

BGGreen Partnership for a Sustainable Community

Concept Paper

Submitted to the Bowling Green-Warren County
Planning Commission and City Government

**"Smart Growth" Recommendations
for Sustainable Development
in Bowling Green, KY and the Region**

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Vision for Sustainable Development

The *BGGreen Partnership for a Sustainable Community* is concerned about current directions of growth and development in Bowling Green-Warren County. We wish to help chart a new course which promotes community vibrancy, diversity, livability and self-sufficiency, enhances quality of life, and embraces principles of sustainable development, also called “smart growth.”

Sustainable development encompasses the social, economic and environmental systems of communities. It is commonly defined as “development which meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.” [Bruntland Report, 1987] Smart growth will improve the quality of life in our community in a way that preserves the necessary systems for a high quality of life also for future generations.

Planning efforts should focus on people and on preserving the character and livability of our city as much as business needs. Land use, infrastructure and support systems need to be made more compatible – working together to provide aesthetically pleasing mixed use development and support a growing economic base. All residents need to have access to parks, shopping, schools, affordable housing, open space and trail. Our heritage and natural resources – an essential part of our communities character – need to be preserved. Finally, changing demographics and social and economic forces will result in people living closer together.

We envision a community which nurtures, educates and provides opportunities for children and young people; offers educational, recreational, sports and entertainment venues to attract and retain young adults; provides jobs, services, continuing education, cultural and other opportunities for families and adult singles; and attracts and provides services and diverse opportunities for retirees.

S-W-O-T Analysis

There are a number of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to Bowling Green and the surrounding area which should be factored into development decisions:

Strengths include: mild climate; small size; proximity to major urban areas in several states; home to Western Kentucky University and the facilities, programs and opportunities it offers; interstate and rail access; historical neighborhoods; richness of natural resources and farmlands in surrounding areas, easy access to numerous outdoor and recreational activities, and a growing multiculturalism

Weaknesses include: costly (economic and environmental) prevalent sprawl pattern of development; de-vitalized inner city areas; zoning ordinances which prevent mixed-use community development; high air (ozone) pollution; fragile karst topography and high potential for groundwater/waterways contamination; few public transit options and almost total dependence on the private automobile; predominant low wage pay scales for workers; incomplete assimilation of immigrant communities.

Opportunities include: research, service and technology opportunities offered through Western; Innovation Center; preserving our richness of history and natural resources as a basis for building strong tourism and ecotourism industries; stimulating the local food economy and biodiesel; maximizing potential as a shopping and cultural “seat” for surrounding counties; expanding growing music “scene” with additional venues; expanding services and cultural/recreational opportunities to become a notable retirement destination

Threats include: air (ozone) and water pollution vulnerabilities; inadequate protection of natural resources; federal tax laws which encourage downtown de-vitalization and outlying sprawl; growth patterns which have decreased city revenue while increasing infrastructure costs; inadequate revenue and vision to support smart growth; inadequate planning and support for public transit; inadequate low income housing options; inadequate incorporation of immigrant communities; encroachment on open spaces and farmland; poor education, especially in surrounding communities; non-accepting attitudes toward “outsiders,” new ideas, and change

“Smart Growth” Opportunities

For a prosperous and sustainable community, strengths must be emphasized, weaknesses addressed, opportunities developed and threats reversed. Steps taken to strengthen and support local businesses and boost regional self-sufficiency will keep more dollars in the community, where they can support economic gains for more of our citizens. This will also create a more stable and secure future.

The 20-year comprehensive development plan for Bowling Green-Warren County should reflect “smart growth” principles (see page 12), and build on the following core community values: environmental stewardship, economic opportunity and prosperity, social and economic equity, and community empowerment.

