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INTERNATIONAL MOBILITY OBSERVATORY

INNOVATION FACT SHEET

STRATEGY: **LAND USE AND URBAN DESIGN STRATEGIES** No. 7.1.1

CONCEPT: Growth Management Strategies

PROJECT NAME: Urban Growth Boundaries

LOCATION: Portland, Oregon, USA

The Portland Metro Council has adopted a blueprint that sets a policy direction for how the Portland region will manage its growth during the next 50 years. The concept calls for maintaining a tight urban growth boundary and accommodating future development inside the boundary in 6-8 regional growth centers and a number of smaller town centers. Downtown Portland will serve as the hub of the region. Accommodating a projected population increase of 77 percent within the existing urban growth boundary will be accomplished primarily by reducing lot sizes, from an average of 8,500 sq.ft. to 6,600 sq.ft. The growth concept evolved from a study of three alternative growth scenarios: (1) Allow the region to grow out, leaving current policies in place; (2) freeze the region's urban growth boundary and substantially increase density in transit corridors; (3) Decant some growth to satellite growth centers and focus their density.

With the adoption of the growth concept, attention has shifted to a 20-year Regional Framework Plan which will specify how the region and local communities will implement the growth concept. The framework plan, adopted in 1998, will develop performance standards and model tools to help local governments meet the goals of the framework plan for land use, transportation, and open spaces.

However, Portland's urban growth boundary, long admired by city planners and environmentalists as a model of controlled growth, has come under increased attack from suburban officials and residents. As the supply of available land within the growth boundary shrinks, housing prices are soaring. Since 1987, the median price of single-family homes has more than doubled, and Portland has gone from being ranked as one of the most affordable cities for housing to the third least affordable city.

As the economic consequences of Portland's policies became more evident, demands for relaxing land use controls and relieving the pressures within the urban growth boundary have become more insistent. To appease the critics, the Metro Council voted in October 1997 to add approximately 4,500 acres to the urban acreage, a two percent increase in the land area within the urban growth boundary. In the face of continued criticism, the Council is now considering a further expansion of the boundary, that would add a total of 8,000 to 9,000 acres, or a four percent increase in the land area within the boundary. Even further expansions of the boundary may be expected in the years ahead if population continues to grow.

Ref: Innovation Briefs, Nov/Dec '98. Rev 5/99

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INNOVATION FACT SHEET

STRATEGY: **LAND USE AND URBAN DESIGN STRATEGIES** No. 7.1.2

CONCEPT: Growth Management Strategies

PROJECT NAME: "Smart Growth" Policy

LOCATION: State of Maryland, USA

In 1997, the Maryland legislature passed a landmark bill designed to direct future growth and control unbridled development within the state. The so-called "smart growth" legislation allows counties to designate "priority funding areas" for public infrastructure investment, and sharply limits any state funding of growth-related projects, such as transportation, water supply and sewage treatment facilities, that are located outside these areas. The intent of the legislation is to offer strong fiscal incentives to local governments to control sprawl and protect rural land without infringing on local autonomy. Under the formula, counties can continue approving development outside the designated growth areas but local taxpayers would have to bear the full cost of such projects. Instead of dictating rigid urban growth boundaries such as those used in Portland, Oregon (see, 7.1.1), Maryland is simply using its power of the purse to influence local zoning decisions.

In deference to local autonomy, the policy leaves the designation of Smart Growth areas in the hands of the counties. Critics see this concession as a serious loophole that allows local government to effectively circumvent the policy. Their fears are proving to be well founded. Counties already have designated more than twice as much land for development as is needed to accommodate growth over the next two decades, according to the state Office of Planning. Howard County, located strategically between Washington and Baltimore and undergoing rapid urbanization, took all the land previously slated for development and, with one exception, called the whole thing its Smart Growth area. Alleghany county, in rural Western Maryland, has set aside enough land in its Smart Growth area for more than 100,000 new homes even though it needs only about 1000 new housing units to accommodate projected growth over the next two decades, according to state estimates. Even Montgomery County, known for its progressive land use policies, saw fit to designate as growth areas just about every "rural village" in addition to land in and around every municipality and principal highway corridors. One Councilman, explaining the Council action, was reported as saying that it is in the County's interest to make the Smart Growth area as large as possible to avoid a "straitjacket" on desired projects. These actions suggest that counties are not likely to scrap their plans for growth, even if such plans happen to conflict with the state's sprawl containment philosophy.

