trust for Public Land
- Urban Land Institute

Also participating in planning the conference were representatives of the Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs and the Maine State Planning Office.

In addition, the valuable contributions of the conference's associate sponsors should be acknowledged. These organizations were:

- Associated Industries of Massachusetts
- Business and Industry Association of New Hampshire
- Connecticut Business and Industry Association, Inc.
- Connecticut Conference of Municipalities
- Conservation Law Foundation
- Council of State Governments
- Eco/Eco Civic Forum (Maine)
- Environmental Diversity Forum
- Grow Smart Rhode Island
- International Council of Shopping Centers
- Lincoln Institute of Land Policy
- Maine Association of Planners
- Maine Real Estate and Development Association
- National Association of Home Builders
- New Hampshire Municipal Association
- New Hampshire Planning Association
- Northeast Watershed Roundtable
- US Department of Housing and Urban Development
- US Department of Transportation
- Vermont Association of Planners
- Vermont Forum on Sprawl
- Vermont League of Cities and Towns

## Morning Plenary

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Setting the Stage: John P. DeVillars,  
EPA's New England Administrator

Keynote Address: The Honorable Howard Dean,  
Governor of Vermont

Signing: Memorandum of Understanding

## Setting the Stage: John P. DeVillars, EPA's New England Administrator

After welcoming the approximately 1,000 attendees, Regional Administrator DeVillars described the uniqueness and variety of New England - its villages, urban centers, forests, mountains, and estuaries. He also described the adverse land use and fiscal effects that unplanned growth is having on the region, including:

- the loss of more than 1,200 acres of New England's open space a week to development - including nearly 2 acres each hour in Massachusetts alone
- the development of 26,000 acres in Rhode Island over the past ten years - an area the size of two Providences - while the state's population has remained stable
- the expenditure in Maine of \$727 million (1970 - 1995) on new school construction in fast growing towns, while the state's public school population shrank by 27,000 students
- for every \$1 in revenue a low-density housing development brings to a New England municipality, it costs the community as much as \$1.50 in increased expenses to pay for schools, roads, and other services

DeVillars then provided numerous details regarding the environmental impacts of this unplanned growth. Among those: more than half of all New England's water pollution now is due to non-point sources; habitat destruction and fragmentation are threatening more than 80 percent of the endangered species in the region; and New Englanders are driving nearly a third more miles than they were just a decade ago, an increase of another third from the previous decade. This increased travel accounts for about 40 percent of the smog pollution that causes violations of health-based air standards for more than 20 days a year in parts of New England.



Given these statistics, DeVillars said there is a need for all levels of government, as well as other organizations and groups, to work together to solve these problems. He subsequently announced the “EPA-New England Smart Growth Action Plan” as the agency’s contribution to solving these problems. The Plan has four major components:

- ***building effective partnerships*** with a wide variety of organizations such as the conference co-sponsors and associate sponsors, as well as EPA-New England’s federal and state agency partners
- ***reshaping EPA-New England’s programs and policies*** by using federal authorities to oppose or modify projects that contribute to sprawl, as well as to further develop and support efforts such as Brownfields projects and the Urban Environmental Initiative
- ***strengthening local capacity*** through a “Fundamentals of Smart Growth” training program and a new competitive grants program
- ***elevating public awareness*** through workshops, outreach, and local conferences across New England

In conclusion, DeVillars said it is particularly important for EPA-New England to engage a wide range of business, government, and nonprofit stakeholders in these efforts, given New England’s long and rich history of local rule. The full text of DeVillars’ speech and the Smart Growth Action Plan can be viewed on the EPA-New England web site at <http://www.epa.gov/region1/>.

## Keynote Address: The Honorable Howard Dean, Governor of Vermont

Governor Dean provided an overview of Vermont's efforts to combat unplanned growth, beginning with a description of Act 250, the state's land use law that guides and supports economic growth without "paving over the state." While Act 250 is not without its faults, the Governor said that, for example, the law's prevention of speculative development had a critical role in averting major real estate and banking failures during the recession of the early 1990's. He stated that good land use planning can have economic and unexpected benefits.

