

Public Hearing, Planning and Development Committee, March 2, 2009

My name is Bill Cibes. I formerly served in the legislative and executive branches of state government, and in higher education. More recently, I was appointed by Speaker Chris Donovan to serve on the Governor's Task Force on Responsible Growth, which reported to the General Assembly in February 2008, and am currently the chair of the advisory board of HOMEConnecticut, a member of 1000 Friends of Connecticut and a member of a rather loosely organized group of civically-involved citizens called the Blueprint Coalition (see [www.ctblueprint.org](http://www.ctblueprint.org)).

I first want to praise this committee for raising a number of bills recommended by a Smart Growth Task Force. You deserve great credit for recognizing, as the language of *HB 6467* states, the "high financial, social and environmental cost of sprawl development."<sup>1</sup>

In order to achieve the long-term quality of life for current and future generations in Connecticut, it is absolutely essential that we enhance – some would even say, restore – our ability to compete in a global marketplace. Our future quality of life – the "prosperity for all" which the Blueprint Coalition says should be the vision for Connecticut's future – demands that we leverage the key assets of innovation, human capital, infrastructure, and quality of place – as scholars at the Brookings Institution have argued.<sup>2</sup> Certainly a major barrier to achieving quality of place, and hence international competitiveness, is the sprawl which continues unabated in Connecticut.

- Failing to modify land use rules that require large lots for residential uses spreads out the population and significantly raises the costs of housing and transportation.
- Failing to locate people close to jobs and shopping, or close to energy-efficient modes of transporting them back and forth, frustrates our ability to conserve energy, reduce harmful emissions and avoid environmental degradation.
- Sprawl also drastically raises the cost of infrastructure – such as roads, schools and public safety protection – necessary to service the needs of our people.<sup>3</sup>
- Because only relatively affluent residents can afford to pay these extra costs, sprawl encourages segregation by income, and indeed makes some essential elements of prosperity unaffordable to large segments of the population.
- Sprawl both encourages and is enhanced by interlocal competition for grand list growth, exacerbating the dysfunctional aspects of an inequitable property tax structure.

*HBs 6463, 6464, 6465, 6466, 6467, 6469, 6585, 6588 and 6589* are all important steps toward the goal of smart growth to foster competitiveness. I'm sure you recognize that

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<sup>1</sup> To re-enforce your point, CERC reported in 2007 that just between 1988 and 2006, Bridgeport lost 22,894 jobs (from 1988's total of 67,820), New Haven decreased from 90,240 jobs to 76,395, and the number of jobs in Hartford went from 158,600 to 115,574 – a loss of 43,026. Many of these jobs went to outlying communities, increasing the cost of commuting, requiring additional investment in infrastructure, encouraging the dispersal of housing, and decreasing the vitality and viability of the city which experienced the loss. It is almost an understatement to say that the "financial, social and environmental cost" was "high."

<sup>2</sup> See [www.brookings.edu/events/2007/1106blueprint.aspx](http://www.brookings.edu/events/2007/1106blueprint.aspx) Click on "transcript."

<sup>3</sup> To put these latter points another way, sprawl complicates the task of providing the connectivity of information, goods and people which David Osborne and Peter Hutchinson say is a key to economic success in the Information Age. (*The Price of Government*, pp. 57-58)

they are but *first* steps, but they are valuable ones, and in general they do not damage the potential for taking further steps in the future, nor undercut progress already made.

*HB 6467, AAC Smart Growth and Plans of Conservation and Development*, which directly addresses the issue of sprawl, is a key part of this package. I would accordingly recommend that you look carefully at the language of this bill, especially Sections 1 and 2. In order to improve the clarity of the critical policy which you declare here, please consider some modifications to the language of the file copy, as set out below:

