

Growing smart in Minnesota

Framework for action

Minnesota is growing and changing fast. The question before Minnesota is not *whether* we grow — we will. The real question is *how* we can grow in ways that improve the prosperity and quality of life for all as Minnesota competes in the knowledge, service-based and just-in-time economy of the 21st century. Our edge in this competition is the vitality of our economy, the soundness of our infrastructure, the quality of our workforce, the health of our environment, the quality and abundance of our farmland and natural resources, and the attractiveness of our communities.

Economic competitiveness is important not only to urban areas, but to regional growth centers and rural communities as well. All parts of the state face the challenge of maximizing economic opportunity and connecting people to housing, transportation and jobs. At the same time Minnesota must protect and enhance the environment and other assets that keep communities attractive places to live and work. This is what smart growth is all about.

With smart growth, some things must grow — jobs, productivity, wages, education, housing opportunities, savings, profits, opportunity and knowledge. Others — pollution, waste and poverty — must not.

Goals of the Ventura Smart Growth Initiative

Minnesotans care deeply about their state and want a strong economy, a healthy environment and robust, vital communities, both for themselves and for future generations.

First, the state must listen to citizens, businesses and local governments, and encourage their participation and involvement at the local level in deciding what smart growth will look like in their community.

The goals of Governor Ventura's Smart Growth Initiative are to:

- Maximize economic opportunity for all while protecting and enhancing the assets that make Minnesota a great place to live — healthy communities, clean air and water, and Minnesota's unique natural, cultural and historical areas.
- Manage natural resources and agricultural land to ensure they are sustained for future generations.
- Be fiscally prudent by building on existing public investments and avoiding future costs down the road.

Second, the state must be consistent. Minnesota needs to cut out the mixed signals, policies and investments that encourage short-sighted growth and re-align its policies, resources and incentives to foster smart growth. In addition, Minnesota needs to evaluate and realign state regulations so they *deter* activities contrary to smart growth principles and *promote* activities consistent with these principles.

Third, the state needs to support communities as they pursue smart growth strategies. The state should offer incentives rather than top-down mandates, and support local governments around the state that make sustainable development choices.

Principles for success

Smart growth offers options for how Minnesota can develop and change while enhancing its quality of life. It is not a one-size-fits-all approach. While there are many options for smart growth, these common-sense principles will guide public decisions and achieve the results Minnesotans expect:

■ **Stewardship: Use land and natural resources wisely to sustain them for the future.** Minnesota will protect the environment and conserve agricultural land, open space and other lands that support sustainable outdoor recreation, tourism and natural-resource-based industries. This will allow for growth that is sustainable for the long term.

■ **Efficiency: Make more efficient, integrated public investments in transportation, housing, schools, utilities, information infrastructure and other public services.** Minnesota needs to coordinate and link its tax policies with smart growth. It also must coordinate and link public investments in transportation, information infrastructure, land use, housing, schools and utilities so they expand economic opportunity for the entire state. By maintaining and improving existing investments in roads, schools and utilities, rather than needlessly making expensive new investments on the edges of communities, Minnesota will avoid wasteful public spending and support economic growth.

■ **Choice: Give communities smart growth options and choices.** Communities can be shaped by choice, or they can be shaped by chance. The state will work with local governments to encourage citizen and business participation in decisions about what smart growth should look like. Minnesota will create choices and incentives for linking transportation, housing, jobs, education and the amenities that make communities desirable places to live.

■ **Accountability: Reinforce responsibility and accountability for development decisions.** For smart growth to become a reality, everyone — individuals, businesses and government — must make smart choices and take responsibility for the true costs and consequences of the decisions they make. The marketplace can be an effective force for smart growth, but only if state and local policy sends consistent signals and development decisions are predictable, fair and cost effective. If communities choose to make short-sighted development decisions, it is not up to Minnesota taxpayers to pay the costs of their mistakes.