Nonetheless, Vermont is developing rapidly. In the past 20 years, vehicle miles traveled have doubled, despite only a 25 percent population increase. Meanwhile, areas such as the City of Burlington and the rest of Chittenden County are experiencing enormous growth from commercial development. As a result, the private sector has been an important participant in Vermont's overall efforts to control sprawl. Among the initiatives the Governor mentioned are:

- ***Government agencies*** should not be funding roads and sewers that facilitate sprawl. Also, state agencies are required by executive order to locate their offices in downtowns. Further, the Vermont Board of Education adopted a policy in 1997 that recognizes that schools are an essential part of the community, by requiring all school districts to thoroughly study renovation options prior to pursuing new school construction that could occur in greenfields or outside of a community center. Post Offices also were cited as an essential component of most downtowns, even doubling as general stores in smaller communities. Accordingly, the state has discouraged the US Postal Service from relocation to non-downtown sites.
- ***Incentives*** are needed to draw people to downtowns. Vermont's "Downtown Bill" is a start, as it provides for tax credits towards reinvestment projects, planning grants, and tax rebates for the rehabilitation of historical structures. Further, the state has assisted with the development of downtown parking garages to facilitate people getting to and utilizing downtowns. Also cited were Vermont's successful negotiations with "big box" developers such as WalMart, which facilitated their location in two instances in either an existing development or in a downtown. Vermont's legislature will be considering a tax cut this year, and Governor Dean stated his intent to push for a reduced sales tax in downtown areas, as defined by the Downtown Bill.

► *Land conservation* is an essential component of growth management.

Governor Dean cited an example of a corporate headquarters that received an initially inappropriate curb cut to locate near national forest land. Instead of using litigation to stop this development and potentially allowing future development by another party, an agreement was negotiated with the developer where a permanent conservation easement was placed on lands adjacent to the headquarters. The conserved land then was deeded to the Vermont Land Trust.

Governor Dean concluded his remarks by stating that New England has a unique opportunity to create land settlement patterns for the next 100 years. For Vermonters, these 200-year old patterns have created a sense of where their communities begin and end, as well as a sense of the land, since they are able to easily access and use it. While not all of New England's residents live in communities of less than 2,500 as do more than two-thirds of Vermonters, this sense of community can be created throughout the region, through local action. To start, he suggested saving critical pieces of land in individual communities and neighborhoods, and creating bike paths out of railroad beds so people have contact with each other. The Governor stated that this will take daily work by all involved, in order to measure every proposed project against what effect it will have on a community's settlement patterns.

## Signing: Memorandum of Understanding

A “Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Smart Growth” was signed by representatives of:

- US EPA-New England
- US Department of Housing and Urban Development, New England Area
- Four agencies of the US Department of Transportation: the Federal Highway Administration, Massachusetts Division; the Federal Aviation Administration; the Federal Railroad Administration; and the Federal Transit Administration

The MOU recognizes that sprawl is an issue of growing national significance, and that in New England, communities and others are in favor of growth that is economically, environmentally, and socially smart. Based on the “Clinton-Gore Livability Agenda: Building Livable Communities for the 21st Century,” the MOU agencies agreed to undertake specific actions and responsibilities to achieve this type of growth. For example, each agency will develop an implementation plan consistent with the Livability Agenda, and will work with each other and New England communities to provide information and tools in order to effect smart growth.

## Morning Session Summaries: "Overcoming Barriers and Providing Incentives and Tools"

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This part of the conference program included seven concurrent breakout sessions - all focusing on the general issues of overcoming barriers and providing incentives and tools. Each of the sessions targeted specific aspects of these issues - for example, siting of commercial development, and government's role in planning and facilitating growth. The following sections summarize each of the seven breakout sessions.

(1) Incentives for Smart Growth:  
Where and How Should Development Occur?

(2) Encouraging Planned Business Growth:  
Siting Commercial Development and Promoting Urban Redevelopment

(3) Tools for Encouraging Smart Growth and Saving Open Space

(4) Keeping Rural Economies Viable

(5) Infrastructure Investments for Smart Growth

(6) The Role of Local, Regional, and  
State Governments in Planning for Growth

(7) Reshaping Federal and State Policies to  
Encourage Smart Growth

## Morning Session #1—Incentives for Smart Growth: Where and How Should Development Occur?

### Chair:

Philip Langdon, author of *A Better Place to Live: Reshaping the American Suburb*

### Speakers:

Anthony Green, Vice President, The Green Companies

Bennet Heart, Attorney, Conservation Law Foundation

Evan Richert, Director, Maine State Planning Office

John Ewing, Director, Vermont Forum on Sprawl

Gary Garczynski, Senior Officer, National Association of Home Builders

### Panelists:

William Shutkin, Director, New Ecology, Inc.