The model we encourage for development is an “urban neighborhoods” model which promotes:

- A diverse mix of people of varied ages, incomes, cultures, employment and interests’
- A variety of housing types mixed with a small businesses which deliver goods, services, entertainment, and sometimes employment right where people live
- Pedestrian-oriented commercial areas with stores, services and restaurants
- Community facilities within walking distance of each urban neighborhood core, including schools, community and recreation centers, libraries, parks, and human services,
- Transportation alternatives including ride-sharing, car-sharing, mass transit, walking and bike paths to reduce dependence on the private automobile
- Reliance on local food systems to support local growers, strengthen the local economy, reduce transportation requirements, and improve nutritional value
- Efficient buildings which conserve energy and water use; renewable alternatives to reduce dependence on (socially, environmentally and increasingly economically) costly fossil fuels
- Well-integrated public open space, providing recreational space opportunities for residents and workers
- Efficient resource use through “reduce, reuse, recycle, restore and redesign” programs - for individuals, businesses and government
- Partnerships with neighborhood and community-based organizations to improve people’s access to services and activities, and to create opportunities for interaction, through such means as neighborhood planning and community policing.
- A unique identity reflecting local history, its natural features, culture and other sources of community pride

Core Values

Environmental Stewardship – To preserve open and arable land, clean air and water; safeguard community health; protect biological diversity and maintain essential biological processes and life-support systems.

A healthy environment is the foundation for sustainable development and protecting the health and vitality of communities. The City will have the goals of lowering emissions and lessening pollution, as well as moving away from a disproportionate burden of emissions on poorer sections of the community. The City will move toward fully adopting the U.S. Mayors Climate Protection Agreement.

An emphasis on “compact” development will curtail urban sprawl and loss of arable land, mitigate the air pollution and stormwater discharge that results from heavy reliance on automobiles, and prevent the loss of green space and increases in impervious surfaces resulting from non-compact development. An “urban neighborhoods” strategy which mixes residences, small businesses, arts and entertainment, and green space will further reduce dependence on private automobiles and increase community vitality, economic prosperity, diversity, health, and security.

Community development initiatives which contribute to safeguarding the environment include:

- Developing good mass transit alternatives
- Supporting energy conservation, efficiency and renewable alternatives
- Emphasizing local food systems and organic methods of agriculture
- Minimizing waste through programs to reduce, reuse, recycle, restore and redesign
- “Compact” development patterns of growth

The City will strive to:

- Protect and improve the quality of the local (and global) environment
- Maintain and enhance conditions necessary to a healthy environment, e.g., reducing use of hazardous materials; reducing runoff through limiting impervious surfaces, and natural plantings
- Devise a plan to reduce CO₂ emissions
- Stimulate pedestrian-oriented development and transportation alternatives
- Promote “compact” development and an “urban neighborhoods” model of growth
- Manage the city’s built environment so as to limit its impact on natural resources (i.e., energy retrofit, use of recycled materials, “green” building design, LEED building standards)
- Serve as a role model for individuals and businesses in environmental management practices, e.g., conserving energy, using renewable energy sources, recycling, etc.
- Devise incentives/disincentives to encourage individuals, industries and businesses to employ sound environmental practices, e.g., energy efficiency and renewable sources, recycling, etc.
- Educate and support all citizens in becoming better environmental stewards

“We should reconsider and renew and extend our efforts to protect the natural foundations of the human economy: soil, water, and air. We should protect every intact ecosystem and watershed that we have left, and begin restoration of those that have been damaged.”

-Wendell Berry, Kentucky author, educator, and environmentalist

Economic Prosperity – To provide economic opportunity for all groups (age, race, religion, socioeconomic, etc.) in the community, while taking care to enhance individual and community well-being and welfare only by following a path of economic development that safeguards the welfare of diverse subpopulations and future generations (intra- and intergenerational equity.)

A strong economy is fundamental to maintaining a high quality of life in Bowling Green. All citizens want themselves, their children, and others to enjoy the benefits of a healthy economy, economic opportunity, and security of livelihood, and to meet their basic needs for food and shelter, health care and education. Ideally, economic prosperity will be shared broadly across population sectors, and government resources allocated to assist those who need it. The City should support the health of families, and recognize that the entire community benefits when no person or family receives a substandard wage.

The City will actively promote an employment environment that provides livable wage jobs and the education and skills-building opportunities to ensure employability for all community members. It will also look for ways to enhance the region's economic prosperity, as it will accommodate a reasonable share of the region's economic growth.

By emphasizing affordable housing and neighborhood planning, citizens will be encouraged to live inside the city and closer to work, shopping, and entertainment. This will reduce the need to travel distances by car. It builds the City's tax base, thereby increasing revenue, and reduces the City's burden for distributing services, water and energy long distances, thereby saving money. Money saved can be applied to improving education and job training, infrastructure, services and cultural opportunities, thus contributing to an improved quality of life for all.