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INNOVATION FACT SHEET

STRATEGY: **LAND USE AND URBAN DESIGN STRATEGIES** No. 7.1.3

CONCEPT: Growth Management Strategies

PROJECT NAME: Sprawl Control Initiatives

LOCATION: Various States in USA

Growth management, long seen as a matter of local zoning, emerged as a hotly contested political issue in numerous state and local November 1999 elections in the United States. More than 100 measures aimed at preserving undeveloped land or limiting growth were on the ballots nationwide, reports State Resource Strategies, a Washington-based firm specializing in growth management issues. In **New Jersey**, voters approved by a large majority a constitutional amendment to spend \$98 million per year for 10 years on open space acquisition and agricultural land preservation. The measure aims to preserve half the state's undeveloped land (one million acres) by buying it outright or paying owners to give up the right to develop it. In **Florida**, voters approved a \$3 billion bond referendum to support open space preservation. On **Long Island**, citizens voted heavily in favor of open space preservation on ballot proposals in Suffolk and Nassau counties. In nearly a dozen other states — notably Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Minnesota, Michigan, Texas, Ventura County CA, and the San Francisco Bay area— voters approved open space and farmland preservation plans.

But other “smart growth” initiatives did not fare so well. A proposal to restrict subdivision of 600,000 acres in eastern **San Diego County** went down to defeat as did an **Arizona** initiative to enact mandatory urban growth boundaries. And in Maryland, the “Smart Growth” program has been rendered largely ineffective according to some observers, by the action of county governments which have declared large portions of their respective territories as “designated growth areas.” (see, 7.1.2)

Ref: Innovation Briefs, Jan/Feb '99

INTERNATIONAL MOBILITY OBSERVATORY

INNOVATION FACT SHEET

STRATEGY: **LAND USE AND URBAN DESIGN STRATEGIES** No. 7.1.4

CONCEPT: Growth Management Strategies

PROJECT NAME: Georgia Regional Transportation Authority

LOCATION: Atlanta GA, USA

The state of Georgia has created a powerful new transportation superagency, the Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (GRTA). The initiative is an attempt to address the problems of air quality, sprawl and traffic congestion that plague the Atlanta metropolitan region. The new agency will be responsible for coordinating most aspects of ground transportation and regional planning. To make its mandate effective, GRTA has been given extraordinary powers. All major developments within the metro area that contribute to increased traffic and sprawl will be subject to the agency's approval. The GRTA will also have the authority to review and make recommendations to the governor on all proposed regional land use and transportation plans prepared by the local MPO (Metropolitan Planning Organization) and the state DOT. Furthermore, as a prerequisite to receiving state funds, developments of regional impact will require GRTA approval. Finally, the agency will be responsible for submitting plans to the federal government and will be the designated recipient for federal funds.

The regional transportation legislation was introduced in the Georgia legislature at the end of January 1999 and was signed into law only two months later. The ease and speed with which the law was enacted is testimony to the broad support the initiative received from a coalition of interests led by the local business community including most major suburban real estate developers. What brought the business leaders around was the fear that sprawl and the accompanying gridlock would ultimately make Atlanta's further growth impossible and choke off its future economic expansion.

Ref: Governing Magazine, May 1999, p.20

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INTERNATIONAL MOBILITY OBSERVATORY

INNOVATION FACT SHEET

STRATEGY: **LAND USE AND URBAN DESIGN STRATEGIES** No. 7.2.1

CONCEPT: Transit Oriented Development (Transit Villages)

PROJECT NAME:

LOCATION: Portland OR; San Diego CA

The somewhat nostalgic-sounding phrase "transit village" has gained recent currency to describe compact, mixed-use development clustered around suburban rail stations that, by design, encourages residents and workers to walk, use their cars sparingly, and depend primarily on transit for trips outside the immediate community. Transit villages are hardly a new idea. They borrow from the vision of early city planners, like Ebenezer Howard in England and Frederick Law Olmstead and Edward Bellamy in America, who advanced the idea of pedestrian-oriented "garden cities," linked with railways to the central city. Some vestiges of transit villages survive in the former "streetcar suburbs" of American cities, such as Shaker Heights in Cleveland, Chestnut Hill in Boston, and Country Club Plaza in Kansas City. Their modern counterparts can be found around rapid transit stations in some cities such as Toronto, Montreal, Washington DC, and San Francisco, although their predominantly high-rise character hardly evokes the intimate image of a "village."

Western Europe probably offers a better modern-day example of transit village development, notably in the "new towns" of England (Milton Keynes, Runcorn) and the satellite communities of Stockholm, Frankfurt, Munich, Amsterdam and Paris — all of which rely on high speed rail transit as their primary means of access, and are built on a scale which permits largely pedestrian circulation. For example, in Valingby, one of Stockholm's satellite new towns, the rail station shares space with a supermarket, where returning commuters can do their daily shopping on the way home. The station is adjacent to a car-free village square lined with more shops and service establishments, including a daycare center. The town is laid out in such a way as to encourage walking. More than 50 percent of the workers commute by transit — this, despite the fact that Sweden has the highest per capita car ownership in Europe. The cities of Portland, Oregon and San Diego have probably approached the European model most closely. Both cities have embraced transit-oriented design concepts that focus residential and commercial development within walkable distance of existing and future light rail stations and consciously encourage walking and bicycling.

*Ref: Robert Cervero, "Transit-Supportive Development in the United States," December 1993
Innovation Briefs, May/June '99*

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