

Smart Growth Myths: Why Some Smart Growth Policies May Not Be So Smart

- Exposing the myths of “smart” growth
- Exploring a new framework of thinking on growth management policies
- Promoting new, better “Balanced Growth” Principles

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Smart Growth Myths

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The term “smart growth” is widely used in the vocabulary of state and local government officials as well as citizens talking about developments in their communities. The term encompasses a broad spectrum of land use planning and regulation ideas to control, channel or stop new development. What is “smart” to one person, however, may not be so to another, especially if it means the government will control where an individual gets to choose to live, work, shop and play.

“Smart growth” is an ingenious term. Regardless of the merits of a proposed new “smart” land use policy, plan or regulation, opponents of them risk being labeled as stupid or irresponsible – after all, what intelligent person would oppose something that is framed as “smart?”

...many solutions proposed by smart growth advocates are solutions to problems that are contrived and simply do not exist.

Some smart growth advocates’ zeal in pushing their agenda is based on their belief that most people and municipalities don’t know what is in their own best interests, so they should look to “smart growth” advocates for guidance. We find this view offensive. Moreover, the calls to action underlying many smart growth discussions are largely based on fabricated facts and unquestioning allegiance to end goals no matter what the means to achieve them. We believe this is the wrong foundation for making sound policies, laws and regulations.

The rallying cries underlying the smart growth agenda are also compelling. By leaning heavily on emotional issues we can all support, such as a clean environment, a high quality of life and preservation of community character, smart growth advocates’ myths resonate and gain traction with citizens and politicians. However, the HBACT suggests reframing the discussion, first, by a critical analysis of the smart growth agenda, including solutions to problems that are either contrived or don’t exist. And, second, by proposing an alternative view of land use policy that we firmly believe is a better, balanced choice for Connecticut.

To help sort out fact from fiction, HBACT examined some of the myths that are regularly seen and heard in the media, at seminars and in front of policy makers. These myths include:

- CT’s urban footprint grew by 15% over only 17 years and we’re paving over the state;
- CT is sprawling across the state and we’re eating up all the open space;
- CT is losing it’s farmland;
- “Residential development” or “urbanized land” has grown by over 100% while our population has grown only 12%;
- Connecticut is growing too fast; we’re building too many homes and in the wrong places;
- Property taxes are driving poor land use decisions so we must reform the property tax;
- Suburban development (derisively called sprawl) causes excessive traffic congestion.

These smart growth myths are, at worst, outright false and, at best, grossly overblown or misleading.

These smart growth myths are so widely used that many people have come to accept them as fact. However, in the following pages a critical look at the underlying data and

reports from which these myths are derived will show that the myths are, at worst, outright false and, at best, grossly overblown or misleading.

What really is unfortunate is these myths create unnecessary roadblocks to reasoned, balanced conversations that could lead to common ground among all (or at least most) interested parties. For example, we support the goals of promoting higher density developments in urban areas, the reclamation and development of brownfields, and transit-oriented and mixed-use developments because we know the marketplace for these types of developments is underserved. But, unfortunately, we are forced to spend our time and resources combating policies, laws and regulations that oppose suburban growth (which many smart growth advocates derisively call sprawl) fundamentally because we recognize that the vast majority of people prefer suburban style living. If we lose that battle, Connecticut loses, and no amount of urban, higher density, “smart growth” development will make up for the lost people, lost jobs and lost economic opportunities.

Exposing smart growth myths with the truth is not enough. In politics, logic, common sense and facts rarely triumph over emotion. What will win the day for more balanced growth policies is the very personal and emotional reality that anti-suburban (anti-sprawl) policies will make it more difficult and costly for individuals to choose the type of home they want and where they want it. They will make it more difficult and costly for businesses to expand or locate here. Choices on where to shop and play will also be more limited.

Elected officials face a daunting challenge when confronted with “smart growth” proposals. Many of these proposals give more power and control over our land use choices to government regulators. For example, new regional land use controls (on top of existing local and state controls); statewide planning maps that contradict local zoning yet dictate

Growth policies should be based on facts, but more importantly, policies should recognize and respect the freedom of people to choose.

state agency funding decisions for sewer and water utilities and public buildings; drawing lines around urban areas and directing all future growth to occur inside the line; unfettered authority for local land use and wetland commissions that add layers and delays to the permit review

process; massive state tax increases to shift more wealth from those who have it to those who do not; and a host of other smart growth proposals, all place increased restraints on the exercise of individual rights and freedoms and our economic growth. Officials are put in the unenviable position of having to choose between being labeled “stupid” (at least behind closed doors) for opposing “smart” growth proposals (or, in more public audiences, chastised for failing to show “smart growth leadership”), or standing up for greater individual freedom and choices and less cost in our land use system.

Growth policies should be about expanding, not limiting, individual and business choices. They should be based on facts, but more importantly, policies should recognize, respect and work with the freedom of people to choose. Growth policies should recognize that this freedom cannot be denied and more people will choose (as many of our younger generation are doing) to move out of state. These types of growth policies can be done in balance with protecting our environmental resources and respecting existing community character. This freedom to choose among a greater menu of options in a balanced growth system will enhance everyone’s quality of life.