The City will strive to:

- Provide incentive programs to help small, local businesses located in the city to thrive
- Make appropriate zoning changes to support an “urban neighborhoods” mixed-use model
- Promote tourism and eco-tourism industries
- Stimulate the local food economy and biodiesel production
- Encourage good wages for all workers and at all levels of the employment spectrum
- Provide good job training, internship and apprenticeship opportunities for young workers
- Develop eco-tourism and eco-art opportunities built around the natural rivers and caves unique to our area.
- Expand activities and services which attract and support young families plus retirees
- Develop incentives to draw businesses and households to the inner city and renovation of existing properties, to counter IRS tax codes which promote sprawl and new building
- Expand cultural and entertainment activities and venues

“We should start with the economies of food and farming, we should promote at home, and encourage abroad, the ideal of local self-sufficiency. We should recognize that this is the surest, the safest, and the cheapest way for the world to live. We should not countenance the loss or destruction of any local capacity to produce necessary goods.”

-Wendell Berry, Kentucky author, educator, and environmentalist

Social Equity – to provide for equity within and between generations.

Recognizing that resources and opportunities are not limitless, and must be shared among all members of the community, Bowling Green citizens seek greater equity in the opportunity to benefit from, participate in and contribute to the life of the community. Special attention needs to be directed to residents in distressed communities where incomes, education, skills, and labor force participation rates are lower than average, and to ensure that the quality of infrastructure and services will support economic viability in all parts of the city.

Bowling Green’s future depends on the skills, strength and vitality of *all* its people. The city’s long-range prosperity relates to people’s increased investment in and connection to the community plus having more supportive families and healthier children, increased access to health care and services, a more skilled and capable workforce, and increased safety in homes, neighborhoods and streets. The City will encourage Bowling Green residents to better understand one another and to create urban environments that work for people.

Poverty impacts the capacity of people to achieve a basic standard of living that is acceptable to the general community and to participate in the life of the community. It is also connected with environmental degradation. *Go Green Bowling Green* seeks to reduce the gap between high and low income earners and to increase the minimum wage standard to a living wage for families and manual laborers, recognizing that all work contributes to the community and with the goal to improve the overall quality of life. This will benefit the City in reduced need for assistance services, higher disposable incomes, and increased tax revenues

In order to promote equality, justice and understanding, the City will not tolerate discrimination in employment or housing, and will endeavor to ensure that all citizens have the education, skills and opportunity to participate in and benefit from economic growth. Communities must work together toward reducing poverty and creating opportunities for all people, and assisting those in the population who are most vulnerable.

The City will strive to:

- Support a “living wage” for the lowest paid workers
- Promote an employment environment which offers good pay for good work and which permits fluidity in the workforce
- Reduce the stratification between wage and salary scales
- Provide job training, education, and support services for disadvantaged youth and families
- Provide assistance services to help struggling community members where needed
- Offer affordable housing alternatives to the low and middle income families in our communities
- Seek to redress the problem of homelessness and offer emergency shelter and food services

Community Empowerment – to encourage full citizen participation in all levels of governance. Residents, community organizations, institutions and business owners will collaborate with the City to find acceptable, desirable and innovative ways to achieve City goals. The City will support people of all ages and ethnic, socioeconomic and social groups in finding a sense of belonging and ownership, accessing needed services and connecting with other people.

The City will strive to:

- Create opportunities for real citizen involvement in planning decisions
- Require all government departments to be guided by sustainability Core Values
- Develop City ordinances which permit a mix of residences and small businesses, i.e., an “urban neighborhoods” model
- Reduce noise (and light) pollution, e.g., restricting use of leaf blowers
- Develop green maps for the city and neighborhoods (<http://www.greenmap.org>) to chart “green” and cultural resources and cultivate citizen participation and community sustainability.

Preserving our Natural Environment

Bowling Green is at a cross roads between promoting economic growth which maintains its natural environment, or growth which jeopardizes it. Warren County is currently surrounded by farm lands, fields, forests, and watersheds that are all at risk of being encroached upon by economic development. These natural areas currently help to set Bowling Green apart from other cities and attract tourists and residents to the area. Already our natural resources are being stressed by non-point source pollution of our waterways from runoff, high levels of air pollution, and inadequate protection of our delicate karst topography in its potential for groundwater contamination and land subsidence.

