

SMART GROWTH IN CANADA

The Canadian Urban Institute

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A BRIEF HISTORY OF AN IDEA

The term “smart growth” was coined in the United States to suggest an alternative, not just to “problem growth,” but to “no growth.” In the mid-1990s, the suburbs of American cities like Atlanta and San Diego were expanding rapidly, sprawling across the landscape. Environmentalists had long deplored this trend, but as the economic costs of sprawl began to be felt, the demand for a new approach was taken up by businesspeople, commuters, and local governments. State officials, searching for a middle way that would allow for necessary growth and development, but in ways that were less wasteful of resources and less likely to encounter opposition, came up with “smart growth.”

The term seemed to act like a magnet for all kinds of proposals to make cities less dysfunctional, more liveable, and more economically competitive. Proponents of public transportation, affordable housing, green space protection, clean air and water, heritage preservation, downtown and brownfields redevelopment, compact urban design, mixed-use zoning, parks, community gardens, and bicycle and pedestrian paths took up the term and added something to it.

The ideas behind smart growth were not new. The costs of sprawl had been known to planners at least since the 1970s. Groups such as the Sierra Club had been lobbying for the conservation of natural areas and historic preservationists had been trying to halt the destruction of cultural heritage for decades. The decline in the population of major American cities, and the corresponding loss of business and tax revenues had concerned local politicians for many years. The call to invest in transit, not just in more highways, had been intensifying since the 1980s. The demand for a range of housing types is perennial.

What was new was the coalition of many different interests behind the idea that the current way in which cities grow needs to change. Suddenly the Sierra Club and the National Association of Home Builders found themselves using much the same language and promoting some of the same goals. Federal, state and municipal governments, as well as the private and non-profit sectors rallied round a single cause. Both government funding and private investment converged, making a new kind of planning possible. In effect, ideas that had been around for decades arrived at a “tipping point” – a term used to describe the transformation of an idea or type of behaviour into a widespread, contagious trend.¹

¹ Malcolm Gladwell, *The Tipping Point* (New York: Little Brown, 2000).

The term and the idea that it stood for were taken up enthusiastically by the Clinton-Gore administration, which announced a “Livable Communities” initiative in 1998 that included federal support for mass transit, the redevelopment of brownfields sites, and matching grants for regional and local initiatives in the area of smart growth. All 50 state governors, most mayors of large cities, and hundreds of citizens’ groups supported the initiative.

The danger, of course, is that a vague term such as “smart growth” can be used to mean whatever a particular group wants it to mean, and therefore can be used to justify almost any project. When large amounts of money are available for smart growth projects, then the temptation to call all growth smart growth becomes overwhelming. American decision makers are learning that they need to use the term cautiously, and apply rigorous criteria when they consider a project that labels itself as an example of smart growth.

WHAT CAN CANADA LEARN FROM THE AMERICAN EXPERIENCE?

Canadians have long prided themselves on the fact that their cities have never suffered as much as American cities. Yes, we have sprawling suburbs, but we don’t have “doughnut cities” because we never gutted our downtown areas to quite the same extent as the Americans did in the 1950s and 1960s, in the name of urban renewal. Yes, we have traffic congestion and many people endure long commutes every day, but we never abandoned transit as an alternative. Yes, we are paving over farmland at a great rate, but with our smaller population, we don’t put quite as much pressure on the environment.

At the same time, many Canadians feel that our cities could and should function better and that Canadian complacency is misplaced. They regard with some envy the way in which Americans have formed coalitions, rallied public support, galvanized the government, and established public-private partnerships to bring about urban improvements.

American cities that Canadians used to think were dying have been resuscitated and are rivalling Canadian cities in liveability and economic health, like heart attack victims who survive to become fitness fanatics. The American federal government, which carried out the destructive urban renewal schemes of the 1960s, is now supporting smart growth projects of the 21st century with billions of dollars in funding. There is more money for affordable housing and tougher environmental legislation. The idea that cities are engines of the economy is more widely accepted by the upper levels of government. The Americans’ aggressive determination to whip their cities into shape is something that many Canadians can only wistfully admire.

Canadian cities may not have problems that are as severe as those of American cities, but they do have problems. Some of those problems have been caused by a political system in which municipal powers are strictly limited and much of the crucial decision-making authority is in the hands of provincial governments. During the late 1990s, the relationship between provinces and cities was, to say the least, strained, because of the downloading of services and forced amalgamations of many cities with their suburban regions. Meanwhile, the federal government ended programs that benefited cities, such as those that supported the creation of affordable housing, and seemed disinclined to invest in infrastructure.