John Bullard, Executive Director, Family Business Center,  
University of Massachusetts at Dartmouth

Before determining where and how development should occur, speakers agreed that the nation must concur on common definitions of smart growth, sprawl, and sustainable development, and must understand current patterns of development in urban, suburban, and rural areas. Agreement on a common definition will:

- establish a stronger position to create the framework and incentives necessary to promote and support sustainable development
- help to overcome existing barriers between the development community and natural resource managers

Combating sprawl and promoting smart growth will require a combination of strategies, including education, regulatory reform, and financial incentives/disincentives. For example:

- citizens need to be educated on the benefits of increasing density, the actual costs (financial, social, and environmental) of the continuing outward migration to the “fringe,” and the need to change public policies that create unintended development patterns

- the results of consumer choice and preference surveys can be very powerful planning tools
- downtowns and older, close-in areas can be made more attractive for new development and redevelopment by streamlining the permitting process and making zoning more flexible
- tax policies can be changed to favor development and redevelopment in town centers and downtowns, and to discourage sprawl by assessing taxes/fees in outlying areas that reflect the actual costs of this type of development

Innovative approaches - for the use of both existing (e.g., cluster) and new tools - need to be sought and promoted. An example of the latter, “Why not fire trucks designed for (narrower) roads instead of (wide) roads designed for fire trucks?”

## **Morning Session #2—Encouraging Planned Business Growth**

### **Chair:**

David Lee, Vice President, Stull and Lee, Inc.

This session discussed important factors in siting and facilitating business growth given New England demographics, such as the fact that 20 percent of the region’s population lives outside metropolitan areas.

### **(A) Siting Commercial Development**

#### **Speakers:**

Nancy Busnach, President, Busnach Consulting

Susan Houston, Executive Director, Massachusetts Alliance for Economic Development

Charles Shorter, Director of Real Estate Consulting, E and Y  
Kenneth Leventhal Real Estate Group

Case studies identified some of the considerations in siting corporate headquarters and other business developments. These include:

- the need to be near where employees live, and the importance of staff retention
- a productive relationship/partnership with city, state, and others, including corporate support of traffic and school improvements
- a site within 35 miles of a labor pool, as well as proximity to universities for graduate labor, research and development, and training collaboration
- the presence of industry clusters, (e.g., interrelated groups of product and service providers)
- the proximity of markets as well as the adequacy of utility infrastructure
- the need to optimize and support evolving business operating strategies (e.g., operational and functional redeployment opportunities, location attributes, labor, infrastructure, and real estate incentives)
- 21st century factors, including an educated work force, available real estate, and after-the-fact incentives

## **(B) Promoting Urban Redevelopment**

### **Speakers:**

Mike Freimuth, Director of Planning and Economic Development, City of Bridgeport, CT

Tom Ahern, Senior Project Manager, Boston Redevelopment Authority

Alden Raine, Principal, Raine Associates, Inc.

Larry Charles, Executive Director, O.N.E./C.H.A.N.E.

Case studies from Hartford, Providence, Boston, and Bridgeport identified the following characteristics common to successful urban redevelopment:

- the community should be given respect and attention from the beginning, by creating “community ownership” and facilitating community control and community accountability
- measure how development contributes to eliminating poverty



- consider historic preservation needs
- encourage transit-oriented development
- provide financial incentives (e.g., 30-year tax increment financing, grants, loans)
- consider key site characteristics such as location (e.g., waterfront), as well as infrastructure and character (e.g., historically industrial) of the redevelopment area
- enable consolidation of land parcels
- merge local government development and planning staff to facilitate review and permitting

### **Morning Session #3—Tools for Encouraging Smart Growth and Saving Open Space**

**Chair:**

Mark Racicot, Open Space Regional Planner, Metropolitan Area Planning Council

**Speakers:**

Deb Brighton, Principal, Ad Hoc Associates

Thomas Dupree, President, Southern New England Forest Consortium

Robert Mitchell, Planning Director, Town of Amherst, MA

Julie Iffland, Project Manager, Trust for Public Land

Richard Pfurr, Town Planner, Cheshire, CT

**Open space preservation techniques and lessons learned in this session included:**

- concentrate and increase density in downtowns and villages
- take advantage of state agricultural preservation programs, and otherwise protect blocks of farmland
- funding - start a seed fund, no matter how small, and cooperate with both land trusts and neighborhoods, as their fund-raising drives can supplement municipal funding

- create and utilize flexible cluster zoning bylaws
- consider tax issues and consequences - research the actual tax consequence of an open space purchase per household; provide current use taxation for farmland or forest land, or abatements, where appropriate; assess land at its use value; and look at changing the property tax structure to support social, economic, and environmental goals

