



# **Communicating Smart Growth**

## **Implementing the Frame: Improving Our Communities**

Funders' Network  
for Smart Growth and Livable Communities

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By  
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## ***Introduction***

In 2003, ActionMedia contracted with the Funders' Network for Smart Growth and Livable Communities to help re-frame smart growth. ActionMedia conducted nine focus groups and met with national practitioners and funders to develop inclusive ways of talking about growth and development issues and to discover pertinent values and perspectives that are widely shared by citizens across the geographic, racial, economic, and political spectrum. ActionMedia proposed a "growth & development" frame that can serve as the foundation for more effective communications.

In 2004, ActionMedia conducted workshops in Minnesota, Pennsylvania, California, and Maryland, with a range of advocates, policy makers, and funders working on policies related to development and growth patterns. These workshops, each tailored to the organizations represented, were designed to demonstrate the growth & development frame and its power to the advocates, show them how to apply it, and help them (and learn from them) in the weeks after the workshop to use the frame.

This paper is written for advocates who are already supportive of smart growth solutions, and is not intended to make the case for a smart growth agenda. Its purpose is to help advocates strengthen their communications by using the recommended frame. The frame should not be thought of as a "smart growth frame." It's a growth and development frame that sets a positive context for smart growth solutions, and helps advocates avoid playing into the hands of their opposition.

Different organizations will use the frame differently. While some organizations are explicitly Smart Growth groups, many of their allies are not. Groups committed to environmental protection, mass transit, public health, housing or social equity can and should continue to pursue their specific policy agendas. But all of them can frame their diverse messages with a common set of assumptions and values that will increase the clarity and power of their communications.

## ***The Current Story***

Most of the existing communications from advocates for smart growth policies can be characterized this way:

Sprawl is the problem; Smart Growth is the solution. Urban sprawl is gobbling up our land, emptying city cores, creating congestion, pollution, blight, economic shifts, and contributing to social inequity, obesity, asthma, and loss of community. Smart Growth will create stronger neighborhoods and regions, reduce pollution and congestion, improve community health.

While the statement above is not intended to be comprehensive, it does represent the basic template from which most Smart Growth messages are composed. At the same time, a competing story is being circulated by opponents to policies intended to improve growth management. This opposition story can be characterized as follows:

Smart Growth is the problem. Individual liberty, property rights, the functioning of the free market and consumer choice are threatened by over-reaching land use regulation. The Smart Growth movement wants to tell you where to live, how to live, and what and when to drive.

This opposition frame has been intentionally formulated to counter and thwart the efforts of smart growth advocates. One example of its translation into a message is this, from Commonwealth Foundation:

“Referred to in pejorative terms as urban sprawl, suburbanization has been blamed for a number of negative impacts. Proposals to alter land-use laws in response to the perceived crisis are likely to have serious, negative side effects, such as reducing the rate of home ownership and increasing burdens on young, middle-class families. Suburbanites cherish the very lifestyle that the opponents of suburbanization abhor.”

These two opposing stories define the current public discourse on growth management policy. The opposition frame is carefully constructed, steeped in values and designed to make *advocates for smart growth* the issue. This oppositional story is being promoted in a disciplined and coherent strategy. Advocates must be equally intentional in framing and communicating their issues to make *building better communities* the issue.

## ***Communications Frame Technology***

The word “story” is used above to suggest a perspective, or set of operating assumptions, that form the basis for defining and describing experience. Advocates are careful to get the facts and to get them right. But it’s a mistake to understand the communications challenge as a matter of imparting the facts from us, who have them, to you (the audience) who lack them. Facts are important, but they are not a story. Facts, in themselves, are meaningless. All meaning resides in the story we make of the facts.

A communications frame is another way to describe this type of story or “what this is really about.” *Frame* is both a visual and a structural metaphor. A picture frame defines what is included and what is excluded; framing a scene in a camera viewfinder involves decisions about foreground, background, point of view, focus. The frame of a building determines its size and shape, and holds up the structure. A message may be thought of as equivalent to a finished building – the audience is aware of the walls and furnishings, and the same frame may be the basis of a wide range of appearances and lay-outs, but the frame is foundation and starting point.

Communications framing is based on cognitive research. People hear a message in terms of what they already know and believe. A frame directs a listener’s associations and expectations, so that they will be receptive to new information and ideas. If we want someone we don’t know to understand our viewpoint, we don’t launch right into our opinions. We try to establish some comfort and common ground first. We know that ease

and trust make the person more open to our ideas. We can use the ideas and beliefs people already hold, and reason with them to our conclusions.

UC Berkley linguist George Lakoff uses an example to demonstrate the dynamics of a frame. He asks students to NOT think about an elephant. Once everyone agrees to not think of an elephant, he then says something like, “Sam loves peanuts.”