The climate appears to be changing, however. Provincial governments that draw support from suburban regions are finding that suburban voters are unhappy about long commutes, the lack of transportation alternatives, environmental degradation, and neighbourhoods that fail to satisfy their needs. Some provincial and federal politicians have started to use the term “smart growth” and are paying attention to the rebirth of American cities.

Canada could certainly benefit from the kinds of changes that are occurring in American cities. We need transportation alternatives, updated infrastructure, a wider choice of housing options, better environmental protection, and more reinvestment in city centres. We need to slow down sprawl and make cities more liveable. Whether or not we succeed depends largely on the ability of all levels of government as well as the private and non-profit sectors to work together.

THE INTERLOCKING ELEMENTS OF SMART GROWTH

Smart growth is commonly described as an alternative to sprawl, but what is sprawl? Sprawl is often equated with suburbs and new growth on the edges of cities, but in fact, not all suburbs and not all new growth can be considered examples of sprawl.

The main distinguishing feature of sprawl is the way in which new development consumes land at a faster rate than the rate at which the population is growing. Therefore, any alternative to sprawl has to curb the rate at which suburbs expand relative to the growth in population. This means not only reconsidering housing forms and lot sizes in new suburbs, but accommodating a greater proportion of growth in previously developed areas, and *that* means reinvesting in existing cities.

Sprawl is also defined by its environmental and economic costs. Some of these costs are related to the paving over of rural land and the need to extend watermains and sewers farther and farther; others to an arrangement of land uses that requires residents to use a

car whenever they leave their homes. Reducing car dependence also requires several concurrent actions: on the one hand, investments in transit offer an alternative to the car; on the other, transit will only be economically feasible if enough people find it convenient to use the service, so neighbourhoods must be designed to get more people closer to transit routes. As well, employment needs to be sufficiently concentrated to warrant the transit service levels that make transit attractive in the first place.

Finally, sprawl is associated with a number of less tangible problems. In the United States, the endless outward expansion of suburbs left many inner cities without resources, home only to the very poor. Canadian cities have not suffered quite as badly, but many municipalities are feeling squeezed between the need to provide a wide array of services (including social services to the poor) and a shrinking tax base (relative to rising income tax revenues that accrue to senior level governments) to pay for those services. Smart growth includes both reinvestment in cities to make them attractive to people in a wide range of household types and income levels, and the creation of new housing, including affordable housing, to improve the options for existing city dwellers.

Another intangible problem is the sense of placelessness typical of many suburbs. Land uses are strictly segregated, creating huge areas with nothing but housing, interspersed with multi-lane highways, enormous shopping centres, and vast business parks. Commercial development is dominated by large-scale chains that build virtually identical stores in all locations. The scale and anonymity of such development patterns can make people feel isolated, especially those without cars. Smart growth includes measures to create suburbs on a more human scale that are more liveable, interesting, and attractive.

Smart growth, then, is a set of interlocking actions, carried out by coalitions of business people, developers, decision-makers, investors, planners, and citizens. Smart growth means moving ahead on several fronts at once. The Canadian Urban Institute has grouped the main actions into six categories:

- Promoting cities as engines of the economy;
- Containing urban sprawl;
- Providing transportation alternatives;
- Providing housing choice;
- Protecting natural areas and cultural heritage;
- Creating community.

Each category reinforces the others and within each category, a number of actions are required to bring about needed change.

Promoting cities as engines of the economy

It has been suggested that the information economy will mean the end of cities: since businesses can operate from anywhere, keeping in touch with suppliers and customers by electronic means, there is no need for workers to congregate in specific locations. In fact, the information economy is propelling the revival of city life. As Joel Kotkin, author of *The New Geography*, puts it:

Despite the shift to digital communications, the economies of [large urban] regions display a powerful and quintessentially urban dependence on the need to congregate and network... The artisanal businesses of the postindustrial era, in field as diverse as trade, advertising, graphic arts, entertainment and the Internet, thrive best in cities, where they can find a certain critical mass of community....