If we allow the air to become more polluted, our above and underground water sources to become more contaminated, and the farm land to be sacrificed to encroaching development, Warren County will begin to look like any other region that allowed growth to subsume environmental sustainability. The attractiveness and appeal of our region will diminish, as will its economic competitiveness and “draw” for people and industries.

Not only must we protect the environment in Warren County but we must also concern ourselves with nearby natural wonders in surrounding counties. Business practices in Bowling Green can have a direct impact on nearby airsheds and watersheds. Mammoth Cave National Park, a Class I airshed and United Nations International Biosphere Reserve, and Nolin River State Park, both situated within the Bowling Green Metropolitan Statistical Area, and Barren River State Park is only a half-hour drive from the city. These federally and state protected ecological preserves can be impacted by any contaminants that Warren County allows into its air and water including particulate matter, toxic metals, industrial waste, and landfill leachates.

In the karst environment of south central Kentucky which is characterized by caves, sinkholes, and fast moving groundwater, pollution can very quickly move from commercial and residential sites to wilderness areas. Mammoth Cave is just one of many important cave systems in the region including Lost River Cave which is located within the city limits. These cave systems have been impacted by water pollution for years, many of them are only now recovering from ecological mistakes made by past generations.

By promoting responsible growth in Warren County we not only help to protect endangered species such as eyeless fish, Kentucky Cave Shrimp, Indiana Bats, and Grey Bats but we also protect the attractions that make this region special. Not only is this region one of the premiere places for studying karst geology and watershed protection, but the environment also draws hundreds of thousands of visitors each and every year. Places like Mammoth Cave National Park attract both

international recognition and tourism dollars to the region. Allowing improper development and unsafe industrial practices in Bowling Green to undermine natural wonders such as Mammoth Cave, the Barren River, or Lost River Cave will inevitably and irreversibly shortchange not only the inhabitants of this region and the visitors who are drawn to its environmental marvels, but also the future prosperity of our city and region.

The Future Isn't What It Used to Be

The Roman General Varus, in 9 AD, while watching his army being destroyed by new tactics developed by several German Tribes, is purported to have said 'Not like yesterday, not like yesterday.' [Larson, 1998] Generals are often accused of preparing to re-fight the last war, particularly if they were previously on the winning side. If conditions have changed, this strategy can lead to defeat. Individuals, institutions, and nations often make the same mistake, planning for success in a future that they expect to be quite similar to the recent past. In the United States, this means the expectation of a future in which energy is cheap and readily available, U.S. military supremacy is ensured, and adequate natural resources will support an ever-increasing Gross Domestic Product.

To adequately prepare for the future, we need an accurate projection of the future. A growing body of evidence suggests that the future will be far different and less hospitable than the past several decades. Economic, social and ecological trends that may dramatically change the world in the next one or two decades include

- 1) **Global warming** – the scientific consensus supports that global warming is real and is occurring rapidly, and poses major threats of increasing severe weather, drought, biodiversity loss, world poverty and famine, etc.
- 2) **Peak oil** – predictions that world oil production will reach its maximum and begin to decline within the next 10-20 years, coupled with geopolitical factors, make energy independence and efficiency increasingly vital to (our community's) continued prosperity and security. [Heinberg, 2004; Association for the Study of Peak Oil]
- 3) **Population increases** - the U.S. population is projected to increase from its current 297 million to 420 million by 2050, and the world population, from 6.4 billion to 9.2 billion in the same period. [U.S. Census Bureau, 2005]
- 4) **Degradation of global ecosystems** – The capacity to provide materials and services such as food, fiber, and water purification, is declining at a dizzying rate. According to the United Nations *Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA) Synthesis Report*, approximately 60 percent of the ecosystem services that support life on Earth are being degraded or used unsustainably.
- 5) **A burgeoning U.S. trade deficit** (almost \$60 billion per month), government spending deficit (\$412 billion in FY 2004)⁷, and consumer debt have driven down the value of the dollar and weakened the global financial system and put the United States in a weaker position to make the investments needed for sustainability. [Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2005; CBO, 2005]
- 6) **Anarchy is increasing worldwide** as central authority collapses. The ongoing genocide in Darfur (Sudan), absence of central government in much of West Africa, control of eastern Columbia by rebel groups, and Iraq are just a few examples of the decline of national governments. [Diamond, 2005]

Any one of these trends, alone, would be daunting, but combined, they present challenges of unprecedented magnitude. Communities that do not recognize these trends and prepare adequately for a changing future are likely not to be able to survive well into the future.

