



1000 FRIENDS of Connecticut

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*PRESERVING, CONSERVING, AND GROWING SMART*

Planning and Development Committee  
Public Hearing  
March 2, 2011  
(SB 64, HB5782, HB6412)

My name is Susan Merrow. I chair the Board of Trustees of 1000 Friends of Connecticut, an organization which works to promote a better economy and environment through more responsible, sustainable land use decisions that favor regionalism, mass transit, property tax reform, healthy cities, open space preservation, and sensibly sited housing. Our mission is commonly called "smart growth."

On behalf of 1000 Friends, I want to commend the Committee for bringing forward a rich and varied collection of bills that seek to promote regional approaches to land use decision making and to relieve municipal overdependence on the property tax, two key ingredients in growing smarter. The need to achieve grand list growth in each of 169 insular towns in order to meet property tax demands has driven too many short-sighted land use decisions to number. Among these bills are many provisions that will help our towns work together with their neighbors to grow in ways that will benefit them and our state's economy in the long run.

To highlight just a few of these commendable measures, I would like to recommend support of SB 64 AAC Alternatives to Property Tax. While the specifics of this bill must be worked out to ensure that these alternatives also promote sound land use decision making, it is important to preserve the notion that in paying alternative taxes, their property taxes will be reduced.

HB 6412 AAC the Small Town Economic Assistance Program offers an excellent way to encourage inter-town cooperation rather than competition. STEAP grants promote growth at the level of small and rural towns. This bill would help ensure that this growth is smart.

HB 5782 AAC the Hotel Tax brings back an effort that began last year with the MORE Commission to find appropriate revenue streams to promote economic development. It differs from last year's bill in that it sends the revenue to economic development entities rather than to regional planning entities like COG's. This should be amended in order to ensure maximum smart growth impact.

We look forward to working with you as you put these very strong measures into a commendable smart growth package that will take our state forward into a better planned, more prosperous future.