Words associated with a frame evoke the frame. Similarly the word *peanuts* evoke an immediate association with *elephant*.

Evoking a frame reinforces the frame.

Negating a frame evokes the frame. When advocates say, “We’re not anti-growth,” they are reinforcing the frame of their opponents, that this issue is about rates of growth, that smart growth is a euphemism for no growth.

Frames are used to set the terms of discussion – the terms in which people understand the issue. The oppositional frame suggests the terms are growth vs. no growth, free market vs. government regulation, personal choice vs. smart growth dictates. Advocates must adopt a frame that can reset the terms to their advantage. Sprawl is the problem/smart growth is the solution doesn’t accomplish it.

The success of framing the issue in public discourse may be measured as an “echo effect.” When people hear a good story, they repeat it. When advocates are successful in setting the frame, others – importantly including journalists and political leaders - start using it. Decision makers are the ultimate target for the frame. Leaders who share the goals of the advocates must have language that resonates with what their constituents already know and believe. Further, the frame is rooted in assumptions (values) that opponents cannot publicly refute, because these assumptions are so widely shared.

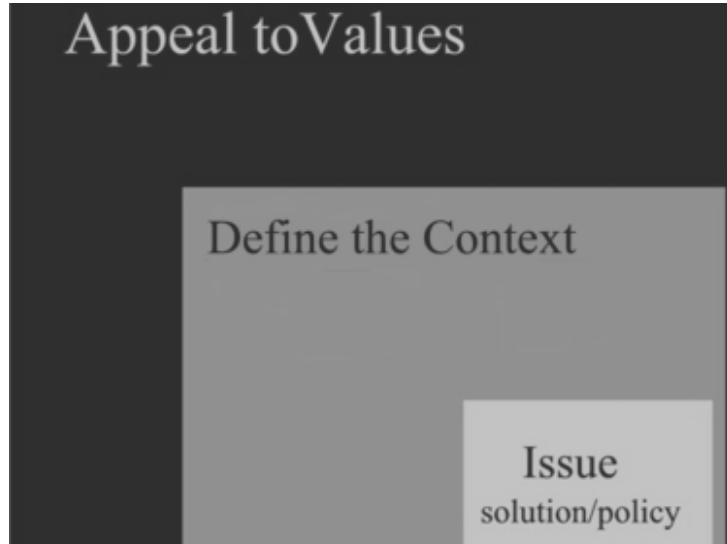
Setting the terms of discussion in this way does not mean that everyone will agree on specific policy solutions. But it does mean that policy must be debated in terms that will support the advocates’ position.

## ***Constructing a frame***

A frame begins with an appeal to values.

The growth and development frame is based on focus group research designed to discover the values and assumptions shared by people across the political, ethnic, economic and geographic (i.e., urban, inner and outer ring suburban, fringe area) spectrum.

Frames are constructed according to a specific hierarchy, beginning with values, setting the context, and then moving to the issue.



### **(Smart) Growth & Development Frame**

#### **I. Values:**

Tier 1 - For policy and planning: Fairness, Big Picture, Community Benefits, Democracy

Tier 2 - For specific development proposals: Choice, Security, Convenience, Conservation, Community

#### **II. Context**

Local progress, growth and development

#### **III. Issue**

What, where and how should we build next?

## Values

*Fairness* is a widely shared value, and means different things to different people. To promote smart growth in terms of this value, advocates must be prepared to state explicitly what they believe is fair and unfair, and to challenge others to be equally explicit.

Planning must be done with an eye on the *Big Picture* – getting all the *options* on the table, and looking at all the consequences, both on neighboring areas and on the future.

Development must be undertaken to *benefit the community* as a whole, not just one interest within the community. This means decisions must be made *democratically*, with constituents getting *early information* about plans under consideration, and with a *meaningful opportunity* to influence those plans.

The second tier of values comes into play when considering specific proposals. *Choice* is a value consistently used by smart growth advocates. It's important to be aware also that *security* – and specifically the fear of crime – is a key consideration people bring to bear when they think of children having the ability to walk or bike around the neighborhood, and when considering greater economic diversity within a neighborhood. *Conservation* is a value that applies to both the natural and the built environment; this value can be effectively stated in terms of its negative – it's *wrong to waste* our trees and water, and to waste existing buildings and infrastructure. The values of *community*, meaning *social interaction* and a *sense of place*, is important to people who already experience that kind of place, but can be misleading for others, who may hear this as a nostalgic and unrealistic sentiment.