Today many of [the] informational industries can conduct their business electronically and at great distance, yet the essential nature of many of these linchpins of urban commerce remains dependent on the sorts of individuals who prefer to live in cities. Employers who rely on creative workers will still be forced to conduct business in cities, even if their own headquarters are located elsewhere, as long as the urban populations possess the necessary skills.²

Cities matter and places matter, yes, but not just any cities, any places. The cities and regions that will benefit from the trends described by Joel Kotkin are those that offer a high quality of life to the kinds of workers that information businesses employ. Knowledge workers are demanding and highly mobile, which is why cities in Canada are increasingly competing for talent against some of the American cities that had been "left for dead" only a decade ago. Some of the actions that can enhance the quality of life in existing cities include:

- improvements to make cities more attractive, including effective urban design measures;
- reinvestment in core areas, such as waterfronts, commercial districts, and former industrial areas;
- incentive programs to encourage private sector investment in cities;
- incentive programs to support development projects that meet specific planning criteria for the city.

² Joel Kotkin, *The New Geography: How the Digital Revolution is Reshaping the American Landscape* (New York: Random House, 2000), pages 15, 59, 61.

Containing urban sprawl

Nearly all large Canadian cities are located close to farmland, and the concern over the loss of farmland to suburban development is growing every year. Many cities have been trying since the 1970s and 1980s to set limits to growth, and official plans clearly demarcate greenbelts and urban envelopes, but these limits are routinely breached as cities keep expanding outwards.

Along with sprawl have come environmental pollution, longer commutes, haphazard and often unsightly commercial development, and a lowered quality of life. There are also the costs of extending highways, watermains and sewers to serve brand-new subdivisions, while infrastructure in older urbanized areas suffers from a lack of repair and upgrading.

Smart growth does not mean an end to all new development or the abandonment of suburbs. However, it does mean reconsidering how and where new development is built and finding ways to improve the quality of life in existing suburbs. In a recent publication on smart growth, the Urban Land Institute noted:

According to *Emerging Trends in Real Estate 1999*, standard suburban development may not be able to sustain itself. In fact, this report predicts that many low-density suburban communities will suffer lower land values because of poor planning, increasing traffic, and deteriorating housing stock.³

The same trends are likely to be felt in Canadian suburbs, particular given the recent rise in fuel prices and the predicted downturn in the economy.

Some of the actions required to rein in sprawl include:

- a commitment to setting meaningful urban boundaries and implementing regional growth management;
- ensuring that new residential developments are designed to support transit and other alternatives to car use;
- drawing up and enforcing regional plans that promote the efficient use of existing infrastructure and strict criteria for investment in new infrastructure;
- drawing up and enforcing local plans that promote mixed-use developments and compact urban form.

³ *Smart Growth: Myth and Fact* (Washington, D.C.: Urban Land Institute, 1999), page 6.

Providing transportation alternatives

Gridlock. Thousands of cars jam the city streets, moving along a centimetre at a time, pumping carbon dioxide into the air, creating stress for commuters and a nightmare for traffic police. Years ago, the Toronto Transportation Commission coined the slogan “The Better Way” for its transit system, and transit certainly looks better and better as congestion, commuting times and rush hours increase, not just in Toronto, but in all Canadian cities.

The social consequences of congestion are felt in the commuters’ homes, because overtired, stressed people have less time for family, volunteer activities, and school events – at a time when parental participation in education is expected to make up for funding shortfalls.

At the same time, highways are crowded with trucks, bringing goods from elsewhere in North America and taking Canadian-made goods to market. The highways are suffering from the strain of increasing truck traffic – not just the wear and tear on the pavement, but the disasters caused by accidents involving large trucks on congested highways.

Clearly, existing transportation systems are unsustainable. But will people really switch to transit as an alternative? The Urban Land Institute in Washington studied the question, and found that people will indeed use transit if they have some incentive to do so (such as saving time or money) and if the alternatives are fast, located near home and work, and conveniently scheduled.⁴

Some of the actions that will get people out of their cars include:

- increased investment in transit;
- supportive urban form (that is, neighbourhoods that are laid out so that most residents can get to and from transit stops quickly and easily);
- planning that makes better use of the potential of transit to concentrate employment and which offers employers the opportunity to invest in such locations.

Providing housing choice

Canada’s diverse population needs a diverse range of housing options. The market has proved quite successful at creating housing for families that can afford to buy, but less successful at providing rental housing for young people and immigrants, affordable

⁴ *Transportation and Growth: Myth and Fact* (Washington, D.C.: Urban Land Institute, 1996).

housing for low-income people, and appropriate housing for the growing population of seniors.

The need is particularly great for rental and affordable housing.