Lessons learned included:

- innovation, flexibility, and partnerships are critical
- there is no single solution
- the importance of knowing the constituency and their concerns, involving the public, and developing reasonable arguments
- never losing sight that most open space issues become political at some point, and also that old assumptions (e.g., avoid discussion of costs) can be rewritten

## ***Morning Session #4—Keeping Rural Economics Viable***

### **Chair:**

Andrew Whittaker, Editor, *The Forest Forum*

### **Speakers:**

Stephen Taylor, Commissioner, New Hampshire Department of Agriculture, Markets, and Food

Charles Niebling, Senior Director of Policy, Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests

Peter Merritt, President, Aquidneck Island Land Trust

Brent Mitchell, Director of Stewardship, Quebec-Labrador Foundation/Atlantic Center

### **Panelists:**

Jay Healy, Commissioner, Massachusetts Department of Food and Agriculture and Manager, Hall Tavern Farm

Steve Wight, Owner/Manager, Sunday River Inn

**This session explored the inextricable links among three traditionally disparate concerns: (1) supporting the rural economy (agriculture, forestry, and tourism);**

(2) protecting the environment by promoting smart growth; and (3) maintaining a desirable quality of rural life. Highlights included:

- the nature and character of farming is changing, and the number of farms in New England actually increased almost 7 percent from 1992 to 1997
- the profile of a typical farm and farmer is also changing - farms are smaller in terms of sales, fewer farmers are full time, and more are engaged in direct sales to consumers
- marketing strategies must focus on the uniqueness of New England: value-added products including New England-based promotions (e.g., “Made in Vermont”), creating and utilizing local niche markets, and direct marketing as an alternative to wholesale marketing
- “softer” government programs that provide incentives and marketing support are more effective than “harder” regulations or protective programs
- rural economics, environment, and community are closely related, and all should share relevant data in order to make the right decisions regarding protection of the rural landscape
- if the “rurally-used” (e.g., forestry) land parcel holds development rights, then eventually it will be developed; purchase or securing of conservation easements and restrictions, as well as transfer of development rights, among others, are all important tools to prevent unwanted development in rural areas

## Morning Session #5—Infrastructure Investments for Smart Growth

### Chair:

Buzz Constable, Senior Vice President, A.W. Perry, Inc.

### Speakers:

Stephen Burrington, Vice President/General Counsel,  
Conservation Law Foundation

James Dodge, Chairman, President, and CEO, Providence  
Energy Corporation

Peter Markle, Division Administrator, Federal Highway  
Administration

Jane Lincoln, Deputy Commissioner, Maine Department of  
Transportation

Tim Brennan, Executive Director, Pioneer Valley Planning  
Commission

Two overarching themes in this session were:

- the need to “download decision-making” and broaden participation in infrastructure projects to include those at the local level closest to the problem
- the need for a “larger army” of better educated citizens capable of building support for smart growth when opportunities for capital spending choices do occur

Specifically and with respect to transportation, panelists emphasized the need for:

- flexible road building standards to minimize impacts on the environment
- accounting for the potentially negative impacts of road improvements on the sense of community
- goals that include improved public transit, greater pedestrian orientation, and better use of technology and innovation, especially given that the full cost of road maintenance typically is not captured by transportation taxes and fees

In addition, the impacts of the telecommunications boom were questioned. While some believed that this could exacerbate sprawl due to a reduced need to commute, others speculated that the better telecommunication features of urban centers might serve to keep users more centrally located.



Panelists emphasized the impacts of sprawl on other utilities as well (e.g., natural gas, wastewater, drinking water). For example, \$18 million was spent in Rhode Island on expanding natural gas service to new growth areas although overall population grew very little.

### **Morning Session #6—The Role of Local, Regional, and State Governments in Planning for Growth**

**Chair:**

Robert Yaro, Executive Director, Regional Plan Association of New York

**Speakers:**

John Lipman, Director of Growth Planning, MA Executive Office of Environmental Affairs

Peg Elmer, Planning Director, Vermont Department of Housing and Community Affairs

Beth Della Valle, Community Planning and Investment Program Manager, Maine State Planning Office

Armando Carbonell, Executive Director, Cape Cod Commission (now Senior Fellow, Lincoln Institute of Land Policy)

Marilyn Cohen, Director of Planning and Development, Town of North Kingstown, RI

**Panelists:**

David Begelfer, Executive Director, National Association of Industrial and Office Properties