## Context

This describes the category of activity to which the values and the issue apply. It's important to clearly establish the context in terms of local progress, even when advocating for broad regional, state-wide or national policy. Changes at a macro level are necessary so that local communities can do the things necessary for their own progress. Unlike the effort to deflect criticism by claiming “we're not anti-growth,” thus evoking the growth vs. no-growth frame, establishing the context as one of local progress and development puts the advocacy in line with beliefs and expectations shared by most members of every community. Virtually everyone agrees that their community can be an even better place.

## Issue

The issue is not “sprawl.” Neither is it “smart growth.” Smart growth advocates must stop portraying themselves as sprawl busters, for three compelling reasons:

1. Sprawl is not a single thing that has a widely shared meaning. It’s understood as a side effect of population increases, the desire of individuals for their own homes and for economic progress, and the workings of market forces to meet people’s needs. Though the word is negative and people readily acknowledge that some of the effects described as sprawl are undesirable, there is no shared consensus that sprawl itself is a problem that must be conquered.
2. People who live in suburbs like where they live, and many people who don’t live in suburbs aspire to, or believe that those who do have a right to do so. The opposition to smart growth reforms has defined the smart growth movement as “anti-suburbanization”, and characterizes the advocates as elites who seek to determine where and how others may live. Every time smart growth advocates describe the issue in terms of ending sprawl and replacing it with smart growth, they evoke the anti-suburban frame.
3. Even if smart growth advocates obtained every policy goal they seek, it will still take many decades to build our way out of the mess we’ve made. Smart growth is a better way of growing. It avoids repeating past mistakes and addresses some existing problems. But it will not entirely end sprawl, traffic, pollution, etc., in any rapid manner.

By defining the issue in terms of future *decisions about what, where and how to build to improve our communities*, advocates position the issue as one in which everyone in the community has a stake, and keep the focus on the responsibility and accountability of decision makers. Broad policy reforms become means and tools for making sure local communities can consider all the options and consequences before they make decisions about what to build next.

## **Messages**

Advocates can readily describe their organization and their objectives in terms consistent with the recommended frame. The following examples (already in use by advocates) lead with values and explicitly state the context as local progress.



### **Valley Visions Blueprint Project**

The Sacramento Region is a wonderful place to live. It has comfortable and inviting neighborhoods. A robust economy. Exciting nightlife. A variety of beautiful scenery and wild places.

These qualities also mean the region will grow. In the next 25 years, we will add more than a million people and 600,000 new jobs. With growth comes challenges. How should we grow? Where should we grow? How should we travel around the region? How will growth affect our environment?

...Through its public outreach and education component, a wealth of technical data for local decision makers, and funding for “smart growth” development, the Blueprint project provides a tangible opportunity to help make Sacramento as attractive tomorrow as it is today.



### **Eastern Shore Land Conservancy**

#### **Saving Land on the Eastern Shore**

Healthy farms and rural landscapes, an active fisheries industry and historic small towns and villages largely characterize the six Mid-Upper Shore counties on Maryland's Eastern Shore. A sense of pride and feelings of respect for the region are held by Eastern Shore residents. But to maintain the Eastern Shore we love, as residents we must address the problem of land loss and become active in protecting our land.

## **Smart Growth as a Brand**

The phrase “smart growth” should continue to be used in existing organizational names (Smart Growth Network, Smart Growth America) and in reference to the Smart Growth Principles. It may be helpful to think of the name as a brand name, and to use it accordingly.

As a brand, Smart Growth has several assets. The name itself is composed of two positive words: “smart” and “growth” both are good things. The brand has established itself significantly, and is recognized by planners and developers, by a growing number of community leaders and advocates, and, in some states, by a significant portion of voters. The name is also codified into law in some states, and codified in a different sense as Smart Growth Principles. The name is also a defining brand for approaches to growth, since there is no other recognizable brand for poorly planned growth or opposition policies.



Photo: National Center for Smart Growth Research and Education University of Maryland

Using the name “Smart Growth” for marketing of a set of ideas and examples, to planners and to others professionally engaged in development, makes sense. The Smart Growth Network, for example, is a ready source for developers and city planners as well as advocates, and these ideas are marketed to them through the Network.

However, using the name for advocacy communications, even in specialized media, is more problematic. As a brand, “Smart Growth” also has some shortcomings. It is diluted, because smart growth can mean so many different things and take different forms. It is also unprotected – anyone can use the name to mean whatever they want, or to mischaracterize a development advocates would not support as “smart growth.”

Most importantly, the use of the political slogan “smart growth” as a rallying call contributes unnecessarily to political polarization. In effect, we are asking for brand loyalty – the audience is asked to identify as a supporter of the Smart Growth group, or as outside of that tent. In fact, there’s no political advantage to drawing such a boundary through the general population or through any group of stakeholders, with people defined as either pro- or anti- smart growth. If the context is local progress and the issue is what should be built next, it becomes much more difficult for organized ideological opponents to attack the policies by attacking the movement or its advocates.

