

BRINGING SMART GROWTH TO THE TRI-STATE REGION

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The theme of RPA's 1999 Regional Assembly is "Bringing Smart Growth to the Tri-state Region." But what is "smart growth," and what can we learn from the national smart growth movement? And how can the region take decisive action to reign in accelerating urban sprawl that threatens our prosperity, quality of life, natural resources and social equity?

Across the country, community groups, environmentalists, and a growing number of business leaders and developers are engaging in what *Time Magazine* recently called "The Brawl over Sprawl." Three decades after Regional Plan Association first rallied the Tri-state Region against urban sprawl, many other groups are joining us here and across the country in a national "smart growth" movement that has the goal of creating alternatives to sprawl.

This discussion paper provides a "score card" on the effectiveness of the Tri-state Region's current smart growth strategies, including comparisons among our three states. It also compares the current effectiveness of smart growth planning here with that of other states and metropolitan regions across the country. It then lays out a smart growth agenda for the Tri-state Region, identifying improvements in state and regional plans, infrastructure investments, and community planning needed to reduce sprawl and achieve smarter patterns of growth over the next two decades.

THE EMERGENCE OF A NATIONAL SMART GROWTH MOVEMENT

The term "smart growth" was first used in Massachusetts in the late 1980s to describe proposals to improve its state and regional planning system. Rather than managing or restricting growth, as earlier growth management systems did, smart growth promotes growth, particularly in and adjoining existing city and town centers. By encouraging growth in these centers, this new generation of policies attack the related problems of sprawl and inner-city disinvestment. Smart growth also curbs sprawl by promoting more compact, more transit- and pedestrian-friendly, and less resource-, energy- and land-consuming patterns of development.

In the 1990s, a national "smart growth" movement has emerged to curb sprawl and promote sustainable growth. In the process, reforms have been implemented at both the state and regional level.

Several states have adopted new or strengthened incentive-based state smart growth management systems, bringing to 13 the number of states with state planning programs. These include: Washington, Oregon, Arizona, Utah, Minnesota, Tennessee, Maine, Vermont, Rhode Island, New Jersey, Maryland, Georgia and Florida. Legislation to create similar systems is pending in several other states, including Iowa and Massachusetts. Most of these programs include the following features:

- a set of *goals or principles* to guide state and municipal plans and investments;
- a requirement that *state agencies prepare functional plans* designed to achieve these goals;
- a set of *strong incentives designed to encourage regions and municipalities to adopt plans and regulations consistent with state goals* (these generally include grants to prepare plans and regulations and priority for state discretionary grants for construction of schools, roads, water and sewer systems, etc.);
- A process for *certification* by a designated state or regional agency of municipal plans and regulations as being consistent with state goals.

Dozens of regions across the country are also implementing smart growth plans. These include rural regions, such as Cape Cod and Lake Tahoe, that contain important natural resources threatened by resort

and second home development in our region, the Long Island Pine Barrens and Hudson River Greenway represent similar efforts. A number of metropolitan regions, including Chicago, Seattle, San Diego and Salt Lake City, are also developing or implementing new regional plans. Even fast growing Sunbelt cities, such as Atlanta and Phoenix, places that until recently promoted sprawl as an inevitable or even desirable pattern of growth, are now moving aggressively to limit sprawl. Atlanta's new Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (GRTA) is the newest of these initiatives. GRTA has strong powers to stop public and private projects, including highways, shopping centers and other development, that contribute to congestion, sprawl and air pollution. This approach could become a model for other regions, including ours, unless effective steps are taken to reduce congestion, land consumption and the air and water pollution that result from sprawl.

THE RESPONSE TO SPRAWL IN THE TRI-STATE REGION

RPA's 1968 Second Regional Plan represented the first concerted effort to control sprawl in a metropolitan region anywhere in the United States. Even three decades ago it was clear to many in the region that the continued movement of residents, jobs and services to fast growing suburbs would threaten the well being of its cities and countryside, and ultimately threaten the quality of life of the suburbs themselves.