Through the 1990s the number of Canadian households experiencing difficulty finding affordable housing has increased dramatically. During this decade real disposable incomes stagnated or declined, especially for lower-income households, while rent levels increased much faster than general inflation, leaving less income to cover shelter costs.⁵

Affordable rental housing is a quality-of-life issue, since many of the people who need it are the people who make cities enjoyable to live in – the immigrants who run specialized businesses, the artists and performers who enliven the arts scene, the students who come to study at universities and colleges, the people who work in shops and restaurants. When people who provide important services cannot afford to live in the cities that need those services, then quality of life suffers for everyone.

At the same time, the baby boom is aging and the need for housing close to transit and within walking distance of essential services is increasing. Smart growth means smart for all people at all stages of the life cycle.

Some of the actions that will increase Canadians' housing options include:

- the removal of barriers and the creation of incentives to investment in all housing forms for all types of tenure (rental, owned, cooperative);
- direct investment in affordable housing for low-income people;
- a greater range of market housing options in locations closer to employment and accessible by transit.

Protecting natural areas and cultural heritage

The environmental costs of paving paradise and putting up a parking lot (or a sprawling subdivision or a big box megamall) are well known. Paving increases run-off, which sends pollutants generated by traffic into groundwater. Forests and woodlots are cut down to make room for development, causing erosion and the loss of wildlife habitat. Farmland is urbanized, so food cannot be grown close to the city and must be trucked in from more distant areas. Car use increases, and air quality decreases. So does the health and quality of life of the people who live in cities and suburbs.

⁵ *A National Affordable Housing Strategy* (Ottawa : Federation of Canadian Municipalities, 2000), page 5.

The foundation of our communities is the natural environment. However, the traditional approach to urban development has been to remove ecological functions from within built areas, a “ditch it” and “pave it” approach. Developers, builders and local governments are beginning to realize that it is often more economical and easier to integrate urban developments into natural systems. Studies show that using ecosystem functions can reduce the need for expensive built infrastructure and increase the value of nearby properties. It also preserves the clean air and water upon which we all rely.⁶

The loss of cultural heritage is equally detrimental. Although historic preservation is often justified on aesthetic, moral or educational terms, many cities have found that heritage preservation can have a direct economic effect.

Design guidelines and marketing programs for historic warehouse districts in St. Paul and Denver and mixed-use waterfront developments in Jersey City are... examples of attempts to increase round-the-clock activity in these cities. Quite apart from efforts to slow or encourage growth, these cities are trying to generate greater variety in downtown activities and, in many instances, historic preservation is seen as an important factor in accomplishing this. Ties between preservation and downtown housing, tourism, attractive pedestrian environments and other major downtown goals are becoming clearer.⁷

Preservation can also be applied to other forms of cultural heritage. Preserving certain distinctive landscapes can enhance the liveability and even the property values of nearby residential areas.

Some of the actions that will prevent environmental degradation and reap the benefits of historic preservation include:

- protecting environmentally sensitive and natural areas from development;
- preserving culturally significant buildings, districts, and landscapes;
- creating parks, open spaces, community gardens, and green areas for public enjoyment.

⁶ Deborah Curran and May Leung, *Smart Growth: A Primer* (Vancouver: Smart Growth British Columbia, 1999), page 5.

⁷ Richard Collins, Elizabeth Waters and Bruce Dotson, *America's Downtowns: Growth, Politics and Preservation* (Washington, D.C.: The Preservation Press, 1991), page 16.

Creating community

Urban design, greenbelts, brownfields redevelopment, affordable housing, and environmental and heritage protection do not create liveable places. People do.

People – the people who actually live in the downtown areas, the suburbs, the older neighbourhoods, the new subdivisions, the 1960s split-level ranch houses, and the recycled lofts – must participate in the planning process and express their visions for the future of their cities and neighbourhoods. People need to see the alternatives to sprawl and describe their experiences as residents in the city or the suburbs, as commuters, as homeworkers, as business owners. And people need to know that decision makers are listening to them and are prepared to act to solve problems.

Creating community is a process, not an end product. Although the term “community” is used to mean physical collections of residences (community planning); groups of people who share a profession (the medical community); or people with similar interests, in this context, an older meaning applies: “A community is made up of people who may not have similar interests but who must negotiate and resolve their differences for the sake of social harmony.”⁸

This is the other essential feature of smart growth: collaboration and cooperation. The cities in the United States that have benefitted from smart growth initiatives have brought together federal, state and municipal government leaders, businesspeople, non-profit groups, and citizens to discuss plans and create partnerships.