“We need community involvement and collaboration, not conflict. We need common-sense incentives for making smart decisions, and consequences, when necessary, for making short-sighted ones.”

Governor Jesse Ventura

Strategies for growing smart in Minnesota

To accomplish Minnesota's smart growth goals, the Ventura administration has identified three major strategic directions.

Strategy 1: Engage citizens in planning and decision-making

For smart growth to become a reality, Minnesota needs an active, informed citizenry and business community participating in planning and decision-making at the local level. To accomplish this, the state of Minnesota will partner with local governments, business groups, civic organizations and others to:

- Engage citizens in defining what smart growth looks like and assessing the costs and consequences of development alternatives, through visual preference surveys, community dialogs, forums and other tools.
- Promote better coordination and communication with state, local and regional interests on planning and development through comprehensive planning.
- Continue to provide citizens with comprehensive planning choices by eliminating the June 2001 sunset of the Community-Based Planning Act. Conduct an independent analysis of the Community-Based Planning program as the basis for future changes to the Act.

Strategy 2: Position and align state government for smart growth

For smart growth to work, Minnesota must align its incentives with its goals. This means linking investments and policies for transportation, housing, economic development, environmental protection and natural resources management so they encourage economic opportunity while sustaining Minnesota's quality of life. The state must lead by example, by incorporating smart growth principles into its planning and spending process, and by providing incentives for local governments to make smart growth choices.

To accomplish this, the Governor's Smart Growth Initiative will:

- Inventory current state government policies and incentives and resources to determine how they work for or against smart growth. Identify and focus on "flash points" where competing policy goals hamper progress on smart growth.
- Work with Governor Ventura's Tax Reform Project to evaluate what changes to the tax system are necessary to promote smart growth. Ensure that any new tax incentives for smart growth can demonstrate measurable results and are consistent with Governor Ventura's goals for a simpler, more equitable tax system.
- Reform other state incentives and policies to reinforce smart growth principles. Ensure consistency between transportation and other infrastructure investments and land-use plans.

■ Craft a flexible state development strategy and support regional strategies that link investments and policy to:

reflect the needs and preferences of citizens, communities and businesses

conserve Minnesota's farms, farmlands, greenways and other natural resources

tie public investments to smart growth plans

■ Create a system of greenways throughout the state, built on collaborative public-private partnerships and voluntary approaches, with minimal public land acquisition.

■ Develop tools for reviewing major statewide spending and bonding bills to assess how well new state investments promote smart growth.

■ Develop smart growth indicators that demonstrate our progress and success.

Strategy 3: Provide communities with effective tools for smart growth

“As a former mayor, I believe in local control, but I also believe that since public investments cross local boundaries, we must have regions that work as a whole.”

Governor Jesse Ventura

All around Minnesota, local governments are bringing smart growth principles to reality with innovative new development and zoning policies. Often, the best solutions are those hammered out at the local level. It's up to local governments and regional organizations, with the substantive participation of citizens, to decide what smart growth will look like in each community. The state must support these efforts so that the whole makes sense.

To accomplish this, Minnesota will:

■ Change the way the state does business, to provide integrated, responsive service to communities.

■ Provide communities with better tools and assistance for evaluating the costs and consequences of development decisions, and more effective incentives for incorporating smart growth principles into planning and development.

■ Strengthen and improve tools for agricultural land preservation.

■ Identify those areas of urban life and development where we need better understanding and develop that understanding through the Urban Development Generic Environmental Impact Statement.

This information was prepared for the Governor's Office by Minnesota Planning and the Metropolitan Council in cooperation with other state agencies. For more information, call Minnesota Planning at 651-296-3985 or the Metropolitan Council at 651-602-1000. Upon request, this information will be provided in an alternative format, such as Braille, large print or audiotape. For TTY, contact Minnesota Relay Service at 800-627-3529 and ask for Minnesota Planning. October 1999