RPA's anti-sprawl strategy at the time was to promote development in a network of eleven planned regional centers linked by a revitalized regional rail network. The Second Plan also called for a "Race for Open Space," that would protect hundreds of thousands of acres of open land from development. Today the regional centers, including Trenton, Newark, White Plains, Hicksville, Downtown Brooklyn, Stamford and New Haven, contain more than one million jobs—approximately one-tenth of total regional employment. After investing nearly \$30 billion in our regional rail system, this system now carries well over five million passengers daily, up by approximately one-third in the past decade. The metropolitan open space system now contains more than one million acres of protected lands.

Despite these important achievements, the region still continues to sprawl, creating widespread public concern over sprawl and its impacts. Ironically, in terms of population growth, the Tri-state Region is one of the slowest growing areas of the country. But here, as in other major US metropolitan areas, the rate of urbanization has accelerated to a rate more than four times the rate of population growth, as office and industrial parks on the region's beltways thirty or more miles out from the region's core spawn new exurban housing, shopping centers and commercial strips. These trends have had several important unintended but adverse consequences for the region as a whole:

- *Open space*, including farms and forests, wildlife habitats and recreational and scenic landscapes, is being consumed by low density sprawl from Central New Jersey to Eastern Long Island and from the Hudson Valley to the Litchfield Hills;
- *Inner cities and older suburbs* and their growing minority and immigrant populations have become increasingly isolated from new job and housing opportunities in the outer suburban ring. This trend reduces property values in these communities, while the costs of services increase, placing them at a further disadvantage. And taxpayers across the region are forced to pay for new infrastructure and schools in the outer ring even as these resources are being abandoned in the inner ring.
- *Traffic congestion* on suburban arterials and interstate highways is approaching "gridlock," as automobile registrations and vehicle miles traveled increase inexorably, choking the region's growth and undercutting its quality of life;
- *Air pollution and "non-point source" water pollution* are produced by increased automobile use and vast areas of pavement in the growing suburban rings, undercutting quality of life for all metropolitan residents.

State Planning in the Tri-state Region

Here in the Tri-state Region, New Jersey's 1992 State Development and Redevelopment Plan represents the most ambitious effort to contain sprawl. However, a recent analysis by the Office of State Planning determined that the state has urbanized 200,000 acres of open land since the plan's adoption, more than twice the amount anticipated. In fact, only a tenth of the State's municipalities have been designated as centers under the plan, with the result that most of the state's growth is still going to "greenfield" sites in the outer suburbs and rural areas.

Governor Christine Todd Whitman is moving to strengthen *New Jersey's State Plan*, which is being updated this year. The new Interim State Plan calls for focused infrastructure investments in designated regional centers, and streamlined permitting in these centers as an inducement for infill and redevelopment. In *New York State*, which currently has no state plan, legislation is now pending in Albany to create a new smart growth program for the state. In *Connecticut*, steps have been taken in recent years to require that state agency actions adhere to the state's advisory Conservation and Development Plan. But there are still no incentives for communities to adopt plans and regulations consistent with the state plan, and Connecticut is alone among our three states in having no current effort to promote smarter patterns of growth.

Parts of the Region Lead in Brownfield Reclamation and Open Space Preservation

In two key smart growth issues, portions of the region lead the nation. The first of these is *brownfield reclamation*, where New Jersey has adopted regulatory and tax reforms that clarify clean up standards and liability concerns and that provide powerful incentives for redevelopment of these sites.

Connecticut has also taken important steps to reform its brownfield reclamation laws, and both New York and Connecticut have created funds to subsidize reclamation of significant contaminated sites. Governor Pataki has appointed a task force to propose brownfield legislation for New York, and a consortium of business, civic and environmental groups is working to promote the introduction of legislation this year. New York now needs to move aggressively to adopt these reforms if it is to avoid being placed at a further disadvantage to New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts and other states that have adopted comprehensive brownfield reforms.

The region has also taken bold action to *acquire open space*. All three of our states have adopted important new conservation land acquisition programs, placing them in the vanguard of a national open space movement. In the November 1998 elections, voters across the country approved 240 land conservation and land use planning initiatives, providing \$7.5 billion approved for open space protection. In the largest of these, New Jersey voters approved a \$1 billion program to preserve one million acres of farmland and other key natural areas. And voters in all five of Long Island's East End towns approved creation of new land banks to protect open space, financed by new real estate transfer taxes.