David Luberoff, Assistant Director, Taubman Center for State and Local Government, Kennedy School, Harvard University

Different approaches to planning among federal, state, and local levels of government were compared and contrasted. In particular, suggestions, strategies, and policy options for better intergovernmental coordination were addressed. Specifically:

- patience and persistence are needed to institutionalize a community's vision for its sense of place and its need to preserve it; it is more apparent and identifiable in some areas and regions than in others

- state support of local planning efforts and initiatives is needed, including a definition of planning (which includes more than zoning), to address unplanned growth through understanding of issues such as market forces, cultural heritage, and community character
- municipalities must control their own destinies through planning and zoning initiatives
- urban, suburban, and rural areas all blame each other for sprawl, but actually, all three are a symptom of the same problem
- we must recognize the significant role that property tax based school funding mechanisms play in land use decisions
- residents of sprawling development should pay more of the real costs
- cities should be designed and maintained to be more desirable places to live so people will not be as inclined to leave
- the availability of consumer choices, housing and transportation in particular, are critical in our society

The following challenges for local, regional, and state agencies were identified:

- more funding is needed for local planning
- collaboration among all levels of government is needed
- local land use policies must be respected when regional and state investments are made
- state funding for infrastructure projects must be allocated and targeted, consistent with local policies, to areas planned for growth
- state agency regulatory powers should be exercised
- federal enforcement assistance, as well as funding for state and local planning, is needed
- open space lands should be purchased as part of an overall plan, not as random parcels that are difficult to use or maintain

- keep and make rural industries sustainable
- make urban and inner suburban communities livable so people do not want to keep moving

## Morning Session #7—Reshaping Federal and State Policies to Encourage Smart Growth

### Chair:

Harriet Tregoning, Director, Urban and Economic Development Division, U.S. EPA Office of Policy

### Speakers:

Keith Laughlin, Associate Director for Sustainable Development, Council on Environmental Quality

Mary Lou Crane, Secretary's Representative, U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

Daniel Varin, Chair, Rhode Island Water Resources Board

Peter Clavelle, Mayor, Burlington, VT

Bruce Katz, Director, Brookings Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy, The Brookings Institution

The respective roles and interactions among federal, state, and even local governments that either hinder or help achieve smart growth were considered. The following principles, specifically related to federal agencies, emerged:

- the need for collaboration, convening, communication, and change to create incentives
- agency roles include bringing together sectors of society at odds with one another and spreading information at the local level
- the need to address “pro-sprawl” programs such as the Department of Agriculture’s loan programs for housing, commercial, and waste facilities in rural areas, Housing and Urban Development’s rurally-located programs, some aspects of EPA regulations (e.g., air, water), and the Small Business Loan Program

Speakers identified the ways in which the federal government can change policy to reduce sprawl, including:

- transportation policy must link transportation projects with current and projected land uses
- federal buildings, especially Post Offices, must be located in downtown neighborhoods or within established commercial centers
- federal dollars should be invested in upgrading aging urban water and sewer systems, instead of building new systems that encourage growth
- public infrastructure funding for downtown projects, as well as incentives to own homes in urban centers, should be expanded
- expand the Brownfield program to include funding for cleanups

Solutions at all levels of government should include:

- overcoming the fear of increased density at the local level and offering financial incentives to encourage it, including the use of basic infrastructure;
- changing policies that concentrate poverty, and offer incentives to stem “urban flight,” including tax credits and transportation enhancements
- improving the education system in urban areas
- overcoming the reliance on property taxes to finance local government and education is needed in order to facilitate the other solutions



## Working Lunch Session Summaries: "Smart Growth in Practice"

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The goal of these concurrent sessions was to identify what actions are needed to put smart growth into practice.

Participants in the urban, suburban, and rural sessions discussed their ideas in small breakout groups and then reported back to the larger session. In turn, each of the Chairs of these three larger groups in the afternoon sessions synthesized the principal ideas and recurring themes from the report-outs, and presented these ideas and themes to the Conference's afternoon plenary.

The following summaries provide synopses of the three sessions, as presented in the afternoon plenary.

