

What Is Smart Growth?

According to the Citizens' Housing and Planning Association (CHAPA), "smart growth" embodies the latest thinking about how to harness the positive aspects of growth while minimizing its negative impacts. This year, the Federal Home Loan Bank of Boston helped CHAPA develop principles to provide guidance for CHAPA member organizations and Massachusetts communities for rethinking our approaches to growth.

CHAPA Smart Growth Principles

Promote efficient land use through development of compact communities with a lively mix of uses -- including housing, businesses and shops, civic and open spaces -- to encourage walking, reduce the need for auto use, support public transit, and minimize loss of open space.

Promote regional land-use planning and transportation options and coordinate local development with these plans.

Encourage tax policy that reduces the dependence on local property taxes and the competition for high-tax-value land uses. Encourage plans and policies that allow all communities within a region to share in the benefits and responsibilities of growth.

Promote diverse housing types in all communities to enable persons and households from a wide range of economic levels, cultures, and age groups to live and work within their boundaries.

Foster a strong sense of place: Consider the history, environment, resources, and character of communities when planning new development.

Promote development that makes use of existing infrastructure by rehabilitating existing structures, cleaning and reusing contaminated sites, and building on infill parcels. Encourage development that conserves resources, minimizes waste, promotes health, and enhances the communities in which it is located.

Consider the impact of development on larger ecosystems, and wherever possible, preserve the natural terrain, wildlife habitat, drainage and vegetation of a community and region, and permanently protect superior examples. Promote special protections for working landscapes — farms, forests, and waterfronts.

Establish development decision-making processes that are open, predictable, fair and cost-effective.

Promote communities of diversity and delight.