BUILDING ON OUR SUCCESSES TO IMPLEMENT A SMART GROWTH AGENDA

But we cannot buy back all of the Region's open land, and we cannot accommodate all of the region's growth on reclaimed brownfield. How, then can the region build on its own successes and learn from other regions that have begun to rein in sprawl? And how can we continue to rebuild our city and suburban centers, and ensure that inner city and older suburban communities share the benefits of smarter growth? To do so, the region must take action on a smart growth action agenda that includes the following efforts:

Improving State Smart Growth Plans

New Jersey's State Planning Commission has just approved a new Interim State Plan after two years of public hearings and a unique process of "cross-acceptance," in which the State Planning Commission and Counties mutually negotiate the plan's policies. The commission is now beginning an independent review of the plan's likely fiscal impacts. The Interim Plan represents a significant improvement over its

predecessor in several ways. Where the 1992 plan contained often contradictory or inconclusive policy recommendations, the new plan clearly states New Jersey's goals of limiting sprawl, preserving rural resources and farmland and promoting development in urban and suburban regional centers. For the first time the new plan also includes a set of urban design policies for the state and its communities and a set of indicators to measure the state's progress in achieving the plan's goals.

The true measure of the plan's likely success will be whether the state provides sufficiently strong incentives for communities to seek center designation and eliminate sprawl zoning in areas designated by the plan for agricultural use and resource protection. State agencies, in particular the Department of Transportation, must also redirect their funding priorities around the plan's policies. Unless these actions are taken, even with its ambitious new state plan, New Jersey can expect to see hundreds of thousands of additional acres covered by sprawl in the first years of the new millennium.

New York State must develop a new smart growth program that provides strong incentives for regions and municipalities to adopt plans and regulations designed to control sprawl and promote reinvestment in centers. State agencies must take steps to support these outcomes, for example by limiting highway construction and economic development incentives that promote "greenfield" development. The Hoyt-Rath bill now pending in the legislature would begin this process. Efforts are now being made to strengthen this bill by providing incentives for municipal and state agency consistency with the state's smart growth goals.

Connecticut must provide powerful new incentives for cities and towns to adopt plans and regulations designed to limit sprawl and implement the goals of its Conservation and Development Plan. Grants for construction of schools, roads, sewers, open space and industrial development should be limited to communities that adopt smart growth plans. Major new highway projects, such as proposals to widen the Quinnipiac River Bridge and I-95 east of New Haven should proceed only if affected communities from Branford to Old Saybrook adopt smart growth plans designed to control sprawl that would be induced by the expanded highway.

Improving Community Planning and Design: Creating a Regional Design Center

Even if all three states and portions of the region adopt smart growth programs, the front lines of defense in these efforts will continue to be municipal planning boards and commissions. All of these groups consist of dedicated and increasingly beleaguered volunteers, most of whom have no background in planning or land use issues. Until recently, there have been few ways for them to gain the skills needed to plan for growth and process a deluge of zoning and subdivision proposals. Important new training programs have been initiated in the Hudson Valley, through a partnership between the Countryside Institute and the Pace University School of Law.

A growing number of regions across the country have established community design centers to support improved municipal planning and design. RPA is proposing to establish a similar regional design center here, which would partner with existing educational initiatives to develop and demonstrate new model plans and ordinances and train local officials in the use of these models.

This center would continue RPA's work in demonstrating the potential of new land use planning techniques to rein in sprawl. Special attention would be paid to developing, demonstrating and replicating new models of infill and redevelopment of urban and suburban centers, and of suburban corridors in need of revitalization. RPA believes that much—if not most of the region's development needs over the next two decades—could be met by development and reuse of these places. This, along with new programs to limit land consumption in exurban and rural communities could reduce sprawl and land consumption in the first decades of the new millennium.