“We have got to learn to save and conserve. We do need a “new economy”, but one that is founded on thrift and care, on saving and conserving, not on excess and waste.”
-Wendell Berry

[The material in this section was adapted, with permission, from Olson, 2005]

The Case Against “Sprawl”

Sprawling development is taking a toll on children, families and communities, and threatens our environment, health and quality of life in numerous ways. Sprawl spreads development out over large areas of land, destroying more than two million acres of parks, farms and open space in the U.S. each year. Increased driving distances and time in the car means less time available for kids, families and other pursuits.

Sprawl puts long distances between homes, stores and job centers, and makes people more dependent on driving in their daily lives. It increases traffic congestion and gridlock, wastes energy and gas, increases commute times and distances, and forces people to drive everywhere. The connection between greenhouse gasses and sprawl is also clear, with about 32 percent of all U.S. carbon emissions originating with transportation. The number of roads necessary to maintain an urban sprawl environment leads to a community severance effect, which produces isolated rather than integrated communities (WHO, 2000). This effect is particularly problematic for children, teenagers, elderly, and disabled people who do not have access to vehicles.

Human health problems associated with sprawl include physical inactivity and air and water pollution. Physical inactivity and obesity are related to car-dependent lifestyles and a lack of facilities and opportunity for walking and biking, and have reached public health epidemic proportions. The increased reliance on cars means more roads and parking lots are needed, which leads to an increase in smog and pollution from water runoff. The severity of ozone pollution is strongly related to the degree of sprawl. Other pollutants emitted by cars, e.g., benzene and particulates, are associated with increased risk of cancer. Traffic safety is also a major issue.

Sprawl also wastes taxpayer dollars. It pulls economic resources away from existing communities, lowers the local tax base, shifts businesses away from downtown, increases the costs of developing infrastructure (roads, sewer, water and services), and leaves behind those who can't or don't drive (students, seniors, those without cars.)

Urban sprawl is particularly problematic for citizens reaching the retirement age and looking for a place to relocate. Suburbs that are completely cut off from businesses, community events, and parks are not likely to attract an aging population. Sprawl leads to a reduced social life because of increased time spent on the roads, and a lack of local venues in which people can interact. Remote suburbs contribute to higher rates of television viewing, more time spent on computers, and little time spent interacting with neighbors. The community severance effect noted above

produces homebound seniors who, if they cannot drive or don't have a car, no longer have access to medical care, social services, and or places of worship.

Studies have shown that this lifestyle produces people who are more isolated and therefore lonelier than the average person (Frumkin, 2004). Studies also show that living in areas with walkable green spaces near one's residence positively influenced the longevity of urban senior citizens independent of their age, sex, marital status, baseline functional status, and socioeconomic status (Takano, 2002), and that sprawl encourages people to become transient, since they can't enjoy a high quality of life as a senior in communities that have an isolated and restrictive layout (Frumkin, 2004). This aspect of urban sprawl should be of grave concern to Bowling Green because in 2006 CNN's *Money Magazine* named the city one of the top places to retire in the United States. The magazine's criteria included having "top notch health care systems, loads of culture, lots of green spaces, and low taxes" (CNN, 2006). If Bowling Green continues down a path toward continued sprawl, the very aspects that attract retirees and senior citizens to the area will be lost.

The Case for Smart Growth

In communities across the nation, there is a growing concern that current development patterns -- dominated by what is often called "sprawl" -- are no longer in the long-term interest of our cities, existing suburbs, small towns, rural communities, or wilderness areas.

Though supportive of growth, communities are questioning the economic costs of abandoning infrastructure in the city and rebuilding it further out. They are questioning the social costs of the mismatch between employment locations and the work-force, and the wisdom of eating up open space in the city and prime agricultural lands at the fringe, polluting the air of a region by driving farther to get places, and contamination of waterways due to increased impermeable surfaces, i.e., roads, roofs and parking lots, without commensurate natural areas and trees.

Spurring the smart growth movement are demographic shifts, a strong environmental ethic, increased fiscal concerns, and more nuanced views of growth. The result is both a new demand and a new opportunity.