At the same time our state and local policies should be facilitating more choices for citizens, policy makers need to also recognize that many current “solutions” to perceived growth pressures have the adverse affect of pushing development further out and preventing many of the desirable goals of sound, balanced growth policies. These include larger lots or down-zoning; buildable square, buildable area and other fabricated development restrictions; greater amounts of upland made off limits through misuse of inland wetlands authority or open space exactions; and outrageously high approval processing fees or fabricated permitting delays that have the effect of requiring even more expensive home sales and larger lots to cover them.

We know that exposing smart growth myths will be difficult for many people who have come to accept them and, perhaps, impossible for some who want to achieve their smart growth agenda by whatever means.

But to offer an alternative basis to support reasoned, balanced growth policies and a better vision for Connecticut, the HBACT strongly believes in the following principles:

- People should be able to choose where and in what type of home in which to live;
- People should be free to choose where to work, shop and play and how to get there;
- People should not have to struggle to maintain a lifestyle in an economy driven down by excessive land use controls and centralized planning; and
- People should be able to more easily avoid their children being driven out of state by high housing costs and the lack of high quality, choice jobs.

We urge everyone to critically examine the following common smart growth myths with an open mind.

We urge everyone to explore a new framework of thinking on growth management issues.

And, we invite reasoned, balanced analysis to explore a better future for Connecticut.

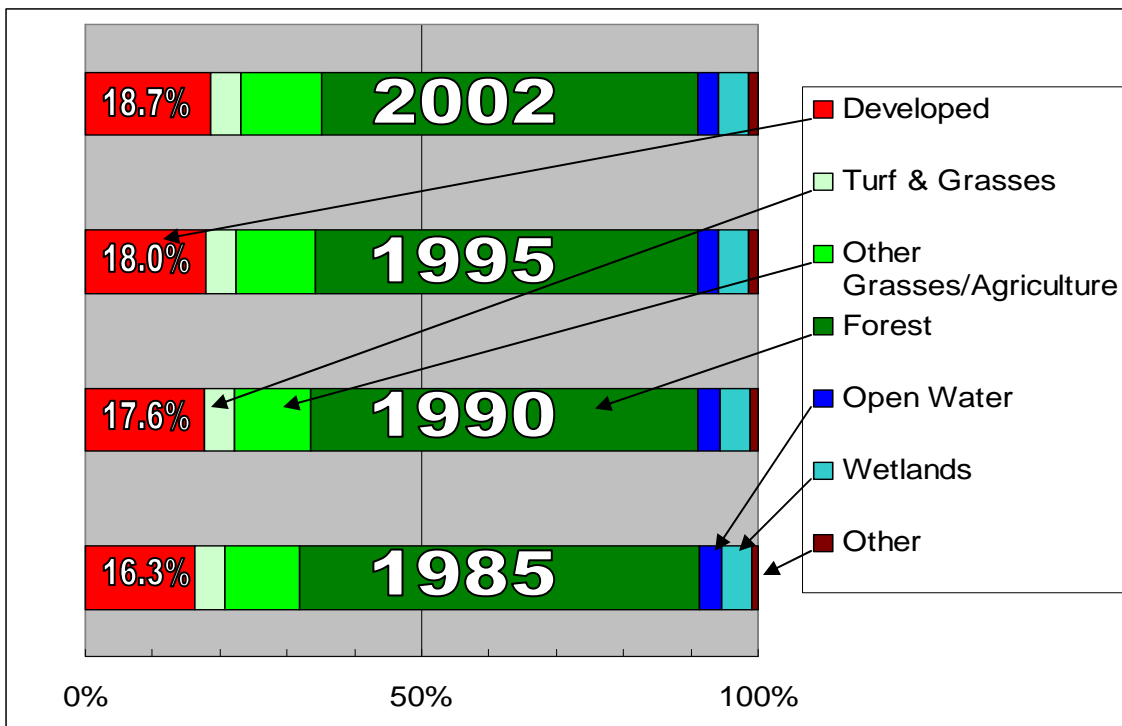
In addition to the analysis in each of the following “Balanced Growth Facts” that expose common smart growth statements as myths, see page 15 for a list of further reading on why some smart growth policies are not necessarily so smart.

Balanced Growth Facts - #1

Smart Growth Myth: CT grew its “urban footprint” by 15% in only 17 years; this is too much; we’re paving over CT.

Balanced Growth Fact: This comes from UConn’s satellite mapping of the whole state, which shows that “**developed**” land cover grew from 16.3% to 18.7% of the entire state from 1985 to 2002 (i.e., 17 years). Yes, this is almost a 15% increase but it does not mean 15% of CT was developed during that time. And more than half of this new developed land cover took place in the 5-year boom period between 1985 and 1990 (CT’s housing depression actually began in 1989). Data comes from UConn’s CLEAR office (Center for Land Use Education And Research) (see http://clear.uconn.edu/projects/landscape/statewide_landcover.htm).

Land Cover in CT (% of CT)	1985	1990	1995	2002
Developed	16.3	17.6	18	18.7
Turf & Grasses	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5
Other Grasses/Agriculture	11.1	11.4	11.7	12
Forest	59.3	57.7	56.9	55.8
Open Water	3.3	3.3	3.2	3
Wetlands	4.5	4.4	4.4	4.5
Other	1	1.2	1.4	1.5
All of CT	100	100	100	100



Balanced Growth Facts - #2

Smart Growth Myth: We are sprawling across Connecticut; We are eating up all our remaining open space.