The center would build on RPA's experience over the past decade in conducting community design workshops in a wide variety of places, ranging from rural Wassaic in the Hudson Valley to Sunset Park in Brooklyn. All of these efforts have produced results in these communities as well as model plans and regulations that can be replicated in other places in the region. Community Design Workshops have been held in the following communities:

- Wassaic, NY, a hamlet in the mid-Hudson Valley, where concepts for transit oriented development have been prepared in anticipation of new Metro-North commuter rail service.
- West Windsor, in Central New Jersey, where visual simulations were prepared in partnership with the Simulation Center to demonstrate the potential to build a new village center around the Princeton Junction railroad station.
- West Milford, in the New Jersey Highlands, where a proposed transfer of development rights system was developed that would protect the town's public water supply watersheds.
- Yonkers, NY, where plans were prepared to redevelop derelict urban waterfront areas adjoining the City's commuter rail station.
- Patterson, NY, where a proposed expanded village would "soak up" development potential from areas draining into the nearby Croton Reservoir System.
- Sunset Park, in Brooklyn, where plans for mixed-use development of waterfront industrial areas were prepared as a component of the community's "197a" plan.
- Lincoln Park, in Newark, where a proposed arts district would become the focal point for community renewal.
- Somerville, NJ, where concepts are being developed to transform a suburban edge city into a regional center with a greater sense of place, where new mixed use development is designed to be accessible to transit and pedestrians. This plan, and an earlier plan prepared by RPA and the Long Island Regional Planning Board for the Nassau Hub area, could become prototypes for the redesign of other edge cities across the region.

Creating Regional Smart Growth Strategies

The *Metropolitan Greensward* proposal in RPA's Third Regional Plan calls for creation of eleven large "regional reserves" designed to protect the region's "green infrastructure" of farms, forests, watersheds, ridgelines and estuaries. The Greensward is also intended to serve as a "green edge to growth," a kind of regional growth boundary delineating the edge of sprawl for the whole metropolitan area.

In two of the reserves—the *New Jersey Pinelands* and *Long Island Pine Barrens*—regional land use regulatory commissions have been established to control sprawl and preserve water supplies and other natural resources. The newest of these, the *Long Island Central Pine Barrens Commission*, is a voluntary compact among its three participating towns. This locally initiated, locally controlled body could become a model for similar initiatives elsewhere in the region.

In a third proposed regional reserve, *New York City's upstate water supply watersheds*, regulations and land acquisition programs have been adopted to ensure that federal water quality standards are met. But land conservation programs are behind schedule and both the City and the federal governments have been criticized for lenient enforcement of their regulations. Of equal concern is the fact that effective growth management programs are not yet in place in the Catskill, Delaware and Croton watersheds to preserve rural character and prevent further exurban sprawl. Further, the US Environmental Protection Agency is closely monitoring the success of current regulatory and land acquisition measures to protect reservoir water quality. EPA could still mandate filtration of the city's water supplies if it determines that current watershed management programs are inadequate to protect water quality, at enormous cost to New York City and suburban ratepayers.

The continued success of these efforts must be closely monitored. A related concern is that the Greensward's biodiversity be protected. The Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) has begun an assessment of the Greensward's ecological resources, and the threats that inappropriate development and

land management practices pose to their well being. This effort will inform priority setting for protection of the Greensward and its ecological assets. The WCS is also preparing model land use and resource management codes that could be demonstrated and replicated in Greensward communities.

Steps must also be taken to create regional land use planning and conservation efforts in the other proposed reserves. Of immediate concern is the region's portion of the *Appalachian Highlands* system extending from *New Jersey's Skylands to New York's Hudson Highlands and then into Connecticut's Litchfield Hills*. All of these areas contain sensitive water supplies, habitat and other resources threatened by low-density sprawl. The recent acquisition of Sterling Forest as a new interstate park demonstrates the potential for interstate cooperation and federal participation in preservation of the highlands.

The US Forest Service and RPA, in partnership with the Highlands Coalition and a number of local conservation and development groups, are now outlining ways that preservation of the New Jersey and Hudson Highlands could proceed. Legislation has been drafted to enable towns to adopt a transfer of development rights (TDR) system in the New Jersey Highlands, which would move development rights out of environmentally sensitive areas to centers and designated development areas.

In the *Hudson Highlands and adjoining areas of the Hudson Valley*, the Hudson River Greenway and land conservation efforts led by Scenic Hudson and the Open Space Institute are preserving important parts of the area's natural and scenic heritage. But large-scale subdivision and strip commercial development continues, and many of the valley's older town and city centers continue to decline. Strong new measures will be needed to rein in sprawl, preserve farm and forest land, and reclaim urban brownfields. A strengthened Greenway program, perhaps building on the Long Island Pine Barrens "bottom-up" incentive-based model, could be an essential part of this effort.