For these reasons, the phrase should be used where it can appropriately be capitalized, to refer to a specific organization, or specific set of principles. Avoid using the phrase in most text: replace it with the specific desired outcome, or with a direct reference to values and context.

## ***Revising existing messages***

The frame can be used as a checklist to revise existing materials or in creating new communications. Look for the phrases “sprawl” and “smart growth” and make an intentional decision: could this be improved by restating the context, and replacing those words and phrases with a more exact statement of the problem or of what is to be achieved?

The purpose of using frames is NOT to convince opponents of the merits of your position. By framing the issue inclusively, advocates set the terms of discussion. By establishing the proper context – growth and development, for community progress, NOT government regulation – and establishing common values, every communication can make potential supporters more receptive to the message, and can force opponents to debate the merits of a specific policy proposal in terms of values they cannot publicly refute (fairness, community benefits, good planning, democratic participation, etc.).

In the examples that follow existing materials were rewritten using the frame. These examples are offered to illustrate how the story changes when the frame is applied. Although the rewrites were not done with the intent of making the messages more positive, that is nearly always the result, because talking about values and how smart growth ideas can be applied creates a positive vision of what, where, and how to build next.



### **Replacing smart growth and sprawl with actions and outcomes**

**Original text:** This paper makes the case that more compact development patterns and healthier urban cores—both desired outcomes of **smart growth strategies**—would save taxpayers’ money and improve regions’ overall economic performance.

**Rewritten with frame:** This paper makes the case that **choosing** more compact development patterns and **investing in projects to improve** the urban cores would save taxpayers’ money and improve regions’ overall economic performance.

**Original text:** **Curbing sprawl** reduces the cost of providing public infrastructure and delivering services.

**Rewritten with frame:** **Thoughtful design and planning** reduces the cost of providing public infrastructure and delivering services.

**Original text:** Think of growth and development in Pennsylvania, and you picture images of big-box retailers and sprawling homes that quickly change rural landscapes to suburban ones. In Southeastern Pennsylvania, we see our cities, towns and older suburbs declining and people and jobs spreading out across the region. Among the many drivers of these trends are a long history of unplanned growth and investments at the state and local level. Can a commitment to smart growth help?

In Pennsylvania, a state that isn't a leader economically, there's a risk that any growth and development would be deemed smart. However, defining and locating the kinds of development that will help lead the state and region to a bright and sustainable future can be tricky.

We all know sprawl when we see it: unlimited, low-density development that is leapfrogging across the region and replacing farmland with strip malls and office buildings in a sea of parking. What about smart growth? How do we recognize that?

The basic principles of smart growth were outlined by the Smart Growth Network (SGN) and the American Planning Association (APA). SGN was formed by the US Environmental Protection Agency and several non-profit and governmental organizations in response to public concerns about losses to the environment, economy, and community vitality. The APA is a non-profit organization that advances the art and science of planning to meet the needs of people and society. These sets of principles identify the characteristics of development...

**Rewritten with frame:** as published Sunday, June 13, 2004

## **The Philadelphia Inquirer**

### **Communities shape face of development**

By Marrienne Scott

Development occurs every day in Pennsylvania. But in many ways, local communities are first thinking through what, where and how they build to ensure that new development enhances what they already have and fits into what they want their communities to be. They are raising the bar on development, and many developers, builders and design professionals statewide are striving to meet that challenge.

In places such as Pottstown, Coatesville and West Chester, existing buildings are being rehabilitated and reused, bringing new life to once abandoned or neglected sites. New developments are being located where roads, sewers and other services exist, and are designed to support a balanced mix of places to live, work, shop, and enjoy the outdoors.

In places such as Norristown and Upper Darby, main streets and downtown areas are being revitalized near public-transit facilities. All over the region, growth is being directed away from exceptional natural and rural areas that contribute to our quality of life....



#### Website statement

##### Original text:

#### **Save Our Tax Dollars**

Endless sprawl is costing Marylanders billions of tax dollars. If current trends continue, providing roads, schools, utilities and other public services will cost Marylanders \$10.3 billion - \$5000 per household - over the next 20 years. We must use our tax dollars more efficiently by reinvesting in our existing neighborhoods and designing new communities wisely.

##### Rewritten with frame:

#### **Stop Wasting Our Tax Dollars**

Nobody wants their taxes used to benefit one area to the detriment of another. Planners and officials need to listen to citizens and openly evaluate all the options so that taxes are invested for the benefit of the community as a whole. We can keep what we have, reinvesting in existing roads, schools, and neighborhoods, instead of wasting money on poorly planned growth.