Balanced Growth Fact: Sprawl is otherwise known as suburban development. Connecticut's suburban growth (homes and businesses) is occurring but doing so within relatively very close proximity to our major transportation lines – not across the state. UConn's satellite mapping shows that most development has occurred within transportation corridors and most of the state (80% of our 3.5 million acres) is still undeveloped. The statement has been made by the experts at

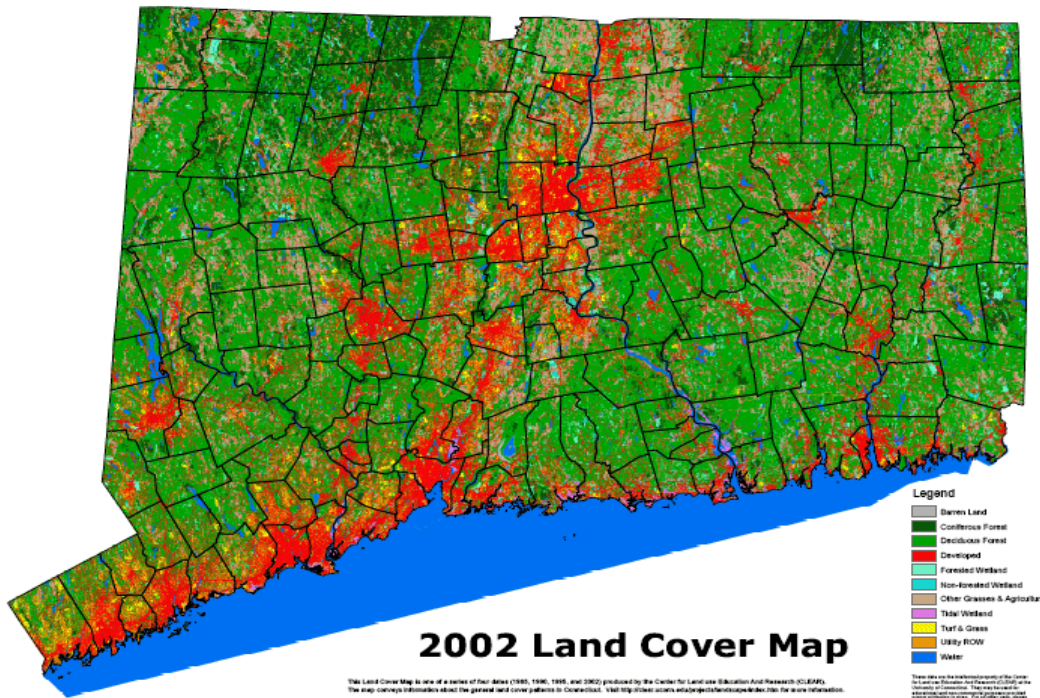
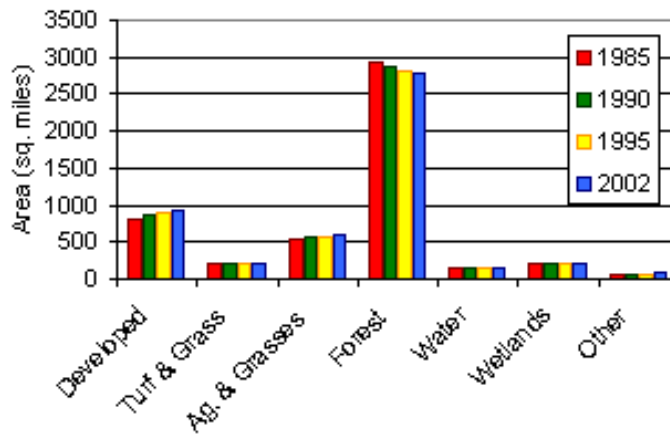
According to UConn, 80% of CT's 3.5 million acres is still undeveloped!

UConn who produce this satellite data that the patterns of land use shown, i.e., what we have actually experienced, could be put into a planner's dream book as the right way to grow.

Any frequent flyer in and out of CT would see that. In the map below, developed areas are noted in red. To see the original maps, go to UConn's CLEAR web site at

http://clear.uconn.edu/projects/landscape/statewide_landcover.htm.

Connecticut's Land Cover: 1985-2002



Balanced Growth Facts - #3

Smart Growth Myth: We're losing all our farmland; or we've losing 9,000 acres per year of our farmland.

Balanced Growth Fact: Bad data and denial of good data lead to this false claim. This particular farmland loss mantra of smart growth and environmental advocates began in 2003. The HBACT asked for two years for supporting data and neither the CT Farm Bureau, environmental organizations, legislators nor DEP, who all used these statements, could or would provide a citation to supporting data. By happenstance only, the HBA discovered in a meeting at DEP in late 2005 that the source was the agricultural census conducted by the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture (USDA). So, let's review this census (or survey) and the "data" source for this myth:

The USDA conducts a "census" of farmers every five years by sending a written survey to every known farmer in the nation.

Land that is reported lost by farmers in USDA's 5 year surveys is just as likely to be forest land, not farm land!

