



SMART GROWTH SCORECARD — Municipal Review

An easy-to-use scorecard for identifying Smart Growth strengths and weaknesses in municipal planning and decision-making.

Scorecards are complimentary upon request. To become a friend of New Jersey Future, and to learn more about our efforts to bring smarter growth to New Jersey, visit our website at www.njfuture.org or call 609/393-0008.

What is Smart Growth?

Smart Growth means adding new homes, new offices and businesses and new jobs to New Jersey's economy in a way that enhances the communities where we already live – without requiring higher taxes, adding to our road and traffic woes and without consuming or polluting our remaining farmland, beachfronts, woodlands and open spaces.

How do you know Smart Growth when you see it?

Smart Growth has two primary features: the “where” and the “how.” It happens “where” development can be accommodated with minimal adverse impact to the environment, and in places where development takes maximum advantage of public investments already made. Smart Growth also addresses “how” the finished development will work with neighboring development to restore choices that are missing in places marked by sprawl: such as the choice to walk or use public transit, the choice to meet neighbors in attractive common spaces, or the choice to live in an apartment, a house, or a condominium.

About this scorecard

This scorecard is as much a conceptual model as it is a practical tool. It should be viewed as a way to help citizens and local officials evaluate whether or not a municipality is “growing smart,” and whether or not the right tools are in place to do so. A lack of smart growth on the ground often reflects problems

with local plans and regulations. As a result, some of the questions in this survey may require a look at local planning documents and/or the zoning ordinance; others can be answered by observation. It may also be necessary to speak directly with your local planning and zoning office.

General Smart Growth criteria:

- Occurs near existing development and infrastructure
- Increases the range of housing options
- Creates or enhances a vibrant mix of uses (residential, retail, office)
- Creates or enhances choices for getting around
- Walkable, designed for personal interaction
- Protects open space, farmland and critical environmental areas
- Respects community character, design and historic features

Directions:

The scorecard is broken up into eight sections, one for each Smart Growth criterion (see above) plus a section to establish a general planning profile of the town. Read through the sections and circle the best answer for each measurement listed. The measurements are weighted differently so that the maximum score for each measurement reflects its importance to Smart Growth goals. To calculate the score, multiply the points for a given answer by the measurement’s weight and enter it into the score column. Add up the scores for each measurement and write that number (subtotal) in the space provided.

Municipal Planning Profile – A snapshot of the town's land use plans and planning. This helps to get a sense of municipal commitment to land use planning in general, as well as municipal sophistication about land-use issues.

Measurement	Answer	Points	Weight	Score
Town Master Plan is current; it should be thoroughly examined, revised, and amended at least every 6 years	Yes No	1 0	X 2	
Town Master Plan incorporates State Plan concepts such as planning areas and centers	Yes No	1 0	X 2	
Town has a designated center (a defined area intended to accommodate growth) or endorsed plan as granted by the State Planning Commission	Yes No	1 0	X 1	
Town actively engages the public in its planning activities	Yes No	1 0	X 2	
Town has an affordable housing plan that is certified by the New Jersey Council on Affordable Housing (COAH), or has a judgment of repose from the courts	Yes No	1 0	X 1	

Subtotal

I. Near existing development and infrastructure – Makes the most of limited public resources and builds on public investments already made by encouraging new development where infrastructure and services already exist. Creates opportunity for infill or redevelopment of under-utilized, abandoned and brownfield sites.

Measurement	Answer	Points	Weight	Score
New development does NOT require the extension of new roads and sewer lines into previously undeveloped lands	Yes No`	1 0	X 5	
New development is occurring within 1/2 mile (walking distance) of existing development in a town center (Town centers are compact, walkable places intended to accommodate growth and include a variety of community services, employment, shopping, housing and public spaces.)	Yes No	1 0	X 5	
Public facilities (schools, libraries, etc.) are located centrally, within walking distance for most users	Yes No	1 0	X 4	
Town has looked into the capacity of its infrastructure and environment to accept new growth (carrying capacity analysis, build-out analysis)	Yes No	1 0	X 3	
Town has redeveloped, or has plans to redevelop vacant, under-utilized, and/or brownfield properties	Yes No	1 0	X 2	

Subtotal

II. Range of housing options – Offers a range of housing types and sizes. Increases the choices available to households of all income levels.

Measurement	Answer	Points	Weight	Score
Zoning allows for a mix of housing types, including single-family homes, affordable housing, multi-family housing, apartments and senior housing	A good mix Limited mix No mix	2 1 0	X 1	
Town encourages affordable housing as a fixed percent (at least 15 percent) of new development	Required Encouraged Not mentioned	2 1 0	X 1	
Town has an affordable housing strategy that includes inclusionary zoning, new construction and rehabilitation programs for low- and moderate-income households. (Inclusionary zoning refers to the allowance of lot sizes [usually greater than 8 dwelling units per acre] that make the provision of affordable units by private developers feasible.)	Yes No	1 0	X 2	
Affordable housing opportunities are distributed throughout the community, integrated into market-rate communities	Yes No	1 0	X 1	

Subtotal

III. Mix of uses – Creates a vibrant community where places to work, shop, live and play are integrated.

Measurement	Answer	Points	Weight	Score
Most daily shopping and service needs can be met in a central location or business district, without the use of a car to get between shops and services	All needs met Some needs met No needs met	2 1 0	X 2	
Zoning code encourages mixed-use development (commercial and residential uses in the same building and/or district), especially in a town center	Required Encouraged Allowed Not mentioned	3 2 1 0	X 2	
Local parking regulations support smart growth by allowing shared parking, credit for parking provided off-site, reduced parking requirements for mixed-use development and credit for on-street parking	Yes No	1 0	X 3	
Town has a Special Improvement District or economic development plan to attract new businesses and housing options to a town center	Yes No	1 0	X 2	

Subtotal

IV. Choices for Getting Around – Maximizes use of existing transit service and other transportation options in order to decrease dependency on the automobile, thereby reducing traffic and encouraging walkability (see V. below).