Smart growth recognizes connections between development and quality of life. It leverages new growth to improve the community. The features that distinguish smart growth in a community vary from place to place. In general, smart growth invests time, attention, and resources in restoring community and vitality to center cities and older suburbs. Smart growth is more town-centered and mixed-use community-centered, is public transit and pedestrian oriented, and has a greater mix of housing, commercial and retail uses. It also preserves open space and many other environmental amenities. But there is no "one-size-fits-all" solution. Successful communities tend to have one thing in common--a vision of where they want to go and of what things they value in their community--and their plans for development reflect these values.

[Text from executive summary of *Why Smart Growth: A Primer* by International City/County Management Association with Geoff Anderson (1998.)]

Principles of Smart Growth

To achieve smart growth, proactive communities have moved to:

- **Mix Land Uses**
Smart growth supports the integration of mixed land uses into communities as a critical component of achieving better places to live. Single use districts make life less convenient and require more driving.
- **Create a Range of Housing Opportunities and Choices**
Changing demographics are creating new demand for a wide range of housing options: houses, condominiums, affordable homes for medium and low-income families, “granny flats” for empty nesters, multi-service retirement communities. Providing quality housing for people of all income levels is an integral component in any smart growth strategy.
- **Preserve Open Space, Farmland, Natural Beauty and Critical Environmental Areas**
Smart growth preserves open space and critical environmental areas, improves quality of life, cuts down on pollution from runoff, and guides new growth into existing communities.
- **Emphasize Compact Building and “Green” Design**
Smart growth provides a means for communities to incorporate “green” energy design, LEED (Leadership in Environmental and Energy Design) building standards, and compact design as an alternative to conventional, land consumptive development.
- **Revitalize and Renovate Existing Areas and Properties**
Before plowing up and building on more forests and farms, look for opportunities to grow in existing areas already served by infrastructure. Smart growth directs development towards existing communities to conserve open space and irreplaceable natural resources.
- **Create Walkable, Close-knit Neighborhoods**
Walkable communities offer not only a place to walk, i.e., sidewalks, but something to walk to – a store, transit stop, church, school. This contributes to people’s sense of community because people get to know each and not just their cars.
- **Foster Distinctive, Attractive Communities with a Strong Sense of Place**
Smart growth encourages communities to protect and celebrate what makes each community unique and special, including historic buildings and culture.
- **Provide a Variety of Transportation Options**
People can’t get out of their cars until they are provided with other ways to get where they’re going, including safe and reliable public transit, sidewalks and bike paths.
- **Take Advantage of Existing Assets**
From local parks to neighborhood schools to old buildings, public investments should focus on getting the most out of what’s already built.
- **Make Development Decisions Predictable, Fair and Cost-Effective**
For a community to be successful in implementing smart growth, it must be embraced by the private sector. Incentives should be offered for smart development and builders wishing to implement smart growth practices should face no more obstacles than those contributing to sprawl.

- **Encourage Community and Stakeholder Collaboration**

An empowered and involved citizenry is the surest way to give citizens a stake in building a vital and vibrant community. Growth can create great places to live, work and play -- if it responds to a community's own sense of how and where it wants to grow.

The Tax Code and Planning for Incentives

An important issue for regional planning is the effect of the Federal tax code on urban decay and urban/suburban sprawl. Because of the way in which the U.S. tax code is written, businesses are encouraged to build new buildings instead of expanding or renovating their current premises. This is not something that can be changed at the local level, but it is important for local officials to understand the situation and develop incentives and other mechanisms to address it.

The U.S. tax code encourages businesses to build new buildings by providing tax deductions for the expenses of the new building. If the same business renovated their existing premises, there would be no deduction. This provision in the tax code encourages ever-greater urban sprawl, with businesses moving out of older sections of the city into the newer areas.

The tax code also introduces a second problem that contributes to urban decay. Once a business has moved from their old location, they usually offer the building for lease or sale. If the building is not leased or sold, the tax code provides a "business loss" deduction for the empty property. This policy encourages owners of empty property to "roll the dice" by not lowering the price of the property. If the property doesn't sell, they can take a deduction. If the property sells, that is even better.

These two tax code provisions often work in conjunction with one another to encourage urban decay. The business loss section encourages prices to remain high in older areas of the city. The high prices drive more businesses to the suburbs, where new construction is eligible for a tax break. Thus these two provisions unintentionally cause some older areas to become blighted with large numbers of empty properties, while urban/suburban areas keep growing and sprawling.