- ◆ The farmland loss numbers for CT come from a single 5-year period, comparing the 1997 agricultural census to the 2002 census. BUT, the USDA also in 2002 "recalibrated" its 1997 census because the survey returns from farmers are notoriously very poor. With the statistical recalibration and comparing apples to apples, the loss for that 5 year period was only 2,159 acres over the entire 5 years (i.e., 432 acres/yr). **But even this doesn't reveal the most important data myth:**
 - The same census shows a gain of agricultural land in CT between 1992 and 1997.
 - Also, the USDA census "data" on "lost farmland" does not track land that is in agricultural use, but tracks "land owned by farmers" and the same data shows that fully 46% of the land owned by farmers is not farmed – it's in forest and buildings, so land that is reported to be lost by farmers is just as likely to be forest land as it is to be farm land.
- ◆ Contrasted to the USDA census, UConn's land cover satellite data shows that between 1985 and 2002 (the first and last satellite data points published to date), **agricultural land cover type GREW from 11.1% of CT to 12% of the whole state** (we could say a whopping 8% growth of farmland over just 17 years, but we won't).
- ◆ When this is pointed out to smart growth advocates, we have experienced either silence in response or an attack on UConn's satellite data begins (despite the fact the same advocates misuse the UConn satellite data to state their exaggeration about developed land cover - see Balanced Growth Facts - #1).

Conclusion: Yes, some farms are sold for development, but farmers and farming, while a very tough business, are resilient. The growth in the amount of land that is farmed in Connecticut is real and undeniable. Farmers may clear forest land they own to conduct more farming when markets demand their products. Farms may change from more difficult production (e.g., dairy) to other types. But we are not losing our overall farmland acreage. And the use of our forestland resources has been reasonable and is sustainable.

According to UConn's satellite data, CT's agricultural land GREW from 11.1% to 12% between 1985 and 2002.

Should the state support farming and help farmers be better businesses to successfully compete and produce the food and other resources we all need? Perhaps yes – we cannot comment on a business in which we are not engaged. We can comment on our business – providing the homes and apartments that we all need. **The farmland loss mantra should be exposed as a myth and no longer used to support land use policy reforms.**

Balanced Growth Facts - #4

Smart Growth Myth: Residential use of land or urbanized land has grown by 102% percent (i.e., doubled) over the thirty-year period of 1970 to 2000, while population increased by only 12%. This type of growth and extent of sprawl is not sustainable.

Balanced Growth Fact: These often used statements come from the Connecticut Metropatterns report produced by Ameregis Corp. for the Archdiocese of Hartford. But the statements are erroneous conclusions and a gross misrepresentation of the Census Bureau data on which they are based.

- ◆ The report analyzes the growth in “census tracts” defined as “urban.” It accurately counts the area of such census tracts, which did grow by 102% from 1970 to 2000. But this is far different than the myth that “residential use of land” or even “urbanized land” doubled, as explained below (Note: a 100% increase = double the original amount):
 - An urban census tract is defined by the Bureau of the Census as 500 people/sq. mile.
 - For the myth to be even remotely accurate, each of the new “urban” census tracts counted in 2000 would have to start with no people at all in 1970. This is just not reality and, in fact, you can have very little residential development to tip the scales of a census tract into the “urban” definition. Doubling the number or area of census tracts meeting the definition of “urban” in no way, shape or form approximates the state’s “residential use of land” or growth in developed land. The myth is a fiction borne out of erroneously equating census tracts with actual developed land.
- ◆ Moreover, an “urban” census tract according to the Census Bureau is one with 500 or more people/ square mile. Using average household sizes in CT, 500 people/sq. mile equals 1 housing unit per 4 acres, proving that one size doesn’t fit all. What is urban in Montana or Minnesota (where Ameregis is located) or many other places in this vast nation is not what Connecticut thinks of as urban. The Connecticut Metropatterns report also inexplicably further ratchets down the “urban” definition by using a lower 460 person/square mile threshold that works to inflate the number of census tracts considered urban by the report’s author.
- ◆ Also, contrary to the premise of the myth, builders do not build housing to accommodate population growth; they build housing to accommodate household formations. Population data does show that between 1970 and 2000, CT’s population grew by 12%. But between 1970 and 2000, the number of housing units and households in CT both grew by 40%.
 - ◆ **Builders do not build housing to accommodate population growth; they build to accommodate household formations. ... Changing land use policies will have zero affect on the formula that each household requires a roof over its head.**
- ◆ The real question is, why did households grow by 40% while population grew by only 12%? The answer is that household formations have much to do with divorce rates, marriage rates, alternative family units, smaller family or household sizes, etc. and have little, if anything, to do with land use policies and regulations. Changing