Measurement	Answer	Points	Weight	Score
Town encourages multiple modes of transportation, as evidenced by on-street parking, bike lanes, sidewalks and frequent crosswalks in the town	Yes No	1 0	X 4	
Town has convenient access to public transit (bus, rail, jitney)	Yes No	1 0	X 3	
Town has a recent circulation plan element as part of its Master Plan	Yes No	1 0	X 2	
Zoning encourages more compact, higher-density development within 1/2 mile of transit stops (bus, train, shuttle, etc.)	Yes No	1 0	X 4	
Streets within the town are interconnected, in a clear pattern for getting around, with few cul-de-sacs or dead end streets that encumber traffic flow	Yes No	1 0	X 3	

Subtotal

V. Walkable, designed for personal interaction – Designed for the human, rather than for the automobile. Helps to reduce traffic and create places with increased potential for social interaction, walking and sense of community.

Measurement	Answer	Points	Weight	Score
Town has a good network of sidewalks and safe pedestrian/bike paths, interconnecting the town	Yes No	1 0	X 4	
Zoning requires buildings to be close enough to each other to encourage walking and pedestrian activity (Average residential density greater than 8 dwelling units per acre; commercial floor area ratio (FAR) exceeding 1.0)	Yes No	1 0	X 5	
Town is designed with the pedestrian in mind; curb cuts favoring vehicular access are minimized, parking lots in the front of buildings are avoided and there are many crosswalks	Yes No	1 0	X 4	

Subtotal

VI. Protects open space, farmland and critical environmental areas – Benefits the general public as it spares watersheds, scenic vistas and agricultural areas needed for drinking water, farm and tourism revenues and strong quality of life.

Measurement	Answer	Points	Weight	Score
Zoning regulations limit growth in critical environmental areas, including State Plan Planning Area 5, prime watersheds, unbroken forest and grassland areas and critical wildlife areas/wildlife habitat (Low densities should be in place in these areas with provisions for small, clustered lots in order to protect farmland and forest land. The more environmentally sensitive the land, the lower the density should be.)	Yes No	1 0	X 3	
Town has regulations that steer development away from unsuitable land, including (if applicable) steep slopes greater than 20 percent, floodplains, stream corridors, aquifers and aquifer recharge areas	Yes No	1 0	X 2	
Town has adopted an open space plan to strategically identify and preserve open lands, including public parks and recreation areas, farms, natural habitats and forests	Yes No	1 0	X 2	
Town has plans to clean up brownfield and unused industrial sites	Yes No	1 0	X 2	
Town requires that all new development exceed the standards in NJ's energy code	Yes No	1 0	X 2	
Town has an active Environmental Commission	Yes No	1 0	X 1	

Subtotal

VII. Respectful of community character and design – Growth is in keeping with the local architecture, especially if in historically significant area. Enhances the overall quality and values of the community. Enhances the community’s desirability as a place to live, work, shop and recreate.

Measurement	Answer	Points	Weight	Score
Zoning has specific design guidelines, including graphic images, to ensure new development is in keeping with community character, especially in historic districts	Yes No	1 0	X 4	
Town has a historic district and/or historic preservation commission to protect important structures	Both Commission None	2 1 0	X 2	
Town has pedestrian-friendly amenities such as benches, lighting, street trees and trash cans, as well as windows at street level	Yes No	1 0	X 1	
Town has clean, well-lit community spaces such as public plazas, squares, parks, etc.	Yes No	1 0	X 1	

Subtotal

Final calculations:

1. Starting with Table I below, enter the subtotals for each section into Column 2 (Section Scores).
2. Divide Column 2 by Column 1 (Total Possible) and enter that number into Column 3 (Calculation).
3. Multiply Column 3 by 100 and enter that number into Column 4. This is the Final Score for the section.
4. Using Table II below, enter the letter grade for each section into Column 5 (Final Grade).

Once the calculations are complete, take a look at the areas in need of improvement. Does the town under evaluation score well in terms of efficient use of infrastructure, but poorly in terms of providing access to public transit and other choices for getting around? Are the building design standards in keeping with the local architectural style, but inaccessible to pedestrian traffic? Making determinations of this nature, and asking the right questions will help guide planning and new development in the right direction, toward Smart Growth.

TABLE I

	Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4	Column 5
Smart Growth Criteria	Total Possible	Section Scores	Calculation (Col 2/Col 1)	Final Score (Col 3 x 100)	Final Grade (A-F)
Municipal planning profile	8				
I. Near existing development and infrastructure	19				
II. Range of housing options	7				
III. Mix of uses	15				
IV. Provides choices for getting around	16				
V. Walkable, designed for personal interaction	13				
VI. Protects open space, farmland and critical environmental areas	12				
VII. Respectful of community character, design and historic features	10				
TOTAL OVER ALL CRITERIA	100				

TABLE II

Final Score	Letter Grade
100 – 90	A
89 – 80	B
79 – 70	C
69 – 60	D
59 – 0	F