



MEMORANDUM

Date: November 13, 2001

To: The Honorable Chair and Members
Pima County Board of Supervisors

From: C.H. Huckelberry
County Administrator *CH*

Re: **Smart Growth Audit**

Background

The attached study by Pima County's Planning Official, Mr. Jim Mazzocco, provides a thoughtful and timely assessment of how Pima County's practices and policy proposals in land use stand up under the test of nationally recognized principles of smart growth. Mr. Mazzocco distills the literature of modern land use planning into eight basic principles and then compares these standards to our local practice and policy. This memorandum is a brief introduction to the *Smart Growth Audit*.

Defining Smart Growth

Smart growth is generally defined by groups like the American Planning Association to cover concepts such as compact urban patterns, revitalization, infill, viable public transit, and decreased auto dependency. The National Association of Home Builders would add concepts that make development viable and efficient. The *Smart Growth Audit* synthesizes the ideas set forth by various groups and arrives at three categories which encompass eight basic principles of smart growth:

Land Use Category: In the area of land use, smart growth principles include: (1) support region-wide green infrastructure; (2) use land efficiently; and (3) use a mix of densities and land use types.

Infrastructure: In the area of infrastructure, smart growth principles include: (4) make full use of urban services; and (5) use more than one transportation option.

Development Process: In the area of development services, smart growth principles include: (6) support responsible regionalism of growth; (7) design urban settings that are livable at a human scale rather than a car-oriented scale; and (8) maintain a reasonable development review process.

Growing Smarter Plus and Smart Growth -- Comparisons and Drawbacks

As we approach the public hearings and deliberations on the Pima County Comprehensive Land Use Plan Update, it is worthwhile to note that the state law that defines the elements of the plan generally supports smart growth principles. The study indicates that: the land use element promotes compact development; the circulation element directs transportation compatibility with compact development; the cost of development element advocates the idea of development paying for itself; the growth area element supports targeting areas for rational infrastructure expansion and multi-modal transportation options with mixed use planning; the open space element focuses on a region-wide open space system; and the environmental planning element requires jurisdictional responsibility for protection of natural resources as well as air and water quality.

Other provisions of state law, however, have the effect of undermining Pima County's ability to implement that stated goals of Growing Smarter Plus. The *Smart Growth Audit* details the constraints that are found in the downzoning statute, the specific plan statutes, the provisions which limit the application of the open space element of the comprehensive plan, and the achilles heel of all smart growth initiatives in unincorporated Arizona counties, that is, the law that allows unregulated lot splitting to continue, encouraging low density substandard growth areas.

Smart Growth Principles Compared to Pima County Issues

In comparing the smart growth principles to Pima County issues, the study makes the following points.

Green infrastructure is defined as the community's natural life support system incorporating an interconnected network of wetlands, waterways, forests, wildlife habitats, working farms, ranches, conservation areas, and other open spaces. Maryland's statewide smart growth policy is to have a green infrastructure annual budget similar to budgets for roads, sewers and other public services. Pima County issues acknowledged in the *Smart Growth Audit* include the policies covered through the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan, and issues that pre-date the Conservation Plan effort, such as the fact that the cumulative impacts to riparian habitats and our riverine systems are not being accounted for by our current ordinances.

Efforts to use land efficiently are complicated by the following Pima County issues: (1) high density comprehensive plan categories are consistently underzoned; (2) state law continues to allow wildcat lot splitting to remain a prevalent rural land development pattern; and (3) continued population growth and housing demand create a land consumption dilemma.

Mixed use development combines many activities in the same area, reversing the pattern of single-purpose neighborhoods. Pima County issues that complicate the implementation of this strategy include that (1) low density land use is the preference for many residents; and (2) multi-family and mixed use housing is not often undertaken.

Urban services: The smart growth standard ensuring that development occurs in tandem with the availability of urban services has clearly not been upheld in Pima County. As the study indicates: (1) the cost of transportation improvements by 2025 will have a \$4.1 billion shortfall; (2) the current transportation impact fee in the years it has been in effect has raised only enough money to build one mile of a four-lane road; (3) population increases will require a more updated wastewater management infrastructure; (4) septic system development continues to grow in the unincorporated County; (5) in developing recreation parks land availability and specific population needs do not always match; (6) there is no comprehensive process to address the cost of development throughout the region; and (7) the Pima County property tax base has declined substantially since 1977 when viewed in constant dollars and on a per capita basis, leaving Pima County with less per capita spending power for general fund services.