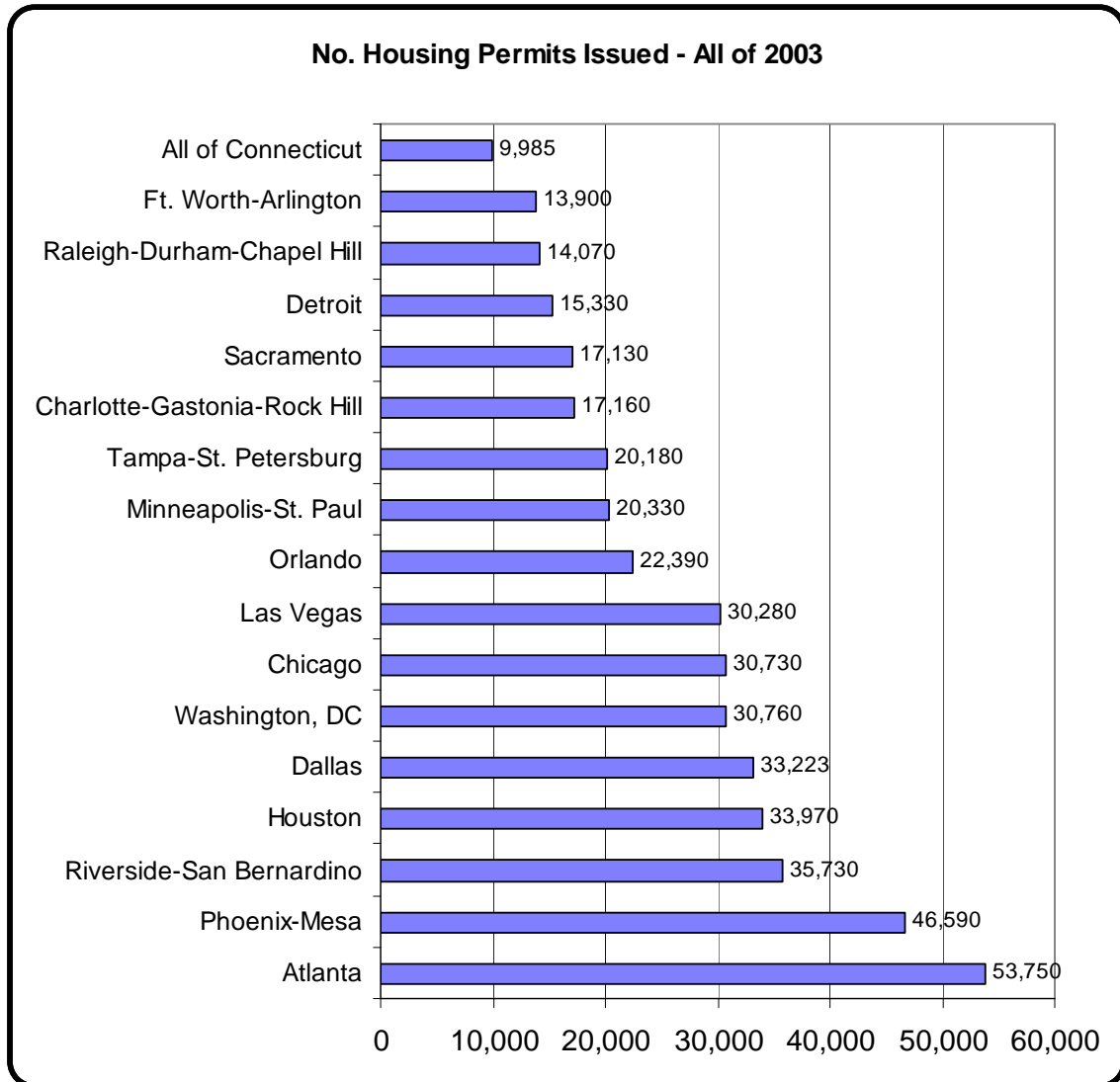
land use policies and regulations will have zero affect on the basic formula that one household will require one home.

- ◆ The flawed analysis of census tract data and the myths it spawns is unfortunate because the Connecticut Metropatterns report also highlights serious issues, such as the growing income gap between urban and suburban populations and the significant economic issues faced by our cities. The outrageous errors taint the whole report. Myths do not need to be created to support actions to address serious urban concerns, and myths should not form the basis of land use or property tax reforms.
- ◆ For more, do a site search for Statistical Smarts at www.hbact.org to see an article further exploring this myth.

Balanced Growth Facts - #5

Smart Growth Myth: Connecticut is growing too fast and we're building too many homes and in all the wrong places.

Balanced Growth Fact: Connecticut is one of the slowest growing states in the nation. For 2006, the nation saw 1.82 million new housing units built, but CT's share was only 9,600 units permitted in the entire state. See below an example from 2003 of the housing permits issued in the entire state of Connecticut as compared to a number of cities in other parts of the nation. This comparison is consistent regardless of the year chosen.