THE TOOLS OF SMART GROWTH

The Canadian Urban Institute has identified certain tools that have been used to promote smart growth in the United States:

- coalitions that bring together governments, the private sector, and non-profit groups to set goals;
- federal, provincial and municipal leadership and enabling legislation;
- financial incentives to encourage private investment in smart growth;
- public-private partnerships on smart growth projects.

⁸ Neil Postman, *Building a Bridge to the Eighteenth Century: How the Past Can Improve Our Future* (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1999), page 53.

Like the elements of smart growth, all these measures are interlocking. Legislation makes financing possible; coalitions bring together public-private partnerships to take advantage of financial incentives to rehabilitate urban areas.

The next step is to examine how these tools could be adapted to the Canadian situation – or whether legislative changes are needed to make them feasible in Canada.

Building coalitions

Successful smart growth initiatives in the United States are largely the result of cooperation among many groups. Rather than developers, planners, legislators, environmental groups, housing activists, financial institutions, and residents' groups all pulling in different directions, these groups have largely joined forces to shape new growth and boost the economy of their cities. Even large private companies have joined the trend; for example, the Bank of America has set aside a fund for investment in smart growth projects and developed mortgage criteria that makes financing available for those who buy into smart growth.

In Canada, local boards of trade have been among the first to recognize that transportation, infrastructure, and planning problems affect business and that smart growth offers a way to make Canadian cities more competitive. At least one Canadian bank offers financing specifically for brownfield redevelopment projects. However, Canada has not yet seen the coalitions of business with environmental and citizens' groups that have characterized American smart growth initiatives, and the federal and provincial governments are only just beginning to consider legislation and funding that takes account of smart growth. There is less widespread support for reinvestment in cities – indeed, many decision makers and voters disagree with the idea.

At present, smart growth in Canada faces a publicity problem. Although newspapers across Canada deplore the traffic congestion, environmental pollution and economic problems caused by sprawl, few journalists have started to focus on potential solutions to these problems. The first order of business is to bring together the necessary participants and get them talking to each other and agreeing on some common goals. The proponents of smart growth need to organize conferences, sponsor documentaries, issue publications, create websites, and use all the available public awareness tools to get the message out.

Looking to federal, provincial, and municipal leadership

Although smart growth has strong grass-roots support in the United States, it has been spurred by federal and state legislation and municipal initiatives that make a new kind of

planning possible and prevent sprawl. Some of the government initiatives that have promoted smart growth in the United States include:

- **Transportation policy:** The *Transportation Equity Act* (TEA-21), passed in 1998, makes federal funds available for transit infrastructure, bicycle and pedestrian paths, incentives for commuters to use transit, research, and other programs to promote alternatives to automobile transportation.
- **Brownfield redevelopment programs:** The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has sponsored more than 300 brownfields pilot projects and provided grants for cleaning up contaminated soils; the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) also makes funds available for rehabilitating brownfields sites.
- **Better America Bonds:** The federal government has established a program whereby state and local government can issue bonds for which investors receive tax credits instead of interest; the bonds can be used by the state or local government to raise money for protecting farmland or wetlands, creating parks, improving water quality, and other environmental projects.
- **Empowerment Zones:** This designation may be applied to urban neighbourhoods where the need for revitalization is urgent; 20 zones have been created that are eligible for federal grants and tax exemptions, as well as programs for school improvements, job creation, and brownfields clean-up.
- **Information:** The federal government has also published and disseminated policy papers promoting smart growth.

None of these programs demand that municipalities participate in smart growth; they simply reward those that do. Could programs like these work in Canada? Since infrastructure renewal, expanded transit, affordable housing, and tax policies and incentives all require federal and provincial support and legislation, it is an important question to answer.

Promoting private investment with financial incentives

The Americans have been remarkably creative and successful in finding ways to get the private sector involved in smart growth. Some of the techniques they have employed include:

- tax increment financing;
- tax-exempt municipal bonds;
- tax credits;
- location efficient mortgages.

Tax increment financing is a form of public-private partnership that has been used for redevelopment projects, particularly brownfields and infill projects, that require public

investment to get off the ground. The principle behind this kind of funding is that since the city will gain from increased property tax revenues when a run-down area is redeveloped, it should contribute some funding up front to ensure that the improvements are made. The funding may be used for building or repairing infrastructure, buying land and buildings, demolition and site improvement, and bond financing costs.

