

The State of Smart Growth

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Adapted from *This Land: The Battle Over Sprawl and the Future of America*

(Johns Hopkins University Press, Spring 2006)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since Oregon instituted its landmark land use planning system in 1973, smart growth has gone through several iterations and has been buffeted in the political arena. In the first half of the new decade in the new century, growth management in Oregon, Maryland and New Jersey suffered serious setbacks, due to ballot measures supported by property rights advocates, a change in political leadership, and a drumbeat of negative associations by politicians and commentators.

In response, smart growth has assumed a different, more targeted and primarily incentive-based character, where the emphasis is on the expansion of housing choices and the fulfillment of personal needs and desires, such as shorter commutes or a sense of place and community. Initiatives underway in Michigan, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania and Delaware focus on repairing urban infrastructure, changing zoning to allow mixed-use, compact development, and transit-oriented development and workforce housing.

At the same time, the smart growth movement strengthened an alliance with advocates of the poor, inner cities and older suburbs, who are concerned with the debilitating socio-economic impacts of sprawl. Regional equity and smart growth advocates, led by members of the Congress for the New Urbanism, continue to play a high-profile role in the rebuilding of Gulf Coast areas following Hurricane Katrina.