



## Green Energy Council

# THE GREEN ENERGY COUNCIL SMART SUSTAINABLE GROWTH INITIATIVE

### Mission Statement

Every day millions of working men and women and their families return to their homes when the day's activities are done. Those homes are places where great ideas flourish, where memories are made, where parents tuck their children into bed.

Today these families are searching for a new and better life. The desire to start fresh is as old as America itself. Right from the start, the American way of life fulfilled the demands of generations for freedom and expansion. Throughout the past two centuries, this country has remained at heart a frontier society, though the geography of its frontiers has changed dramatically.

There is ample evidence that Americans, particularly those with money and jobs to be mobile, are searching for an alternative. Americans today are more concerned with the quality of their neighborhoods and the welfare of the environment.

The future of development in this country is changing. There is a vast evolution in the building industry in this nation as a whole. The statistics alone make it clear, the nation is growing and it will continue to grow. New households are being formed at a rate of over one million per year. To meet this demand the nation's builders will need to construct about 1.6 Million new homes and apartments each year of this decade. Let's discuss the factors of this ever changing industry.

## Smart Sustainable Growth: The Definition

Now, what is Smart Sustainable Growth?

First, it is growth that should balance the needs to have less impact on the environment as well as have adequate plans for future development due to population increases, economic prosperity and housing demand. Smart Sustainable Growth promotes hybrid development that demonstrates a new and workable alternative to suburban sprawl and isolated neighborhoods. It also means creating new centers containing both residential and commercial growth.

Smart Sustainable Growth means meeting housing demands in smarter ways by planning for and building higher densities, preserving meaningful open space and protecting environmentally sensitive areas as well as using renewables to provide energy needs where applicable. Smart Sustainable Growth means planning for and funding infrastructure improvements. It means revitalizing older suburban and inner city markets.

The future of Smart Sustainable Growth depends on the ability to achieve the higher densities needed to create architecturally diverse mixed use communities while preserving open spaces for future generations. Smart Sustainable Growth Communities should help people get out of their backyards and onto their front porches, where they will have a better chance of interacting with neighbors. It strives for higher densities per acre. These not all being detached homes; there is a mixture of single family homes, town houses, apartments over down town storefronts and higher end sites with less density in the outer rings of the downtown areas.

In order to thrive a village, town, city or nation must have places where people can congregate away from home and work, where neighbors can get to know one another without the formalities of the office or the encumbrances of family. The key however is to put the emphasis on walking or biking within the community, rather than getting in the car.

***“History has shown that fundamental changes in society are not dictated by governments or corporations, but are the results of battles undertaken by people.”***

# **The Green Energy Council Smart Sustainable Growth Agenda**

Smart Sustainable Growth supports livable neighborhoods with a variety of housing types, price ranges and multi-modal forms of transportation.

Smart Sustainable Growth is an approach to land-use planning that targets a Country's resources and funding in ways that enhance the quality of life for all it's citizens.

Smart Sustainable Growth principles include mixed-use development, walk able town centers and neighborhoods, mass transit accessibility, sustainable economic and social development and preserved green space.

Smart Sustainable Growth supports development and redevelopment that serves the economy, the community and the environment.

Smart Sustainable Growth is all about improving quality of life and preserving valued resources. It's a comprehensive strategy for sustainable development – meeting the present needs of your community without compromising its future.

Smart Sustainable Growth developments can minimize air and water pollution, facilitate brown field's cleanup and reuse, and preserve open space.

Smart Sustainable Growth advocates the use of compact building design. Building great dense places with good design is not just an abstract theory – it is a practical approach to growth that is being used in diverse places across the country and the globe. There is an increasing recognition worldwide that higher density is integral component to the creation of neighborhoods that offer convenience, value and a high quality of life.

Smart Sustainable Growth is a series of strategies and initiatives designed to help communities plan for and accommodate new growth in ways that preserve their economic prosperity, environmental health, and community character.

Smart Sustainable Growth provides quality housing for people of all incomes.

Smart Sustainable Growth represents an opportunity for local communities to increase housing choices, not only by modifying their land use patterns on newly-developed land, but also by increasing housing supply in existing neighborhoods and on land served by existing infrastructure. Integrating single- and multi-family structures in new housing developments can support a more diverse population and allow more equitable distribution of households of all income levels across the region. The addition of units -- through attached housing, accessory units, or conversion to multi-family dwellings -- to existing neighborhoods creates opportunities for communities to slowly increase density without radically changing the landscape.

Smart Sustainable Growth creates new housing construction that can be an economic stimulus for existing commercial centers that are currently vibrant during the work day, but suffer from a lack of foot traffic and consumers in evenings or weekends.

## **Smart Sustainable Growth Solutions**

For a community to be successful in implementing Smart Sustainable Growth, it must be embraced by the private sector. Only private capital markets can supply the large amounts of money needed to meet the growing demand for Smart Sustainable Growth developments. Since the development industry is highly regulated, the value of property and the desirability of a place is largely affected by government investment in infrastructure and government regulation. Governments must make the right infrastructure and regulatory decisions that create fair, predictable and cost effective Smart Sustainable Growth.

Despite regulatory and financial barriers, developers have been successful in creating examples of Smart Sustainable Growth. The process to do so, however, requires them to get variances to the codes – often a time-consuming, and therefore costly requirement.

Expediting the approval process is of particular importance for all involved in the development process especially the home owner.

For Smart Sustainable Growth to flourish, state and local governments must make an effort to make development decisions about growth more timely, cost-effective, and predictable for everyone. By creating a fertile environment for innovative, pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use projects, government can provide leadership for Smart Sustainable Growth that the private sector is sure to support. The Green Energy Council calls this a “Green Tape” policy.

Smart Sustainable Growth is best represented by the integration of mixed land uses which creates opportunities for living arrangements in closer proximity to jobs and transportation. Mixed residential development with a variety of housing types results in a more diverse population while enhancing consumer buying power in already developed (Smart Sustainable Growth) areas. Adding new residents to downtowns and older suburbs bolsters the commercial viability of existing and expanding businesses. It also helps support rider-ship for public transit operations.

In today's economy, communities find that by mixing land uses, they make their neighborhoods attractive to people who increasingly use quality of life criteria to determine where they will settle.

Smart Sustainable Growth provides a means for communities to alter the planning context which currently renders mixed land uses impossible.

***For more information about the Green Energy Council, please visit us on the web at [www.greenenergycouncil.com](http://www.greenenergycouncil.com)***