Although this issue can not be addressed at the local level, there are mechanisms that have been taken by local, regional, and state governments that help to address the problem. For example, some governments have created "enterprise zones" by providing incentives for businesses to stay, expand, renovate, and relocate in older areas. These incentives take various forms, such as local tax breaks, low-interest (or no-interest) financing, and even including employees of businesses in health insurance groups so that healthcare costs are lower. A more controversial method involves a denial of building permits beyond a specified line, such as the "urban green line" growth boundary that has been adopted in cities such as Portland, Oregon.

An interesting and successful incentive program has been undertaken in Kentucky by the city of Paducah. This novel program is a mixture of economic and non-economic incentives and has drawn national attention. In 2000, Paducah created the "artist relocation program," with the goal of making the urban center a place of art and a destination in its own right. The city created an urban enterprise zone consisting of downtown and the adjacent blighted neighborhoods. Artists, gallery owners, and antique dealers received incentives in the form of low-interest financing (including up to 100% loan-to-value ratios that include renovation costs), availability of group health insurance, tax breaks, and other economic and business incentives.

The goal is to create a city that people not only want to come to, but one where people want to live. This will theoretically lead to high-paying white-collar employers locating in Paducah, thereby increasing the tax base and helping to develop the local economy. The relocating artists are encouraged to use their incentives to renovate blighted buildings, not only for their commercial and working spaces, but also for personal living. Thus the city (and the artist) wins by the conversion of formerly blighted spaces to up-to-date spaces that can be sold later, even in the absence of new employers.

By all accounts, the Paducah program has been a resounding success. Several companies have chosen Paducah for high-paying white-collar operations because of the unique quality of life it offers, and recently the American Justice School of Law chose Paducah as a location because of the artistic opportunities and activities that are offered in the city. The “artist relocation program” has received national attention, with many cities—both large and small—sending representatives to Paducah to “see how they did it.” This “quality of life” marketing has not only helped Paducah attract high-paying employers, but has also led to a revival of formerly-blighted areas.

Conclusions

An “urban neighborhood” model for growth and development promotes people interactions, prosperity, community pride, and the greater security that results from people knowing and watching out for each other. When the neighborhood model breaks down, we see increases in crime and drug trafficking, unemployment, poverty, safety and security. This problem has already been seen in areas of Bowling Green and Warren County, but can be avoided through smart policies for growth and development.

The future strength of our community is in promoting diversity, stewardship of the environment, and caring for its people. We need to attract and support young families and innovative businesses. Demographic, social and economic trends support growth in this part of the country. With appropriate planning we can build on these trends and improve quality of life and security for our citizens, today and in the future.

For continued growth, Bowling Green must welcome newcomers and make Bowling Green attractive for families with and without children, as well as single adults and older people/retirees. Efforts made to attract and retain households with children will have the benefit of also making the community more attractive to households without children. Some steps to take include:

- Supporting neighborhood development that provides a range of commercial, cultural, educational and recreational services, and that can be easily and safely traversed on foot or by bicycle
- Supporting increased opportunities for households with young children to secure suitable housing with yards and play areas adjacent to their homes, and safer streets
- Encouraging the development of a variety of multi-family housing types with features attractive to various types of households and ages
- Using institutional and political resources at its disposal to ensure excellent education for all ages, and access to quality health care, throughout the community.

A Native American saying reminds us that “Every decision must take into account its effect on the next seven generations.” Sustainable development refers to the long-term social, economic, and

environmental health of our community. A sustainable culture thrives without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. Sustainable cities use resources efficiently and effectively. They reuse, recycle, reduce, restore - and redesign. They recognize constraints and build on assets. They use existing local resources where they can. They minimize exportation of environmental risk. They provide physical and economic security. And they distribute these and other benefits broadly in the community, to the benefit of all. They balance the need for growth with the needs for stability and prudent use of resources.

The Comprehensive Plan is intended to manage growth and change in Bowling Green for the next 20 years. The future described in the plan will not be achieved all at once, but phased in as opportunities present themselves. An effective plan must be flexible enough to succeed within a range of likely conditions and be adjusted as those conditions are monitored and evaluated, while maintaining a steady aim at its goals.