In the *Litchfield Hills*, the Housatonic Valley Association is mapping important conservation lands, and HVA and RPA are leading efforts to ensure that open spaces owned by electric and gas utilities, including key stretches of shoreline along the Housatonic River and Candlewood Lake, are preserved as these industries are deregulated. Subdivisions and commercial strips are creeping up Routes 7, 8 and 44 from the growing employment centers in Northern Fairfield and suburban Hartford. And a wave of new development, including hundreds of oversized "starter mansions," is diminishing the character of the area's historic villages and rural landscapes—Litchfield County's fundamental economic asset. The prevailing one- to three-acre zoning in most of the County's towns will virtually mandate sprawl as these trends continue.

In the most urbanized of the eleven proposed regional reserves, the *New York - New Jersey Harbor Estuary*, more than \$30 billion has been spent to improve the estuary's water quality. As a result, the waters of the Harbor are cleaner than they have been in more than a century. Boating, fishing and even swimming are returning to the harbor, making it a great open space and recreational amenity at the region's urban core. And wildlife, fisheries and shellfisheries are returning to health. New park alliances have been established to promote major new parks in Manhattan and Brooklyn and the New Jersey waterfront walkway. Already, completed sections of the walkway and nearby Liberty State Park are bringing millions of visitors to the water's edge. In New York City, a new joint city-state authority has been created to develop Manhattan's Hudson River Park. But all of these efforts are hampered by a shortage of capital and operating funds and conflicting demands for waterfront properties.

RPA and a broad coalition of civic groups are also promoting redevelopment of *Governors Island* as a major new park and educational and conference center, which would serve as a focal point for public access to the harbor. RPA is also mapping potential waterfront access, park and wildlife areas throughout the Harbor estuary, as part of the "H2O" Highlands-to-Ocean initiative, which will result in a park, preserve and public access plan for the Harbor. RPA is also participating in a new civic coalition devoted to creating a public trust fund for preservation and improvement of these open spaces. These efforts must

be integrated into a larger vision and action plan for the Harbor, incorporating plans for seaport development, housing, ecological restoration, and maritime industry, as well as parks and public access concerns.

In *Eastern Long Island*, newly created community land banks will attempt to stay ahead of the developers, as the Island's last remaining extensive areas of farmland and undeveloped coastline remain under strong development pressures. These land conservation efforts cannot succeed, however, unless all five East End towns complete and implement new comprehensive plans now underway (or, in the case of Southampton and Shelter Island, recently adopted). To preserve the area's rural character, remaining open land, and the integrity of the Peconic Estuary, sophisticated new land use regulations must be closely coordinated with acquisition programs to direct development into existing village centers. One way to do this would be to expand the regional transfer of development rights system now working well in the L.I. Pine Barrens to the rest of the East End. The area also needs some form of regional review of developments of regional impact—large commercial and other projects that impact the highways, water supplies and other resources upon which the whole East End depends.

In *Long Island Sound*, major investments in wastewater treatment have improved the Sound's water quality. But efforts to preserve remaining waterfront open spaces are lagging. These parcels are all under strong development pressures, and state open space protection programs should be refocused on the Sound.

Of particular concern are the bluffs and dune systems of the North Fork, which is the largest contiguous undeveloped area fronting on the Sound. Several key properties, including the Grandiflora Dunes in Riverhead, contain rare ecological resources that are threatened by inappropriate development. And the state of New York is proposing commercial development of the Kings Park Development Center property, one of the last opportunities to expand access to the Sound in central Suffolk County.

Western *Connecticut* residents now have less public access than any other coastal region in the United States. Only a limited number of undeveloped properties remain in Fairfield and New Haven Counties, many of them currently used as estates and for institutional purposes. Most of these will be developed in the next several years unless new partnerships between the state, municipalities and private land trusts can be created to acquire and manage these properties as public preserves.

RPA has proposed a major new initiative to protect the Sound's remaining natural areas and expand public access. One approach, recently endorsed by the Long Island Sound Watershed Alliance, would be for the Congress to designate the Sound as a National Reserve. Federal open space acquisition funds would be provided through the reauthorized Land & Water Conservation Fund, now being debated in the Congress. Under this approach, both states and federal conservation agencies could coordinate major new open space initiatives, in partnership with communities and private land trusts.