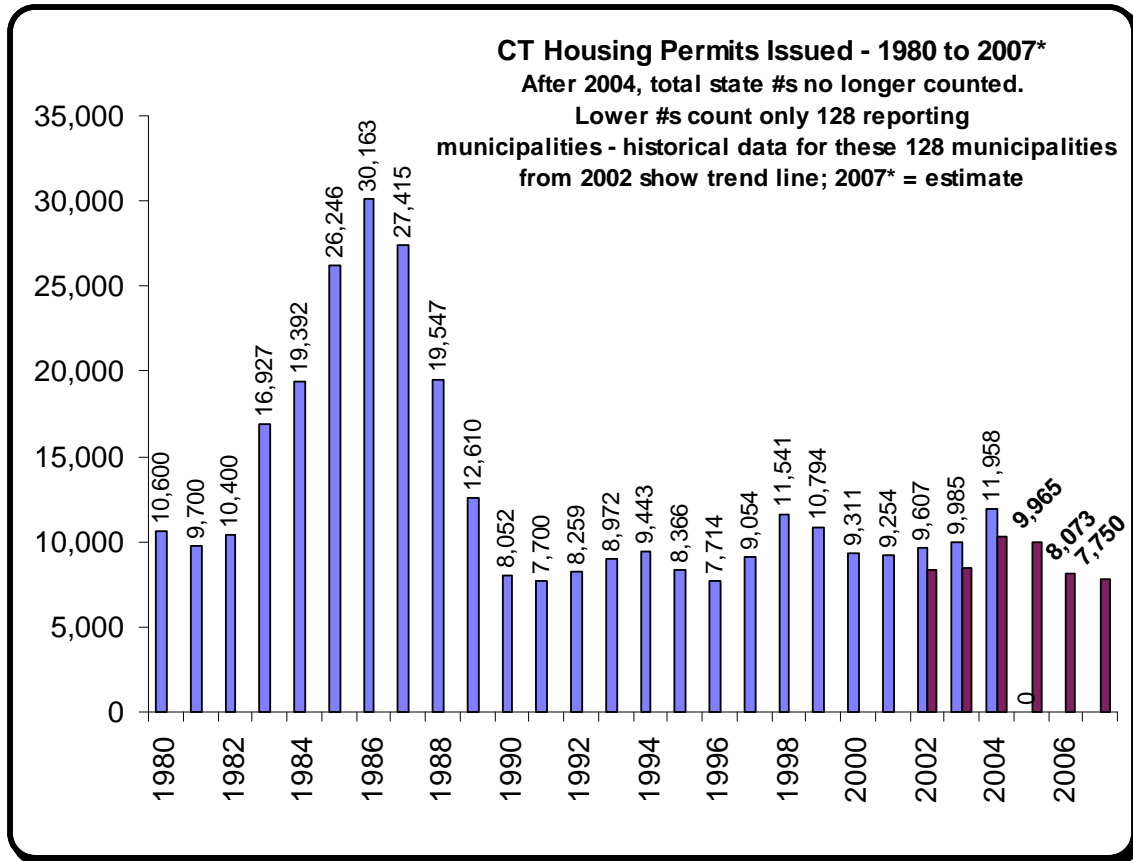
source: NAHB (and U.S. Census Bureau) and DECD

From 2000 – 2004, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, CT ranked 48th in the nation in terms of the number of housing units built per growth in population (i.e., we are not keeping up with even the limited population growth we have). And in CT the number of permits declined substantially in 2006

CT ranks 48th in the nation in terms of the number of housing units built per population.

from 2005. The number of permits in 2007 is even lower than 2006. See the chart below. We are simply not growing, and our lack of housing growth, which causes higher

home prices, is a key reason why young people, ages 18-34, are leaving the state. Connecticut, in fact, according to the Partnership for Strong Communities and the HOMEConnecticut coalition, leads the nation among all states in the percentage of its young people fleeing the state.



source: DECD and former Dept. of Housing

As far as the claim that we build homes in the wrong places, the vast majority of people prefer to live in suburban development, the very type of development some smart growth advocates abhor. There is a marketplace for urban, transit-oriented development and more of it needs to be allowed by our cities and inner ring suburbs serviced by transit. But state and local land use policies need to accommodate the entire marketplace (i.e., suburban development), or more people and businesses will leave the state for better opportunities elsewhere.

The vast majority of people prefer to live in the suburbs, the very type of development some smart growth advocates derisively call sprawl and want to stop. Suburban life would be denied or made prohibitively expensive to new employees and, more and more often, to our own children.

Balanced Growth Facts - #6

Smart Growth Myth: Property taxes are driving poor land use decisions because housing does not pay its own way and towns are left with chasing after commercial development.

Balanced Growth Fact: Some anti-sprawl advocates argue that towns chase after commercial developments so they will get tax revenues needed to offset the public's costs of servicing new homes. This creates approvals of presumably otherwise "unwanted" developments further and further out into the suburbs, i.e., sprawl. If the property tax system was changed so that towns relied less on it, they argue, the chase for tax ratables would stop and sprawl would then stop. The argument, however, ignores the reality that people (not builders and not government planners), one at a time in our free marketplace system, choose where they want to live, work, shop and play.

This property tax argument begins with the myth that housing does not pay its own way. The bible of this no growth myth, published in 1995 by the Southern New England Forest Consortium, Inc., is called "Cost of Community Services in Southern New England" ("COCS"). But the COCS report is severely flawed for a number of reasons. The most important is that the COCS' "fall back ratios" used to allocate municipal expenses to the three categories of land uses studied (i.e., residential, commercial/industrial, and open spaces) are admitted in the report as based on relationships that have "not been established or widely accepted - and may not even exist." This incredible disclaimer has been lost on people. For a full critique of the flawed COCS paper, do a site search for COCS at www.hbact.org.

Many towns have bought into this myth that housing does not pay and to some extent use it to deny residential growth while seeking out what they perceive to be tax generating land uses. Thus, the myth that housing doesn't pay creates a self-fulfilling prophecy. It does factor into some land use decisions, although most land use decisions are made upon other factors, such as traffic issues; impacts on wetlands and other environmental resources, open space, scenic vistas, and on community character; how the project will look, its site design, the design of the buildings; its "fit" within the neighborhood; its affect on surrounding property values or other businesses in the community; and many other concerns.