An environmental group involved in smart growth issues can use the frame to add values to its description of its work.

**Original text:**



**What We Do**

Since its founding in 1970, the Council has played an active role in environmental policy discussions and decision-making in Harrisburg, in both the regulatory and legislative arenas. Our advocacy work generally includes commenting on proposed legislation and regulations, testifying before General Assembly committees and publishing our Legislative Update, which provides our members and others with clear analyses of issues and the Council's positions. In 2000, we were a key player in the debates surrounding passage of important amendments to the Municipalities Planning Code that offer a host of voluntary options that will enable municipalities and counties to jointly plan for development.

More recently, we have been supporting Pennsylvania Governor Rendell's Quality of Life initiative, which would provide continued funding for important programs such as Growing Greener. We have also focused on advocating for improved state water resource management and for improvements to abandoned mine reclamation work.

**Rewritten with frame:**

**What We Do**

The Council believes that our environment is an asset to everyone in Pennsylvania. Since 1970 we have been helping citizens and lawmakers look at the big picture in terms of the inherent value of our land, air and water. We work to make sure that the choices we make are done to provide the broadest benefit to the people of Pennsylvania, today and into the future.

We advocate for legislation and regulations that will help Pennsylvania maintain and improve its economic prosperity and social well-being. We provide information about the options available to General Assembly committees and we publish our Legislative Update, so that our members and others are informed early on about the options and decisions legislators are considering.

## ***Issue-specific concerns***

### **Transit**

The current transportation story usually assumes two sides: pro-highway vs. pro-transit. A stronger story is: the status quo vs. a balanced transportation system.

A balanced transportation system calls for the most efficient mix of cars, buses, rail, bikes, walking etc. that enables people to get where they need to be when they need to be there. Advocates are calling for balance and system approaches. However as this example shows it is all too easy to evoke a transit vs. cars frame:



### **GBC-led Baltimore Transit Alliance builds advocacy for regional rail system**

...the Baltimore region lacks the overall sense of a "system" and needs enough destinations to reasonably **compete with driving**. It must be expanded if the region is to remain competitive and continue to attract and retain a high quality workforce

This construct was not meant to set up a competition; it was actually calling for enough transit destinations so that car drivers would have adequate **choices**.



In Minnesota, a transit group rewrote the introduction to their Citizen's Agenda to a balanced system frame.

The transportation system that moves Minnesota life is failing. The arteries that move people and goods to where they need to be, when they need to be there, are more clogged everyday. It's past time to take a realistic look at the entire system, and make balanced decisions to fix the problem.

We must look at the big picture if we are going fix the details. The 1950's ideas behind today's system are not only obsolete and overgrown; they are grossly out of balance with the pace of 21<sup>st</sup> century life. We need choices -- a mix of public and private transportation, safe bicycle routes and pedestrian walkways that work. As The Twin Cities add a million new residents by 2030, we'll need communities that take full advantage of transportation options.

Current transportation policy is unaccountable. It ignores and hides the real costs of driving, road building and parking, and short changes other options. We need leadership that will put all the options on the table, and then make fair and honest decisions on behalf of all the needs and users. This Citizen's Agenda lays out the road to a balanced and free-flowing transportation system.

## Equity

It's a good word. Short, has a good feel to it. But what does it mean? A lot of people think it's about the ownership share of property or a home. Advocates try to use it to speak to issues of justice, but often it remains unclear.

In the following example from Baltimore, *equity* appears to mean some kind of equality between communities (jurisdictions). Yet, the next clause, *where citizens respect diversity*, seems to be driving to issues of race and justice.



Citizen's Planning and Housing Association

### Vision

CPHA envisions a well-planned Baltimore region with equity among jurisdictions, where citizens respect diversity and have access to responsive government and quality housing in vibrant neighborhoods.

In Minnesota a large interfaith group is embarking on a *regional equity campaign* and developed a statement of purpose and principles.

METROPOLITAN INTERFAITH COUNCIL ON AFFORDABLE HOUSING

*"Do justice, love mercy, walk humbly with your God." Micah 6:8*



Regional Equity Campaign

### Original text:

- a) To create a metropolitan area where everyone without exception has a safe, decent and affordable home;
- b) to give our children, families and neighbors of all races and incomes the best possible environment in which to live;
- c) to make each of our cities and our region a better place for all of us.