Another approach would be to expand the Stewart McKinney National Wildlife Sanctuary to encompass sites like the Grandiflora Dunes, portions of Kings Park, and key conservation properties in Connecticut. The US Fish and Wildlife Service could work in partnership with state agencies to preserve these properties, perhaps in cooperation with existing land trusts or a new Long Island Sound Trust or Conservancy created for this purpose. Access, parking and recreational use of these properties would be limited to levels consistent with the parallel goals of protecting both natural resources and the privacy of neighboring residents and communities. The success of similar ambitious coastal access programs in Massachusetts and Rhode Island suggests that this initiative could succeed in Long Island Sound.

Regional Express “Rx” Rail and MetroLink

One of the major contributors to the region's economic success in the 1990s has been a revitalized regional rail system, in which we have invested nearly \$30 billion in the regional rail system since 1980.

Through these investments, subway and commuter rail systems have been renewed and ridership is up by nearly a third since 1990. But virtually no new transit capacity has been created in 60 years, leaving no room for expanded economic activity or transit ridership. And there are only limited opportunities to expand highway capacity in either urban or suburban areas, given fiscal, environmental and community constraints.

RPA's proposed \$21 billion Regional Express "Rx" rail system would create this needed capacity. Already, steps have been taken to develop the first phase of this system, with initial funding and political commitments for the new JFK AirLink and the East Side Access project linking the Long Island Rail Road to Grand Central Terminal.

In January 1999, RPA urged that the MTA proceed with *MetroLink*, the next phase of Rx. *MetroLink* would run the length of Manhattan Island under the Second Avenue Corridor. It would carry nearly half-a-million passengers daily in comfort to destinations throughout the Manhattan business district, and dramatically shorten commutes and reduce congestion for hundreds of thousands of daily commuters. Metro-North and Long Island Rail Road commuters would gain convenient links to Lower Manhattan for the first time, and a one-seat ride would be provided from Grand Central, Wall Street and Downtown Brooklyn directly to terminals at JFK Airport. Express service from the Bronx, Queens and Brooklyn would cut travel times in half for hundreds of thousands of commuters, reinforcing the desirability of these residential areas.

MetroLink is an essential part of a regional smart growth strategy. RPA is now working to build support for the new revenues required to finance this \$13 billion investment. A new Trans-Hudson passenger rail link is also urgently needed, and initial steps have been taken by NJ Transit and the Port Authority to move this project ahead. Together, these two projects, along with the East Side Access project, could create the capacity for a generation of sustainable growth in the region's urban core. Other Rx services, including a new high speed Tri-state Rx line, running in the Northeast Corridor from New Haven to Trenton, and new high speed Amtrak service in the same corridor, could help the regional downtowns retain their role as central places in the regional economy.

Other Smart Transportation Policies and Investments

RPA has also promoted the redesign of existing urban expressways to make them more functional and reduce their impacts on surrounding areas. The first of these is the aging Gowanus Expressway, where RPA has proposed that the existing elevated roadway be replaced with a deep bore tunnel, instead of being reconstructed in place, as the New York State Department of Transportation originally proposed. Using new tunneling technology that has already been used in Paris, Oslo and other cities, this project can be built at a fraction of the cost and inconvenience of traditional tunneling projects. If this project is successful, other urban highways might also be replaced with tunnels as they reach the end of their design lives.

Finally, RPA and others have proposed that we introduce value-pricing strategies on existing highways, bridges and tunnels, using new Easy Pass automated tolling technology to manage congestion through pricing. A value pricing demonstration project is now underway on the Tappan Zee-Route 287 corridor for trucks, with peak tolls increasing during the morning and evening rush hours.