(1) Rebuilding Urban Communities

(2) Building Better Suburbs

(3) Investing in Rural Economies

## Working Lunch Session #1—Rebuilding Urban Communities

### Chair:

Gregory Watson, Executive Director, Dudley Street  
Neighborhood Initiative

Several themes emerged from this session, including the following:

- **Taxes.** There is a need to rethink the tax system so it is responsive to the needs of communities. An example is partitioning tax revenue so a percentage could be spent on infrastructure improvements and maintenance.
- **Politics.** A forum is needed for regional thinking. In particular, it should be community-based so that urban issues can be brought forward as a priority for suburban-based legislatures.
- **Transportation.** Multi-modal and pedestrian-friendly are two improvements to urban transportation that are needed. This could be achieved through leverage such as limitations on the construction of new parking garages.
- **Education.** Reinvestment in inner city schools will change the perception that urban schools are bad or undesirable.
- **Sense of Community.** For example, buying local helps residents understand an urban (i.e., regional) economy. Avoid displacing residents through gentrification of urban areas. Improve the quality of life for all urban residents.

## Working Lunch Session #2—Building Better Suburbs

### Chair:

John Mullin, Professor, University of Massachusetts at Amherst

The following subjects were highlighted in this session:

- **Zoning.** Flexibility and creative use of existing tools are critical. This includes promotion of regional centers, master planning that addresses “carrots and sticks,” and encouragement of mixed uses.
- **Tax Policy.** Options and revisions include real estate transfer taxes, excise taxes on real estate, and/or broadening uses for gas tax revenue to support open space purchases and public transportation.
- **Outreach and Education.** Outreach is needed to educate citizens, local officials, and others regarding the cost of sprawl. This should address, in a meaningful way, issues such as the costs of putting a car on the street and the costs of losing habitat. This type of information should be brought into the curricula of all school levels - 1st grade to graduate school.
- **Infrastructure.** Infrastructure (existing and planned) should guide where development should go.

## Working Lunch Session #3—Investing in Rural Economies

### Chair:

Wendy Nicholas, Director, Northeast Office, National Trust for Historic Preservation

The following themes were outcomes of this session:

- ***Rural Landscape.*** The importance of retaining the look of villages and small towns, as well as maintaining public facilities such as schools, roads, and municipal buildings, was emphasized.
- ***Local Master Planning and Leadership.*** These are necessary tools to support rural economies and communities.
- ***Financial Programs.*** Programs that support the industries that keep rural land undeveloped include tax policies (e.g., current use taxes) and incentives such as working capital loans, “Buy Local” and cooperative efforts, and retirement planning for farmers.
- ***Education.*** Outreach efforts regarding sustainable rural economies should be undertaken to make education materials available.

## Afternoon Plenary

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Conference Outcomes: Jerold Kayden,  
Associate Professor of Urban Planning,  
Harvard University Graduate School of Design

Call to Action: John P. DeVillars,  
EPA's New England Administrator

Conference Outcomes: Jerold Kayden, Associate  
Professor of Urban Planning, Harvard University  
Graduate School of Design

After presentation of the outcomes of the Working Lunch sessions on urban, suburban, and rural issues, Professor Kayden moderated a discussion among the Chairs of these three sessions. Highlights of this discussion included:

► *Political Realities:*

Techniques and tools already exist to achieve smart growth, but political will, public support and funding often are lacking. For example, there is a need to follow through on the adoption and enforcement of applicable local bylaws, as well as to elect courageous politicians who are not afraid of empowered communities.

Political and economic coalitions must be formed by creating constituencies based on shared interests of issues such as open space, traffic pollution, and habitat. State leadership remains an essential forum for these coalitions.

► *Societal and Market Issues:*

Public policy must encourage choices in housing, transportation, and shopping in a market economy. As an example, policy makers must work with market forces to provide such choices.

Living choices must be better represented and communicated, since people have trouble envisioning smart growth. Density is not a four-letter word - if dense communities work, then word will spread.

It should be recognized that “livable communities” is a term with resonance, indicating and creating an opportunity-based, fair, and compassionate society.

## Call to Action: John P. DeVillars, EPA's New England Administrator

In closing the conference, Regional Administrator DeVillars thanked attendees and speakers for their ideas and enthusiasm, and reminded all of the need to work together to solve the sprawl problem and prevent further environmental degradation. He also recommitted EPA-New England to implement the agency's "Smart Growth Action Plan," in support of this cooperative and collaborative approach. The Action Plan calls for: (1) elevating public awareness; (2) building effective partnerships; (3) reshaping EPA's programs and policies; and, (4) strengthening local capacity. DeVillars also announced plans to form a "New England Smart Growth Partnership" to help shape, guide, and build upon this Action Plan and the results of the conference. DeVillars encouraged all present to promote and facilitate smart growth in order to protect New England's unique environment and make its communities livable.