### Values & Principles

Money for Affordable Housing, Equity, Density, Links to Transit

Applying the smart growth frame required pointing out that *money*, *density* and *links to transit* are not actually values. And *equity* is not defined. A meeting of leadership worked

through a frank discussion of what they meant by equity. Getting assumptions about equity on the table helped MICAH to rewrite the campaign purpose:

**Rewritten with frame:**

It is our responsibility to be active participants in planning ahead for the progress of our region and our communities. That progress is blocked by regional and racial inequities, maintained by patterns of decision making and social and political systems that prevent:

- Fair distribution of community benefits, including housing, jobs, schools, and *healthy* environment
- Equal access to opportunity
- Racial Equality
- Shared decision making and access to information

We dedicate ourselves to systemic reform, removing obstacles to justice and demanding community policies that serve the common good.

## **Affordable Housing**

The word *housing* immediately evokes a frame, of poor quality housing projects for poor people. Even advocates, when asked “Did you grow up in housing?” are puzzled and sometimes ask “What do you mean by housing?”

The phrase *affordable housing*, and other income related terms such as *low-*, *lower*, and *mixed-income*, evoke associations with Section 8, poverty and crime. *Affordable housing* is also unclear in its meaning, because the news media, political leaders, and even housing advocates use it interchangeably in both its technical meaning, pegged to Federal criteria of percentage of income, and in its common meaning of houses people can afford.

**USA TODAY – June 24, 2004** The quest for affordable housing is fueling the explosive growth of suburban cities in the Sun Belt and even reviving some old industrial cities in the northeast according to population estimates out today.

**National Public Radio -- March 27, 2004** Affordable housing has drawn commuters from the coast, who in turn are attracting small businesses.

**Washington Post - March 9, 2003** Rising prices add to sprawl by pushing affordable housing farther out, to places as distant from Washington as Hagerstown, Md., Charles Town, W.Va., and York, Pa.

*Workforce housing* is problematic as well, suggesting that the workforce is a special case, and apparently excluding people who don't have jobs—the undesirable poor. Further the phrase suggests the question, where are the businesses and employers clamoring for workforce housing? But it is effective to describe the objectives in terms of people with specific jobs needing places to live.

## Anne Arundel Workforce Housing Coalition

Can our teachers, nurses, firefighters, bank tellers, newspaper reporters, deputy sheriffs, hairstylists, contractors, storekeepers, policemen, electricians, recent college graduates, retirees, insurance agents, social workers, paramedics, construction workers, and government employees afford to live in our county?

For groups such as Housing California, whose mission is explicitly about the poor and homeless, the frame can be used to set their work in context:



### Who We Are

**Original text:** Our mission is to prevent homelessness and to increase the amount of decent, safe, permanently affordable and accessible housing available to homeless and low-income families and individuals in California.

Use of the frame can help to lead with values and set the mission in context of benefits to the community as a whole.

**Rewritten with frame:** The **security and stability** of our **communities are improved** when everyone can find a decent place to live. The mission of Housing California is to prevent homelessness and to increase the amount of decent, safe, permanently affordable and accessible housing available to homeless and low income families and individuals in California

Advocates can increase the power and clarity of their language by talking about *homes and apartments people can afford to live in*. No one is likely to say “I want to buy new housing for my family,” or, “my lease is up, I have to go find new housing.” Housing is planner/developer jargon and works when talking about housing starts, housing stock and supply, etc.

Housing California revised a newsletter article using the frame:

**Original newsletter text:**

**Inclusionary Housing: Important Community Tool for Solving Housing Crisis**

Every community in the state shares the responsibility of encouraging the housing industry to build homes for all Californians. There are a number of tools that local governments can use to ensure that the market is providing a full range of housing needed for the people who live and work in the community. Over 20 percent of the cities and counties in the state are using an increasingly popular tool called *inclusionary housing* as part of their overall strategy to secure and stabilize housing in their neighborhoods.

Inclusionary housing is a policy adopted at the local level that requires a portion of new rental and for-sale housing to be set aside as affordable for lower and moderate income households. This strategy fosters more balanced, mixed income communities, in which lower income families have access to better schools, parks, transportation, and other necessities lacking in poorer neighborhoods. (or ...which benefit school performance, enhance access to jobs and transportation, and encourage conservation of resources.) It makes it more likely that the housing available meets the needs of local residents and ensures the creation of affordable housing—especially in communities where there is competition for scarce land. To date, more than 34,000 families have affordable homes as a result of inclusionary housing policies.

**Written to the frame:**

**Creating Choices for Everyone – Addressing California’s Housing Crisis**

Every community in the state benefits when everyone has a decent place to live. Families do better, kids do better, and business and neighborhoods do better. Every community and local official needs to encourage the housing industry to build homes that provide enough choices so that all Californians at every income level can find decent place to live. There are a number of tools that local governments can use to ensure that the market is providing a greater range of housing options to everyone living and work in our communities. Many cities and counties in the state are using an increasing effective tool called *inclusionary housing* to secure and stabilize their neighborhoods.

