

SMART GROWTH IN SACRAMENTO

The idea of Smart Growth has come a long way in Sacramento since 2001.

In that year, the California Energy Commission sponsored an evaluation of local planning processes and published a catalog of development examples that followed the Smart Growth principles adopted by the National Governors' Conference. The catalog entitled *Shining PLACE3S*, highlighted mostly state and national success stories; because Sacramento's planning efforts were still based on a suburban model established in the City's 13 year-old General Plan, local examples of smart growth development were limited to a handful of projects.

Later in 2001, the city council added these 14 "Principles of Smart Growth" to Sacramento's 1988 General Plan:

- Mix land uses and support vibrant city centers.
- Take advantage of existing community assets emphasizing joint use of facilities.
- Create a range of housing opportunities and choices.
- Foster walkable, close-knit neighborhoods.
- Promote distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place, including the rehabilitation and use of historic buildings.
- Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty, and critical environmental areas.
- Concentrate new development and target infrastructure investments within the urban core of the region.
- Provide a variety of transportation choices.
- Make development decisions predictable, fair, and cost-effective.
- Encourage citizen and stakeholder participation in development decisions.
- Promote resource conservation and energy efficiency.
- Create a Smart Growth regional vision and plan.
- Support high quality education and quality schools.
- Support land use, transportation management, infrastructure, and environmental planning programs that reduce vehicle emissions and improve air quality.

With the adoption of these principles, decision makers, developers and Sacramento residents began thinking about growth in terms of infill, density, transportation options and a better quality of life in sustainable, complete neighborhoods.

In 2002, the City started a Planning Academy to encourage citizens to take part in the planning process and become effective advocates for Sacramento's Smart Growth Initiatives. By 2009, 271 people have graduated from 10 Planning Academies, many of them becoming council members, city commissioners or effective neighborhood advocates.

Also in 2002, the Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG) began a Regional Blueprint effort to identify smart growth land use patterns. Using the principles similar to those adopted a year before by the City of Sacramento, SACOG began to identify the benefits of shifting development away from the traditional single use, low density suburban model to one that encouraged more mixed use, compact and urban-style neighborhoods.

In February 2009, the City of Sacramento's Planning Department published its *Sacramento Places* document. Similar to the *Shining PLACE3S* catalog published eight years before, *Sacramento Places* details the benefits of smart growth. Unlike the earlier document, however, *Sacramento Places* is filled entirely with local examples of attractive, vibrant community development.

Sacramento Places can encourage economic development by showing prospective residents, businesses, and developers how the City is evolving in a positive and innovative way. It illustrates the smart growth principles that are included in Sacramento's new 2030 General Plan. Adopted in March 2009 after a four-year process that involved over 4,000 residents, the new General Plan details how determined Sacramentans will use the principles of smart growth to fight traffic congestion, deteriorating air quality, urban sprawl and the loss of open space, even as the area is projected to add an additional 200,000 people and 140,000 jobs by the year 2030.