



*Protecting Southwest Florida's unique natural environment and quality of life ... now and forever.*

## **ELEMENTS OF SMART GROWTH**

*"Smart Growth" is a code word for whatever the user of this term wants to achieve concerning metropolitan development. Yet different users of the term have totally different goals, so "smart growth" can mean almost anything. In spite of its diverse and often conflicting meanings, all parties superficially endorse "smart growth" because it is clearly superior to the alternative: "dumb growth." - Anthony Downs, writer – economist*

### **What is Smart Growth from the Conservancy's perspective?**

**It has 6 essential elements:**

1. Location, location, location: As an environmental organization, our first evaluation is the location of development as it relates to ecological compatibility.
  - Does the development avoid impacts to listed species, listed species habitat, wetlands and sensitive uplands?
  - Is the project located so that necessary infrastructure will not bisect these sensitive environmental resources?
  - Does the footprint of the development result in the actual preservation of the proposed conservation areas?
  - Is the development footprint compatible with adjacent uses?
  - Is the proposal in a currently rural area, and how will locating such urban development impact rural character, and will it lead to further urbanization? If so, is this compatible?
  - What type of development is proposed: Is it a preferable type of development, such as infill or redevelopment? Those are development types within an existing urban area. Or is greenfield development proposed? Greenfield type development is placed outside of the urban boundary where no development has previously occurred. In Southwest Florida, this usually means that important agricultural areas are replaced with development.
2. Design:
  - Walkable – so that residents do not have to rely on the automobile to obtain goods and services for their daily needs. Also, those who are unable to drive or cannot afford to drive can maintain their independence.



Conservancy of Southwest Florida has been awarded Charity Navigator's prestigious 4-Star top rating for good governance, sound fiscal management and commitment to accountability and transparency. Charity Navigator is America's largest and most respected independent evaluator of charities.

- Small block sizes – this equates to greater walkability.
- Compact – the more compact, the more acres of land are conserved.
- High density – not more density, but a smaller footprint with higher densities.

3. Timing:

- Especially when talking about urbanization of rural areas, when does this happen? Does development occur when landowners want to maximize profit by converting agricultural lands to urbanization, or when the community actually needs a new town or village? Is a needs analysis conducted?....And, what about the infrastructure needed to support this new development? How does this go in, when and who pays for it up-front?
- How does this impact the needs of existing residents?

4. Sequencing:

- Don't leapfrog development – does development “jump” beyond existing urban areas and rural development? And does it require further distances to provide infrastructure and services, which increases costs?
- Development should occur in the more urban-adjacent areas before leaping over rural and agricultural lands for new developments.

5. Retained commitments:

- Set aside preserves and conservation easement-protected preserves are not placeholders for future development and cannot be treated as such.

6. Consistency:

- If every new development creates their own set of rules per a site specific overlay, why even have a comprehensive plan?
- If every development asks for and is granted 60 deviations, why have a land development code?
- Put in place good rule, and follow them. Update them as needed with new best available science.