



Smart Growth

- **Smart growth is an approach to planning cities which is people- and environmentally- friendly.**
- **Redevelopment of existing buildings is an important part of Smart Growth.**
- **Many cities are already using heritage conservation as one way of implementing Smart Growth.**

What is Smart Growth?

Smart Growth is a set of actions aimed at controlling the growth of urban sprawl -- low -density, automobile-dependent development at the edge of urban areas. The objective of Smart Growth is to preserve open spaces and farmland, keep water and air clean, reduce fiscal burdens on local government for new infrastructure, and improve neighbourhood quality.

(Canadian Urban Institute, 2001 and Rutgers University, 2001)

Heritage conservation is fundamental to Smart Growth

One of the most important elements in containing urban sprawl is to intensify inner city land use. In most cities, the rehabilitation of old commercial or industrial buildings in the inner city, an area which is already served by urban infrastructure, poses a major opportunity for high-density development.

(Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 2005)

Rejuvenating already developed areas conserves remaining open space, eliminates outward expansion and the need to create new and expensive infrastructure.

(University of Waterloo, 2003)

The redevelopment of existing buildings has environmental, social, and economic benefits

Redeveloping existing buildings is one way of promoting Smart Growth. Others include the purchase of land, restrictive growth policies, changing transportation patterns, and promoting compact development in new suburbs. The redevelopment of existing buildings is most effective because it contributes to:

- Ecological health:
 - Reduction in automobile use, energy use and greenhouse gas emissions.
 - Reduced risk of contaminating the city's underground water supplies, since redevelopment does not involve disturbing potentially contaminated soil.
 - Preservation of more scenic vistas and farmlands, and fewer ecosystem disruptions.
- Public health:
 - Reduction in automobile accidents.
 - Increased physical health as a result of being close enough to walk or cycle to work or school.



- Short and long-term economic feasibility:
 - Lower infrastructure costs.
 - Increased property tax revenue for local jurisdictions.
 - Reduction in the deterioration of inner cities.

(Rutgers University, 2001)

Canadian cities recognize the benefits of adapting and reusing heritage buildings

- In the Greater Vancouver Area:
 - The 33-hectare Fraser Mill industrial site in Coquitlam is being converted into a mixed-use development with 3,700 residential units.
 - The industrial land along the Fraser River is being converted into a mixed-used community of 10,000.
- In Toronto:
 - In the King-Spadina and Parliament areas, old industrial warehouses and mercantile buildings are being converted into mixed-use spaces with 7,040 new housing units.
 - The Distillery District has been restored to house 119 arts, culture and entertainment occupants, and is being hailed as one of the finest and most complex old industrial site restoration projects in Canada.
- In Montreal:
 - The city has been encouraging the adaptive reuse of commercial buildings in older parts of the city, such as in Old Montreal, Griffintown and the fur district.
 - The Angus Shops, a former Canadian Pacific Railway maintenance building, has been converted into 2,500 housing units, with 60% rented at market price and 40% dedicated to providing co-operative, non-profit, and public housing.

This form of intensification is attractive since the reuse of existing building stock preserves heritage, reduces development costs and times, and makes efficient use of existing infrastructure.

(CMHC, 2005)

(Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 2005)

Resources

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