Inclusionary housing is a technical term for policies that make sure the housing market offers something for people at every income level. In most places it’s a local community policy that specifies a portion of new rental and homeowner units to be built and managed as modestly as possible so that even low and moderate income households can find choices within their budget. This strategy fosters more balanced communities, in which every family has access to good schools, parks, transportation, shopping and other necessities. Thinking ahead and planning home developments so

that every family has an opportunity meets the needs of the entire community and everyone benefits — this kind of thoughtful attention to community needs and benefits is especially important in communities where there is competition for scarce land. To date, more than 34,000 families have found home choices they could afford as a result of inclusionary housing policies.

In general, housing advocates should emphasize the value of *community benefit*. The public interest is in making sure everyone who lives and works in the community has a decent safe home that they can afford. This is not merely in the interest of the individuals and families who need homes. It is in the community's interest, because it contributes to economic growth, public health and safety, and makes our community a better place.

## Health and the Blame Game

The opposition frame draws heavily on the values of the conservative right. It evokes other frames including *personal responsibility* which suggests that liberals and the elites always try to blame others rather than accepting or expecting others to accept responsibility for their own circumstances. The blame game must be avoided to avoid evoking the conservative frame. When sprawl is described as the cause of obesity, it's "there they go again," as illustrated in a recent release from the Heritage Foundation

The [smart growth] movement would force people to live at higher densities, in multi-family units, townhouses, or clustered single-family developments--while placing significant restrictions on the expansion of suburban commercial development

...Critics of suburban development ... even contend that suburbs contribute to serial killings, teenage angst, social alienation, low wages, obesity, asthma, and higher taxes.

Advocates who wish to use health as an issue in support of better community design need to be careful that they not portray *sprawl* as the bogeyman and smart growth as the superhero.



## LAND USE, HEALTH, AND THE ROLE OF CITIES

**Original text:** While the recent slogan "Sprawl Kills" was a great eye catcher, it also seemed to be a laughable overstatement. Surprisingly, however, the statement may contain some seeds of truth. New research has begun to confirm a link between local government land use decisions and a variety of health problems related to physical inactivity.

... According to Dr. Howard Frumkin, a public health professor at Emory University, “by contributing to physical inactivity and therefore to overweight and associated health problems, sprawl has negative health consequences.” Frumkin points out that a considerable body of research now establishes that “sprawl—as measured by low residential density, low employment density, low ‘connectivity’ and other indicators—is associated with less walking and bicycling and with more automobile travel than with denser communities.”

This research also reveals that we can help people be more physically active by modifying business-as-usual, auto-oriented land use planning. One of the many studies on this topic was published in the March-April 2003 issue of the *Annals of Behavioral Medicine*...

**Rewritten to the frame, removing sprawl as the bad guy.**

New research has begun to confirm a link between local government land use decisions and a variety of health problems related to physical inactivity. And many local communities are looking at ways they can modify development plans that will actually encourage people to be more physically active.

... According to Dr. Howard Frumkin, a public health professor at Emory University, we can help people be more physically active by modifying business-as-usual, auto-oriented land use planning. One of the many studies on this topic was published in the March-April 2003 issue of the *Annals of Behavioral Medicine*...

## ***Keeping the frame in play***

The Funders' Network for Smart Growth and Livable Communities can play a vital role in helping to advance the frame and encouraging its use. So can a wide range of advocacy groups. There are three essential activities for all practitioners and interested parties.

1. **Use the frame consistently.** All communications, including internal documents and even informal meetings, should be viewed as opportunities to advance the frame. It's important to remember that the measure of success in setting the terms of debate is creating the "echo effect." The more people hear the powerful and inclusive growth and development story, the likelier they are to use it themselves. It's also important for those who speak in public to become practiced at using the frame when speaking in private, for two reasons: the frame can help provide insight into strategy, by clarifying the context and issue; and, unless advocates are accustomed to using the frame whenever they speak about the issues, they will tend to default to the comfortable and practiced "sprawl vs. smart growth" story when under pressure, or when led in that direction by journalists or opponents.
2. **Share the frame explicitly.** Provide grantees and allies with positive examples of the use of the frame, consistently over time, and point out how the frame is being used. Praise and share good examples, especially examples of the "echo" – messages that reflect the frame from those not directly a part of the Smart Growth movement. Help to create these examples by drawing attention to the values, context and issue in communications with journalists, editorialists and political leaders. Every such communication is an opportunity to say, "Ultimately, this is what (this decision or this proposal) is really about..." This will help political leaders speak in terms that resonate with their constituents, and will help journalists organize their coverage according to the advocates' terms.
3. **Engage in constructive mutual criticism.** Both the force of habit, and pressure from opponents, will tend to cause advocates to slip back into describing the issue as "fighting sprawl by using smart growth." When this happens, it's appropriate and useful to provide a direct, private communication, pointing out the missed opportunity and suggesting how the frame might be applied when restating the message in the future. This kind of on-going discussion among advocates will strengthen the frame, and will create a climate conducive to the future evolution of the frame as new opportunities present themselves.