Projects that receive tax increment financing must meet certain criteria under state law (43 states currently have tax increment financing legislation). Although the criteria vary from state to state, the city must usually demonstrate that the area could not reasonably be expected to be developed without public funding and that the area qualifies as a “blighted area” – as determined, for example, by the number of vacant buildings or vacant lots, the number of obsolete or physically deteriorated structures, or the inadequacy of public utilities in the area.

Proposals for tax increment financing usually requires a government review and a public hearing. If the proposal is approved, the city must identify the boundaries of the area in which the financing will apply and adopt a detailed redevelopment plan.

Municipal bonds are debt obligations issued by cities and towns to raise money for public works, schools, highways, affordable housing, and other projects. If the projects are intended to benefit the general public, the bonds are from federal income taxes.

Taxable bonds may be issued for projects such as sports facilities that benefit particular groups. The bonds are redeemed through the increased property tax revenues generated by the particular project.

Tax credits have been used in the United States since the 1980s to promote the creation of affordable housing. Under the Housing Credit programs, the Internal Revenue Service allocates a certain number of Housing Credits to each state; within each state, an agency is designated to administer the program. Tax credits are offered to private or non-profit developers of affordable housing who meet certain criteria. The developers use the tax credits to raise capital.

Location efficient mortgages are underwritten by Fannie Mae, the national provider of homeownership capital, in partnership with state and local governments. This is a pilot program started as part of the Clinton-Gore package of smart growth strategies. These mortgages are offered to households who use public transit rather than cars and who want to buy housing on or near a transit line in an urban area. Because these households do not have the expenses of car ownership, and because they are saving public expenditures on car-related pollution and facilities, they qualify for larger mortgages than they might otherwise receive. The purpose of the program is to increase home ownership in certain urban areas and promote transit ridership.

In many American cities, a combination of these tools are being used to bring about the redevelopment or rehabilitation of urban areas. Could programs like these work in Canada? What would it take to make them feasible?

Public-private partnerships

Many American municipalities have created redevelopment agencies to oversee smart growth initiatives, such as the Atlanta Development Authority, the Denver Urban Renewal Authority, Indianapolis Downtown Inc., or the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency. These public-private partnerships help to raise money for redevelopment and promote projects that will improve the quality of life in each city.

Some of the redevelopment agencies have sweeping powers to expropriate properties in redevelopment areas, administer tax increment financing, issue bonds, charge fees, offer or guarantee loans, buy or lease and operate properties to raise money for projects, or undertake urban revitalization projects. Some are registered charities that can accept donations. Some act much like the planning department of a city, and carry out studies to support smart growth projects. Others act more as information and networking brokers, bringing public officials and private funders and developers together, but not undertaking projects of their own.

Could Canadian cities create such agencies? Canadian municipalities are subject to provincial legislation and have limited powers to create new types of agencies. They may need expanded authority to promote revitalization projects.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Previous publications by the Canadian Urban Institute have focused on the benefits of urban intensification; recommended more effective approaches to planning city regions; pointed out the relative advantages enjoyed by U.S. and British cities in terms of federal and national government involvement in funding; and explored the potential for cities to work with the private sector and educators to create partnerships that will help expand the skills base of local economies to create more competitive city regions. The focus of this publication is broader, and intended to stimulate debate on critical issues facing our cities.

The Canadian Urban Institute is committed to promoting smart growth in Canada. Canadian cities are now competing with American cities for new investment and knowledge workers. For years, Canadians prided themselves on the quality of life in their cities, but today, the United States is moving ahead faster to solve urban problems and create liveable cities. Canada faces the prospect of being left behind.

However, Canadian cities cannot simply adopt American policies wholesale. The elements and tools of smart growth must be adapted to Canadian needs and political

structures. The first step is to start thinking of Canada as an urban nation, and its cities as the source of 21st-century prosperity.

This paper was prepared for the Canadian Urban Institute (CUI) by Philippa Campsie Editorial Services. It is based on a larger volume of research carried out by the CUI and B.S. Onyschuk, Q.C., a partner with Smith Lyons Barristers and Solicitors, which will be available in the near future. The Canadian Urban Institute is a not-for-profit “urban think tank” based in Toronto, dedicated to enhancing the quality of life in large urban areas and the competitiveness of cities and city regions in Canada and internationally. For more information contact Glenn R. Miller, MCIP, RPP, Director of Applied Research, at gmliller@canurb.com or telephone 416-365-0816 ext 284.