The myth that housing doesn't pay its own way is usually started by anti-development advocates with a highly inflated number of school children coming from a proposed new development.

Property tax benefits (real or perceived) are but one consideration among many and often times the neighbors and land use boards consider the other factors noted above to be more important. Moreover, it is illegal in Connecticut for land use boards to consider the fiscal impact of a proposal. Therefore, even if property tax burdens in municipalities were addressed there would be little appreciable change in our land use decisions or patterns of development. Also, there is merit in the argument that the visibility of the property tax to the tax payer (unlike the largely hidden income or sales taxes) is beneficial since tax payers put pressure on government to keep the tax low and leads toward lower overall tax burdens or toward more government justification for the services and purchases for which the tax pays. Citizens want this accountability; government should appreciate it, not try to hide from it.

The myth that housing doesn't pay is usually started by anti-development advocates with a highly inflated number of school children coming from a proposed new development. The truth is the statewide average number of public school children from all housing units in CT

is about 0.6, not the 2.0 to 3.0 often heard from citizens at public hearings.¹ But, setting aside this statewide average, each proposed development should be rigorously analyzed on its own merits to come to a realistic conclusion on the cost benefit to a community. You cannot compare one town to the next, let alone studies from other states or across the country because tax structures and public service expenses vary so widely. Credible studies do give us averages that form the basis to analyze specific developments.

For example, a widely accepted and thorough study of CT's housing mix shows that a 1 bedroom multifamily unit produces 0.04 school age children (SAC), a 2 bedroom multifamily unit produces 0.27 SAC, a 3 bedroom single-family home produces 0.66 SAC and a 4 bedroom single family home produces 1.07 SAC.²

Also, as reported by HOMEConnecticut (CT Partnership for Strong Communities), "there are clear fiscal pressures on municipalities due to educational costs but there is no evidence that student enrollment growth is the cause of the budgetary problems."³

Every town in Connecticut could do a simple study to get to an exact tax benefit for recently built homes: Ask the tax assessor for a list of the addresses for the last 100 housing units that received a certificate of occupancy and the taxes, both real and personal, coming from those specific homes. Send those 100 addresses to the school board or superintendent and ask for the number of public school children coming out of those specific addresses. Use the freedom of information act if necessary – this is all public information. Do the math and you'll have the average number of public school children per housing unit for those 100 homes and the taxes generated by those homes.

¹ Comparing the total number of housing units in the state to the total number of public school students.

² Rutgers University Center for Urban Policy Research (June 2006), analyzing Connecticut's number of school age children (SAC) living in various housing types. The SAC numbers also do not account for school age children attending private schools, meaning that the number of students in public schools is lower than the published SAC.

³ "Most school budget increases are not related to enrollment, or to the number of children in housing." Citing to a University of Massachusetts Donohue Institute study on school cost impact of mixed-income housing. HOMEConnecticut reports, "Studying seven Massachusetts communities between 1994 and 2004, teaching staff levels and overall expenses increased independently of changes in enrollment. During that time, school enrollments were essentially flat, while employment of full time equivalent teaching staff increased by eight percent, total school expenditures grew by 28.6 percent. Some school districts had costs rise significantly even while their enrollment declined."

As noted by the CT Partnership for Balanced Growth, compare also data from the U.S. Census and the State Department of Economic and Community Development, which tell the same story as the Univ. of Mass. study. For example, the Capitol Region (Hartford and the 28 surrounding communities) in 1970 had 249,229 persons between the age of 0-19, making up 37.2 percent of the region's total population. In 2000, the 0-19 age cohort had declined to 195,943 persons making up only 27.1 percent of the region's total population. That is a 21.5% decline in this population cohort, or a loss of 55,000 school-age and younger children. Yet, from 1970 to 2000, the Capitol Region added 81,802 housing units to its existing housing stock. If new housing was generating the large numbers of school age children that anti-suburbanization advocates keep telling us is happening, even at a rate of 1 child per new housing units, the region should have gained more than 81,802 school age children.

Towns also know what they spend on education and how many children are in their school systems. They also know how much education and other financial aid they receive from state and federal governments – this aid must be calculated into the cost benefit analysis if you're trying to judge the impact of new housing on local tax payers. Real estate conveyance taxes and the substantial fees paid for permits and land use approvals derived from new housing must also be calculated to be fair to the analysis. With this data, towns can then calculate the real net revenue coming from recently built new housing. Using the Rutgers study for the number of school age children coming out of different types of housing, towns can extrapolate the number of school age children and likely cost benefit of a new development.

In almost every case in Connecticut, new homes do pay for themselves and more.

Housing development is not the cause of increasing education costs and is not the cause of property tax pressures in our municipalities. Suburban development (i.e., sprawl) should not be caused by our property tax system if land use decision makers do not buy the myth that housing does not pay. More importantly, suburban development will continue nonetheless because it is what most people want.

Balanced Growth Facts - #7

Smart Growth Myth: Auto-dependent suburbs cause excessive traffic congestion. We need mass transit and housing should be built within walking distance to it to relieve traffic congestion.

Balanced Growth Fact: This myth assumes people in urban areas will either walk or use mass transit in large numbers. Some urban dwellers and workers will do so, but most still prefer to own cars and drive. Also, many jobs are no longer in central cores. Traditional mass transit lines no longer serve the commuting patterns of many workers. In many cases, transit-oriented development works economically (i.e., sufficient space is sold or rented) only when there is ample parking provided to service the development – sort of defeating the whole premise of it.