Section 1. (NEW) (*Effective October 1, 2009*) As used in sections 2 and 7 of this act and sections 16a-27 of the general statutes, as amended by this act, 8-23 of the general statutes, as amended by this act and 8-35a of the general statutes, as amended by this act, "smart growth" means economic, social and environmental development that [(1)] uses land and resources to enhance the long-term quality of life for current and future generations in the state; and "principles of smart growth" means standards and objectives that support and promote smart growth when used to guide actions and decisions. These standards and objectives include but are not limited to [and promotes] (A) integrated planning that coordinates tax, transportation, housing, environmental and economic development policies at the state and local level, (B) the reduction of reliance on the property tax by municipalities by creating efficiencies and coordination of services on the regional level while reducing interlocal competition for grand list growth, (C) the redevelopment of existing infrastructure and resources, including brownfields and historic places, instead of new construction in undeveloped places, (D) transportation choices that provide alternatives to automobiles, including rail, bikeways and walking, while reducing energy consumption, (E) the development or preservation of workforce or affordable [and available] housing through densities that reduce sales prices or rents, in locations proximate [for mixed income households in close proximity] to transportation and employment centers or in other eligible locations, as defined in Section 8-13m of the General Statutes, (F) concentrated, mixed-use development around transportation nodes and civic and cultural centers, and (G) the conservation and protection of natural resources by preserving open space, farmland and historic properties and furthering energy efficiency]; and (2) is accomplished by a collaborative approach to planning, decision-making and evaluation between and among all levels of government to promote economic competitiveness in the state while preserving natural resources].

Sec. 2. (NEW) (*Effective October 1, 2009*) The General Assembly declares that it is the policy of the state to address the high financial, social and environmental cost of sprawl development by incorporating the principles of smart growth in any revisions of statutorily required plans<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Let me just add my support for well-executed strategic planning, which is encouraged by these bills. Thinking and acting with strategic and long-term perspective is vital to achieving Connecticut's vision for the future. Strategic planning enables proactive governance. Strategic planning helps avoid the cost of bad results, which stems from reactive governance, or "drift," in which there is no decision-making at all. Strategic planning when done well facilitates adaptation to changing environments. Strategic planning

and strategies (including but not limited to those required by Sections 13b-57g, 16a-27, 8-23, 8-35a, xxx, yyy, zzz ) adopted after October 1, 2009, and by awarding any state grants to municipalities, regional agencies, and any recipient organizations other than municipalities, made after October 1, 2009, according to criteria consistent with the principles of [through effective] smart growth. The General Assembly further finds and declares that smart growth is best achieved by a collaborative approach to planning, decision-making and evaluation between and among all levels of government.

If these changes are adopted, then the language of *HB 6464 AAC Coordinated Preservation and Development* could be improved by revising the language in several places to read "consistency with the principles of smart growth" (e.g. lines 7-8, 173, 202, 207, 271, and 338 of the file copy. (This language is already used in, e.g., lines 178, 277, and 343.) Similar language could be included in lines 186, 192 and 218 of *HB 6465 AAC Smart Growth and Transportation Planning*. And to go back to *HB 6467*, in line 84 of that file copy.

Let me also suggest that you consider modifying the provisions of *HB 6585 AAC Regionalism* to ensure that the benefits of revenue sharing from new economic development in an economic development district extend to ALL the constituent parts of that district, and do not further segregate needs and resources among the municipalities. Specifically, sprawl would seem to be encouraged, rather than discouraged, if two municipalities at the far edges of a district combined to share economic development revenues, to the *exclusion* of their poorer neighbor at the heart of the district.

Thank you for your consideration. Let me again extend my whole-hearted praise for the extremely valuable and far-sighted approach you are taking with these bills concerning smart growth.

I urge the committee, and then the General Assembly as a whole, to adopt this package.

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focuses discussions between policymakers and administrators and improves coordination among departments. It encourages synergy between national and state programs, so the resources of both are maximized. It links budgets to outcomes, helping to identify and re-allocate squandered resources, such as duplicate programs. Good planning establishes funding priorities which identify key areas for economic and social development that should be protected from budget cuts in times of economic downturn, and which should be the major recipients of additional funds as new revenues become available. It creates more accountable and transparent government. In the end, it may lead to increased participation by grassroots citizens in decision making.