## **Attachment A**

### ***Post-workshop follow-up activities as of 8/27/04***

#### **Twin Cities, Minnesota (March 17, 2004)**

##### **MICAH**

Half-day meeting with MICAH BoD to define what they mean by equity; rewrite of regional equity campaign materials

##### **ISAIAH**

Follow up memo on regional planning attitudes on focus group findings. Using the frame values as starting point to bring people along to more cooperation between communities.

##### **Sierra Club**

One hour Citizen Action workshop on helping citizens talk about growth and development issues, with open space as key issue

##### **Transit for Livable Communities**

Half-day meeting to define transit issues with smart growth framework

Citizens Agenda rewrites

Conference call with TLC and Met Council member on frame based strategy to counter Taxpayer League

1 hour conference call – media planning

Media coverage analysis memo

##### **Cleanwater Action**

Phone conference on Community Rights Agenda

Rewrites of Community Rights fact sheet and Letters to Editor

##### **Lowertown Development Corp.**

Present smart growth framing ideas that might be applicable to the \$1 billion dollar St Paul Depot / Lowertown redevelopment project. Director We Ming Liu, Co.

Commissioner, Railroad Commission

##### **Family Housing Fund**

Telephone follow-up meeting with Exec. Dir Tom Fulton around concerns that frame could short change justice in favor of short term political gains. Difference between a frame and marketing.

##### **Greater MN Housing Association**

Pending – review and recommendations for Growth Corridor work

## **Harrisburg, Pennsylvania (May 24, 2004)**

### **Housing Pennsylvania**

1 hour conference call, planning communications to municipal officials  
press release rewrite

**Sustainable Pittsburgh** – review materials for smart growth campaign, suggest revisions

### **Renew Pennsylvania**

1½ hour conference call, planning campaign

### **Pennsylvania Environmental Council**

Regional directors, communications staff and Smart Growth division conference call  
Northeast regional allies conference call, a mini-workshop on the frame and its applications for organizations working closely with Penn Environmental Council.

### **10000 Friends of Pennsylvania**

Rewrite of feature article for Philadelphia Inquirer. The article had already been approved, however, after workshop Marianne Scott wanted to apply frame. Scott used a comparison of original article as a training device to show staff how the frame improved its effectiveness.

### **Penn Future**

Review and comment on Penn Future Facts memo

## **Sacramento, California (June 16, 2004)**

### **Local Government Commission**

Rewrite of 2 health-related articles with Judy Corbett

### **Great Valley Center**

Memo, for Carol Whiteside summarizing frame recommendations that she then “shared” with CA Housing and Transportation Secretary Sunny McPeak

### **PolicyLink**

Phone conference with Oakland and DC directors discussing frame implications around issues of equity

Executive Summary rewrite ideas for Housing Trust Fund Report

Oak to 9<sup>th</sup> Coalition Campaign strategy meeting

Sept 15 half day framing equity meeting

### **Odyssey**

Phone conference to convey the workshop ideas and answer questions from Odyssey staff  
Follow-up with memo outlining some thoughts on talking about transit

## **Better CA**

Conference call participation

## **Housing California**

Rewrite 2 newsletter articles - Inclusionary housing policy and Affordable housing needs Meeting – Housing coalition partners from San Francisco, Oakland, LA, Sacramento and San Diego

Assist when in Minneapolis Aug 16-17 meet with MN Affordable Housing Coalition, Family Housing Fund, MN Coalition for Homeless

Conference call about next newsletter, strategy to make the Congressional Reps and their positions the subject rather than the 300,000 people threatened by Sec 8 cuts.

## **Valley Vision**

Pending - review of Blueprint project materials

## **Baltimore, Maryland (July 21, 2004)**

### **1000 Friends of Maryland**

Rewrite Project Open Space materials

### **Citizens Planning & Housing Association**

Meeting - building internal communications research capability

1.5 hour conference call – strategy around inclusive housing

2<sup>nd</sup> conference call – strategy and frame discussion on housing August 5

Rewrite frame ideas for campaign

3<sup>rd</sup> conf call August 19 – applying new frame and new messengers

Several participants have reported the workshops to be useful and say they are applying the ideas in on-going communications. We anticipate additional contact with participants and some projects are in development.