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'Growing Wealthier' with smart growth

New Urban Network

A Center for Clean Air Policy report released January 19, "Growing Wealthier: Smart Growth, Climate Change, and Prosperity," offers economic *and* environmental arguments for smart growth. "We find that an inclusive planning process following smart growth principles that yields more walkable neighborhoods with broader options for housing and transportation can help communities, businesses and individuals make money, save money and improve quality of life," note authors Chuck Koshian and Steve Winkelman.

The report makes many strong points about economic and other benefits of smart growth, including the following:

• Creating a range of housing opportunities in proximity to jobs saves households money. Washington, DC, region households living in the jobs-rich core spent about 30 percent of their income on housing and transportation, while those in the car-dependent outer suburbs spent over 40 percent.

• Improving neighborhood "walkability" enhances property values. WalkScore.com rates locations according to a walkability index from 1 to 100. One study found that, in general, every one-point increase in a home's Walk Score raised its value by $700 to $3,000.

• Walkability also enhances health. In Seattle, a 5 percent increase in the overall level of walkability was linked to a 32 percent increase in minutes of walking or biking and a reduction in Body Mass Index.

• Creating a range of transportation options can increase property values, investment and jobs. In Denver, homes within a half mile of stations on the Southeast light rail line rose in value an average of 17.6 percent between 2006 and 2008; other Denver homes declined by an average 7.5 percent.

• American Recovery and Reinvestment Act investments in public transportation created almost twice as many jobs per billion dollars invested as highway projects – 16,419 vs. 8,781 job-months. A $100 million investment in Portland streetcars helped attract $3.5 billion in private investment.

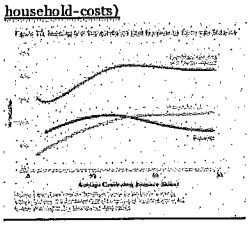
• Directing development towards existing communities can reduce infrastructure costs. Sacramento calculated the infrastructure price tag of its Blueprint Smart Growth scenario to be $9 billion less than conventional development.

• Building within a smaller footprint can reduce water use and improve storm water runoff management. A 2006 EPA report found that in a compact subdivision in Sacramento, California, water demand was 20-30 percent less than conventional subdivisions in the same city.

GDP versus vehicle miles traveled for US states
(/images/13906/gdp-versus-vehicle-miles-traveled-us-states)

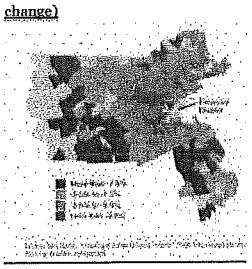
(http://newurbannetwork.com/sites/default/files/imagecache/full-content-width/GWStatevmtGDP.jpg)
Graph from "Growing Wealthier"

Commuting and household costs
(/images/13905/commuting-and-household-costs)



(http://newurbannetwork.com/sites/default/files/imagecache/full-content-width/CommuteCosts.jpg)
Graph from "Growing Wealthier"

Housing price change
(/images/13904/housing-price-change)



(http://newurbannetwork.com/sites/default/files/imagecache/full-content-width/housingpriceschange.jpg)
From peak to second half of 2007 in Eastern Massachusetts. Graph from "Growing Wealthier"

Vehicle miles traveled
(/images/13903/vehicle-miles-traveled)

• Reducing the need to drive saves big money. The Vision California project calculated that a "green" compact growth scenario could save California residents $8,600 in driving related costs per household by the year 2050, or more than $170 billion annually statewide.

(http://newurbannetwork.com/sites/default/files/imagecache/full-content-width/vmtMass.jpg)
In Eastern Massachusetts. From "Growing Wealther"

The report also make the case that smart growth can have significant impact. "Three rigorous studies in the past few years found that communities following smart-growth strategies either have succeeded in, or have the potential to, reduce their citizens' driving up to 60 percent," note the authors. They also state: "We show that reducing daily driving by just two and half miles per person, in concert with vehicle and fuel improvements, can put the transportation sector on path to meeting climate goals."

Recommendations

The summary lists five:

• To realize the full prosperity benefits of smart growth, we need incentive-based policy programs centered on the themes of action, measurement, and analysis.

• Transportation practitioners need new tools and technical assistance to enhance their ability to implement and evaluate smart growth and travel efficiency policies and their economic impacts. This would be an important role for federal agencies, such as US DOT.

• Government programs should reward communities that make efficient use of resources to promote economic and environmental sustainability.

• There is a solid foundation of research on the economic effects of smart growth but much remains to learn. The federal government should increase funding for such research and provide support for evaluating pilot projects and innovative policies.

• Ask the Sustainability Question: "Does this infrastructure or land development decision promote long-term environmental and economic health in an equitable way?"

To download the 82-page report, click on the link below or go to the website here. (http://www.growingwealthier.info/index.aspx)

Attachment	Size
growing_wealthier.pdf (http://newurbannetwork.com/sites/default/files/growing_wealthier.pdf)	15.26 MB

Posted by Robert Steuteville on 19 Jan 2011