Creating a Diverse, Broad-based Constituency

Smart growth conveys a promise that it will improve the well being of residents in all parts of the region, from low-income urban and inner suburban communities to more affluent suburban towns to rural villages and farming communities. To fulfill that promise, and to create a broad consensus for action, the region's smart growth agenda must include effective, ongoing efforts to represent all of these communities. Particular efforts need to be made to relate smart growth to the concerns of urban communities. Because sprawl has a much more visible impact on suburban towns and rural areas,

constituents from these communities often form the core of smart growth coalitions. In spite of the impact of sprawl on cities, inner city residents are less likely to see the relevance of state and regional planning efforts to developments in their communities. In addition, community leaders are often concerned that urban growth incentives will not result in jobs for low-income residents, or that they will further restrict the supply of affordable housing.

To make smart growth work for urban communities, and to insure that regional coalitions represent a diverse constituency, a number of actions need to be taken:

- The leadership of smart growth coalitions must include adequate representation from the region's inner city, suburban and rural constituencies, and needs to reflect the region's racial and ethnic diversity. In collaboration with the Pratt Institute Center for Community and Environmental Development, RPA is working to involve community leadership in smart growth initiatives and regional planning efforts.
- Brownfield reform efforts and other policies to encourage growth in urban communities need to incorporate the concerns of inner city areas. These include the protection of public health and the development of economic activities that are consistent with community needs and priorities. This will require new partnerships between state and municipal officials, developers and community groups, similar to the successful partnership that is now redeveloping Long Branch, NJ.
- Smart growth initiatives must also provide for new housing production in a wide range of locations, prices and densities. Unless this goal can be achieved, the region's already high housing prices could escalate even further beyond the means of poor and middle-class households. The policies and outcomes of smart growth efforts in other areas, such as Maryland, are one place to look for models that seek to balance limits on sprawl with incentives to develop affordable housing.
- Emerging vitality in regional downtowns needs to be nurtured and connected to adjacent residential areas. RPA is currently working in a number of cities, including Newark and Stamford, to help prepare master plans for the next generation of growth and development. Similar efforts are underway in Bridgeport and Jamaica. Other regional downtowns, including New Haven, Paterson and Hicksville, must move forward with similar initiatives if they are to remain hubs of the regional economy.

CONCLUSION: A SMART GROWTH ACTION AGENDA FOR THE REGION

RPA will continue to be the leading advocate for smart growth policies and investments in the Tri-state Region. We believe that the region has a unique opportunity as we enter the new millennium to create strong new smart growth programs. As outlined in the Third Regional Plan, our smart growth goals will be to:

- *Focus most new growth in revitalized centers*, from regional downtowns to rural villages, from redesigned suburban centers to the Manhattan Central Business District and outer borough commercial and industrial centers. This will require expanded brownfield reclamation, tax reform and other strategies in all three states.
- *Create, or strengthen state smart growth plans in all three states by 2002*, designed around these principles.
- *Establish a Regional Design Center*, which in partnership with existing educational groups will provide quality training programs and design workshops for planning officials and communities across the region. It will also develop, demonstrate and promote replication of model smart growth plans and regulations that can be adopted throughout the region.
- *Build the Metropolitan Greensward System*, with the goal of creating effective land use management and open space protection programs for all 11 regional reserves by 2010.
- *Promote investment in key links of the Regional Express Rx Rail system*, including MetroLink, a new Trans-Hudson passenger tunnel, and the JFK AirLink and East Side Access, to create new capacity, shorten travel times and improve the system's reliability and comfort. We will also

promote the redesign of urban highways and value pricing of highways throughout the region to reduce congestion and mitigate the effects of roads on communities and the environment.

- *Coordinate the activities of civic and business groups* across the region that are engaged in smart growth concerns and develop a diverse, broad-based constituency for change.

In all of these efforts, RPA will continue to be guided by the following principles:

- *Promote growth* in locations with the infrastructure to support it.
- *Support the marketplace*, by eliminating regulatory and tax policies that prevent the free market from producing the housing and community choices people want.
- *Revitalize cities, villages and suburban centers* by focusing growth and infrastructure in these places.
- *Conserve the region's green infrastructure* of farms, forests, habitats, rivers, estuaries, parks and water supplies.
- *Improve suburban quality of life* by reducing congestion and sprawl and reinvigorating suburban downtowns.
- *Respect property rights and property values*, for both current homeowners and businesses and developers.
- *Create expanded housing and employment opportunities for the region's minorities and immigrants.*
- *Create choices for all the region's residents*, in where and how they live, work, play and move about the region.