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Nation's Cities Weekly, Oct 12, 1998 v21 n41 p13(1)

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New ideas for thinking smart about growth. (examples of urban development strategies that protect communities) *Mary Walsh.*

Abstract: Cities and towns throughout the US are working constantly to provide ways to enhance sustainable development while protecting the environment, infrastructure, recreation, and overall quality of life. Programs in Napa, CA, Portland and Chattanooga serve as models for these objectives.

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Many communities are taking a closer look at their growth and development based on new strategies that will help them save money--and the environment.

New program ideas for conserving energy, creating land use policies designed to protect the environment and urban growth initiatives that take into consideration the impacts of global warming, are springing up all over the country.

Development can bring many challenges to a community? including a strain on public services such as highway maintenance, water/sewer management, and retention of open space for agriculture and recreation. Guiding growth and protecting the interests of all the members of a community requires a great deal of effort and innovation on the part of local elected officials and

administrators.

Below are a few examples of successful initiatives and resources:

Portland, Ore.--A growth management leader, twenty years ago the city formed an "urban growth boundary." All new development is allowed only inside the boundary. All land outside this area forms a "green belt" around the center city and is zoned for forests and farms.

Chattanooga, Tenn.--The city has formed a South Central Business district to create an economically viable and environmentally healthy area of the city that was once the site of abandoned and dilapidated metal foundries, warehouses, and railroad tracks. The revitalized district will contain a sustainability conference and training center, a sports stadium, greenways, and businesses, all of which will be connected with the downtown area by electric bus transit. Details: Woolly Murphy, 423-266-0521.

Napa, Calif.--The city and county have created a model for citizen involvement in developing a strategy for one of the region's key vulnerabilities. The Napa River, which runs through the city of Napa, regularly spills over its banks and floods the region. In the last decade, two 50-year floods have cost the community a total of \$332 million in damage repair. Addressing this flooding problem, while preserving the river in its natural state, became the task of the Citizens for Napa River Flood Management.

The city manager appointed a city flood protection project coordinator, and both city and county personnel offered technical know-how and staff support to the group. This diverse group of citizens, business leaders and government representatives developed a "living river" strategy which ultimately provided 100 year flood protection, and allowed the river to follow its natural course and meander through the city as much as possible.

A complete description of this project can be found in a "Citizen's Guide" available from the the Napa County Flood Control and Water conservation District, 707-253-4621.

Maryland--The state has adopted a "Smart Growth" law which recognizes the need to control sprawl and provides incentives for development in existing town and city centers. State funds for highways, business development, and housing are targeted primarily to these "Smart Growth Areas."

Vermont--The state has developed a comprehensive, statewide energy plan which provides a vision for meeting the state's energy needs in a way that utilizes new energy-saving technologies and promotes sustainable development initiatives. The plan also lays out the state's Greenhouse Gas Action Plan, which provides guidelines for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The energy and greenhouse gas plans are available on the Internet at www.state.vt.us/psd.

Guidebook--A helpful citizens guide to discussing the issue of growth is "Smart Talk for Growing Communities" published by Congressional Exchange. This document outlines in concise fashion some major questions to be asked in a dialogue about growth and development. Copies of the guide and a facilitator's manual call be ordered by calling 202-393-1441.

Smart Growth Network--The mission of this nationwide partnership is to foster smart growth initiatives around the country. The effort involves the Center for Neighborhood Technology, Joint Center for Sustainable Communities, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Urban Land Institute. The International City/County Management Association (ICMA) administers the program, which includes a bimonthly newsletter, regional conferences, and up-to-date information on how to make informed land use and development decisions. For more information, contact Noah Simon at ICMA. 202-962-3500 or <http://www.smartgrowth.org>.

Urban Growth Climate Tool--An Urban Growth Model (U Grow) has been developed by the NASA-funded Prescott College Global Change and Sustainability Program as a tool for communities to assess their growth based on climate impact scenarios. Using an aerial image of a community along with GIS data, the potential scenarios are presented in 3-D to visually show the impact global warming might have on a community.

This model offers local elected officials and administrators a method for analyzing the most cost effective development plan for their community which would minimize damage from potential adverse climate impacts. The 3-D Urban Growth Model will be featured at the upcoming Congress of Cities in Kansas City in the pre-conference workshop "Latitudes and Attitudes: Local Governments Response to Climate Change, December 1, 1:30-5:00 p.m.

Mary Walsh is co-director of the Climate Change Learning and Information Center. For more information, call 413-549-9937; fax, 413-549-9924; e-mail, ccllc@aol.com.

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