Some mechanisms to help translate the Plan into City actions are:

- Adopting a new set of building standards, e.g., LEED, which support green building, green procurement, zoning land for environmental purposes, and renewable energy production and construction standards for public buildings. This tells the business community that sustainable business practice is essential not only for corporate survival but also to do business with the City and for the long-term health of the planet.
- Neighborhood planning, with full community involvement, to aid in adopting and adjusting the Plan over time. Residents need to share in the vision.
- Adopting the U.S. Climate Control Agreement and taking measures to reduce CO₂ emissions and global warming
- Passing a Precautionary Principle ordinance, like the one passed in San Francisco, which confirms its recognition of the need to do no harm to future generations.

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APPENDIX A: Smart Growth Issue Areas

Smart growth is concerned with seven key issue areas. For more information and good resources in each area, go to the web addresses listed.

- **Community Quality of Life** @ <http://www.smartgrowth.org/about/issues/issues.asp?iss=2>
Smart growth offers a framework to build community and help create and preserve a sense of place. It does this through housing and transportation choices, urban green spaces, recreational and cultural attractions, and policies and incentives that promote mixed-use neighborhoods.
- **Design** @ <http://www.smartgrowth.org/about/issues/issues.asp?iss=14>
Smart growth creates communities that offer health, social, economic, and environmental benefits for all. It achieves this by promoting resource-efficient building and community designs, green building practices, low-impact development, and mixed-use and walkable neighborhoods.
- **Economics** @ <http://www.smartgrowth.org/about/issues/issues.asp?iss=3>
Smart growth encourages community-based small business investment and development, adds to the variety of local employment opportunities, and helps attract new businesses and industries. More efficient government services are key to this, as are public and private investments that focus on quality of life improvements.
- **Environment** @ <http://www.smartgrowth.org/about/issues/issues.asp?iss=4>
Many of our current environmental challenges — air and water pollution, global warming, habitat fragmentation and conversion — are due in part to the way we have built our neighborhoods, communities, and metropolitan areas during the past half-century.
- **Health** @ <http://www.smartgrowth.org/about/issues/issues.asp?iss=5>
Smart growth reduces health threats from air and water pollution and indoor air contaminants through resource-efficient building design and offering transportation options such as mass transit, bike lanes, and pedestrian walkways. These engage residents and workers in a more active, healthy lifestyle.
- **Housing** @ <http://www.smartgrowth.org/about/issues/issues.asp?iss=13>
Smart growth promotes housing options for diverse lifestyles and socio-economic levels. It does this through mixed-use, affordable housing and compact development that revitalizes neighborhoods and provides an alternative to automobile-dependent communities.
- **Transportation** @ <http://www.smartgrowth.org/about/issues/issues.asp?iss=12>
Smart growth protects public health and environmental quality, conserves energy, and improves the quality of life in communities by promoting new transportation choices and transit-oriented development.

APPENDIX B: A Livable Cities Checklist

A livable city has:

1. Walkable, mixed use, higher-density, mixed-income neighborhoods where it is a pleasant, short walk to a store, an office, a transit stop, a friends' house, a school or a park.
2. Vibrant, exciting, sociable, human-scaled pedestrian experiences.
3. Little or no wide, multi-lane, high-speed highway and road infrastructure within its central area. And few, if any, one-way streets, strip commercial development or cul-de-sacs.
4. Modest, traffic-calmed, tree-lined streets with on-street parking. Few, if any, roads are larger than 3 lanes in size.
5. High-quality public squares and public parks.
6. Quality, locally-owned cuisine -- some of which feature outdoor cafes found on a vibrant sidewalk.
7. Quality transit. The service is frequent and easy to use.
8. Quality nightlife. The city does not close down at 5 pm.
9. Quality bicycle and pedestrian facilities and a large number of bicyclists and pedestrians. Life without a car is perfectly possible and enjoyable.
10. Little in the way of surface parking -- particularly FREE off-street parking.
11. A compact downtown full of higher-density housing and diverse retail.
12. Quality culture (entertainment, speeches, arts, etc.) and a quality university.
13. A high degree of civic pride, and a tradition of working to protect their unique, treasured features.
14. Magnificent historic architecture.
15. Little in the way of excruciating, infuriating noise pollution (screaming emergency sirens, leaf blowers, vacuum trucks, helicopters, etc., are under control).

From "*Dom's Ranking of Most Livable Cities*," by Dom Nozzi, at <http://www.walkablestreets.com/livable.htm>.