Moreover, traffic congestion is no less worse in cities with high levels of mass transit. Most people use mass transit only when auto traffic becomes intolerable.

Growth policies should recognize that autos provide greater economic opportunity and freedom to get to more jobs and other activities than mass transit. ... Traffic solutions must work with American's love affair with their autos, not try to break 'em up.

Mass transit also costs more in public subsidies per passenger mile than auto travel (including calculating public highway construction and maintenance costs), and rail transit is the most expensive and costs more per passenger mile than bus service. See “Missing the Transportation Connections,” Chap. 6, in War on the Dream, cited under Balanced Growth Facts – Additional Resources.

Growth policies should recognize that autos provide greater economic opportunity and freedom for more people to get to more jobs and other activities than mass transit. Businesses could be granted tax incentives, at much lower costs than rail subsidies, to develop alternative work schedules and to allow work-at-home policies to more evenly distribute and lessen auto use. The pollution produced by autos is better addressed by promoting clean fuels and alternative powered autos than by land use reforms.

Traffic solutions must work with Americans' love affair with their autos, not futilely try to break 'em up.

Balanced Growth Facts – Additional Resources

For compelling reading on sprawl and the anti-sprawl, smart growth movement, see also:

- The Best Laid Plans: How Government Planning Harms Your Quality of Life, Your Pocketbook, and Your Future, by *Randal O'Toole* (Cato Institute, 2007, www.cato.org);
- The Vanishing Automobile and Other Urban Myths: How Smart Growth Will Harm American Cities, by *Randal O'Toole* (The Thoreau Institute, 2001, www.ti.org);
- War on the Dream: How Anti-Sprawl Policy Threatens the Quality of Life, by *Wendell Cox* (IUniverse, Inc. 2006, www.iuniverse.com);
- SPRAWL: A Compact History, by *Robert Bruegmann* (301 pages; Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 2005) (One reviewer states, “There are scores of books offering “solutions” to sprawl. Their authors would do well to read this book.” Suburban Despair: Is urban sprawl really an American menace?, by Witold Rybczynski, Slate, Nov. 7, 2005);
- The Costs of Sprawl Reconsidered: What the Data Really Show, by *Wendell Cox and Joshua Utt* (Backgrounder, The Heritage Foundation, No. 1770, June 25, 2004) (“An econometric analysis of actual municipality data indicates that there is no practically significant difference in expenditures per capita between the more sprawling [lower density, faster growing] and less sprawling [higher density, slower growing] communities.”);
- Critiquing Sprawl’s Critics, by *Peter Gordon and Harry W. Richardson* (The Heartland Institute, Policy Analysis No. 365, January 24, 2000);
- The Truth about Sprawl: It is not necessarily a dirty word, by *Rick Harrison* (Sustainable Land Development Today, September 2007, p. 25)

A new framework of thinking on growth management issues.

Principles of Balanced Growth

- Land use policies should balance the protection of important environmental resources while accommodating a high degree of freedom of people to choose 1) where they want to live, work, shop and play, 2) what type and size of home they want to live in, and 3) how they want to commute and travel in their daily lives.
- Land use policies and regulations should be reasonable and consider the ability of industry to cost effectively supply safe, decent and affordable homes that people need and the other buildings needed as places to work, shop and play.
- Analysis, research and data supporting any land use plan, policy or regulation should meet the highest standards of ethics, integrity and critical analysis.
- Land use regulations should be clear and certain so that businesses, individuals and the public may know in advance what is permissible and what is not on private property.
- Land use review processes should be timely, while encouraging public input on local land use plans and regulations, and allowing comment on specific proposals within the context of the law and regulations. Land use laws, regulations and processes should incorporate respect for the freedom of individuals to use their land subject only to reasonable regulation and certainty of process.
- Land use plans, maps and regulations should be created at the smallest political unit to 1) be more accountable to the people and 2) adjust more quickly to a constantly changing free marketplace. Regions, the state and federal governments should serve only to provide guidance, resources and incentives so that local plans and regulations are balanced, flexible, considerate of broader, identified and objective statewide needs and goals, and are consistent with the principle above.

Call to Action

It's already too difficult in Connecticut to get things done. A new direction should accommodate the entire marketplace or we risk driving more people out of the state. The first question that should be asked by policy makers is, "How would adoption of any growth policy measure make it easier to choose to live and to work in Connecticut and to get things done?"

The question before us is monumental. Common ground can be found with reasonable, balanced growth policies. We can either continue to pursue smart growth policies that create greater governmental control and builds bureaucracies that drive people out of our state, or we can work to pursue balanced growth policies that will allow citizens more freedom to choose where they want to live, work, shop and play, building a stronger and more dynamic future for our state. We need to work hard now so people do not choose to leave the state to find the freedom they hoped would be secured here.

We think people should stay in Connecticut and stand up for the freedom to choose within a balanced system. Balanced growth is about creating more options for people from which to choose and about making a more functional, cost effective regulatory system. Start by telling your local and state politicians to be reasonable, to adopt balanced land use policies that are based on facts, that make it easier to get things done here and that preserves your freedom to make the choice to stay.