Smart Growth requires transportation to be safe, convenient, and interesting in the context of several options. Related county issues include: (1) vehicle miles traveled (VMT) continue to increase at a much higher rate than population increases; (2) travel under heavily congested roadway conditions is expected to increase in the future; (3) costs per bus passenger are rising faster than revenues per bus passenger; (4) county-wide transit service will continue to serve between 2% and 2.5% of total person trips regionally even with the expansion of the urban service area; and (5) bikeway routes are anticipated to double from the existing 488 miles to 976 miles within the next 10 years with a goal of reaching a total of 1,388 bikeway miles by the year 2020.

The principle of taking a regional approach in managing growth issues is complicated by factors such as the fact that regional governmental cooperation on growth areas is held together only by voluntary efforts, and that there are six jurisdictions making fragmented land use decisions.

The standard that urban settings be designed for human use over car-oriented uses is not met by past planning and it will be difficult to change patterns since (1) the major County road system is an arterial road system that tends to be pedestrian hostile; and (2) the unincorporated county has tended to grow as an urban edge to the City of Tucson and has few core areas in which to build human scale development.

Development services that could be improved to create incentives for smart growth include: (1) improve the current cluster option process which is seldom used because of the complexities in preparing a submittal; and (2) improve the specific plan process to allow for mixed use proposals, which now can be too complicated for infill development.

Smart Growth Policy Considerations for Pima County

Pages 15 through 19 of the study list the policy considerations that Pima County has discussed, considered or adopted to begin to address growth issues in accordance with smart growth principles. Listed by category below, these include:

Considerations Supporting a Region-wide Green Infrastructure: (1) Provide a zoning framework for preserving rural land uses consistent with open space preservation; (2) Prepare a consolidated environmentally sensitive lands ordinance; (3) Ask the electorate every five years to authorize general obligation bonds to purchase open space; (4) Amend the buffer overlay zone (BZ) to eliminate golf courses as a method of achieving the 50% open space requirement and develop ecological based buffers around public preserves rather than follow the geographic land survey boundaries; (5) Limit development on protected peaks and ridges; (6) Use effluent as a consistent renewable resource that can be used to enhance riparian areas and replace groundwater pumping; (7) Consider regional water conservation fees; (8) Consider a revision to the landscaping standards to have a water harvesting reviewed during site planning; and (9) Evaluate the effectiveness of mitigation plantings for the native plant preservation ordinance and the riparian habitat ordinance.

Considerations to Use Land Efficiently: (1) Focus rezoning review on land use efficiency; (2) Consider how subregions should be looked at for land consumption tendencies and what opportunities for compact development exist or better circulation efficiency can be obtained; (3) Revise the cluster development option to make it a more appealing development process; (4) Consider setting minimum density standards for planning categories to discourage underplanning of areas; and (5) Promote conservation subdivisions in low density areas.

Considerations to Create a Better Mix of Land Uses and Densities: (1) Use specific plans to promote sustainable master planned community based on smart growth concepts; and (2) Create a planned unit development concept to retrofit areas of low density sprawl.

Considerations Making Full Use of Our Urban Services: (1) Use public infrastructure investment as a tool to guide urban development; (2) Promote urban infill based on sound engineering and economic standards; (3) There should be no public subsidization of infrastructure in areas prone to unregulated lot splitting; (4) Pursue amended state legislation that grants counties the ability to deal with the current and past lot splitting; (5) Expand County impact fee authority to include all public facilities and services provided to growth areas such as schools, parks, solid waste, public transit and police facilities; (6) Continue partnering with school districts for recreation parks and extending use periods of existing sports fields by placing lighting in them; and (7) Consider a priority funding area approach to target growth areas under Growing Smarter Plus.

Considerations to Have More than One Transportation Option: The regional pedestrian system needs to be inventoried and assessed, and an improvement program needs to be developed and prioritized.

Considerations Obtain Responsible Regionalism of Growth: (1) Increase jurisdictional cooperation on urban growth; (2) Become a development partner with the State Land Department; (3) Consider a regional transportation impact fee; (4) Support master planning/specific plans to comply with the regional growth area element of the jurisdictions comprehensive/general plans; (5) Consider a transit district zoning with its own set of minimum required densities for key designations to help shape regional compact development; and (6) Consider investing in computing resources to perform regional land use image analysis to monitor the on-going relationship between the urbanized area and the Biological Reserve.

Considerations to Achieve the Development of Human Scale Urban Settings: Strengthen standards to express our southwestern heritage.

Considerations Having a Reasonable Development Review Process: (1) Strengthen development standards; and (2) Strengthen long range comprehensive land use planning resources.

Conclusion

In general Pima County's recent policy approach appears to be more in keeping with smart growth principles than historical patterns and practices. State law poses some of the most serious constraints to achieving the standards of smart growth promoted at the national and local level.

Attachment



Smart Growth Audit

I.	Introduction	2
II.	Defining Smart Growth	2
III.	Growing Smarter Plus and Smart Growth: Comparisons and Drawbacks	3
IV.	Smart Growth Principles Compared to Pima County Issues	4
	A. <u>Support a Region Wide Green Infrastructure</u>	4
	B. <u>Use Land Efficiently</u>	5
	C. <u>Use a Mix of Densities and Types of Land Uses</u>	6
	D. <u>Make Full Use of Urban Services</u>	7
	E. <u>Support More Than One Transportation Option</u>	10
	F. <u>Support a Responsible Regionalism of Growth</u>	11
	G. <u>Design Urban Settings at a Human Rather than Car Oriented Scale</u>	12
	H. <u>Have a Reasonable Development Review Process</u>	13
V.	Smart Growth Policy Considerations for Pima County	14
	A. <u>Considerations Supporting a Region-wide Green Infrastructure</u>	14
	B. <u>Considerations to Use Land Efficiently</u>	15
	C. <u>Considerations to Create a Better Mix of Land Uses and Densities</u>	16
	D. <u>Considerations to Make Full Use of Urban Services</u>	16
	E. <u>Considerations to Have More than One Transportation Option</u>	18
	F. <u>Considerations to Obtain Responsible Regionalism of Growth</u>	18
	G. <u>Considerations to Design Urban Settings at a Human Scale</u>	19
	H. <u>Considerations to Have a Reasonable Development Review Process</u>	19
VI.	Conclusion	20

Smart Growth Audit

I. Introduction

This report compares key urban issues facing unincorporated Pima County with the basic principles of smart growth. It looks at policy considerations being proposed in the context of the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan and smart growth principles. The report further attempts to recommend planning policy where gaps in policy need more consideration to abide by the principles.

II. Defining Smart Growth

Smart growth is not a self evident concept. Nationally there are two basic definitions. One is the American Planning Association's that emphasizes policies that support more compact urban patterns, revitalization, infill, viable public transit, and less auto dependency. The Sierra Club also uses these basic features in its description of smart growth.

The National Association of Home Builders definition supports policies that create adequate developable land supplies. Additionally, their view expresses concerns about unfair development costs and housing practices that do not provide the product homebuyers want.

This report uses the key principles of smart growth and synthesizes the different emphases of the above groups.

Below, Pima County issues are compared against eight principles of smart growth. The principles can be considered in three groups.

Land Use: The first group focus on land use; they are support a region-wide green infrastructure, use land efficiently, and use a mix of densities and land use types.

Infrastructure: The second group emphasizes infrastructure; they are make full use of urban services and use more than one transportation option.

Development Process: The final group promotes better decision making in the development review process; they are support responsible regionalism of growth, design urban settings that are livable at a human scale rather than a car-oriented scale, and have a reasonable development review process.

III. Growing Smarter Plus and Smart Growth -- Comparisons and Drawbacks

Pima County must model its comprehensive plan update after the plan elements spelled out in the Growing Smarter Plus statute. The statute uses the smart growth term and the plan elements generally support smart growth principles. For example:

- The land use element promotes compact development.
- The circulation element directs transportation compatibility with compact development.
- The cost of development element advocates the idea of development paying for itself.
- The growth area element supports targeting areas for rational infrastructure expansion and multi-modal transportation options with mixed use planning.
- The open space element focuses on region-wide open space system.
- Finally, the environmental planning element requires jurisdictional responsibility for protection of natural resources as well as air and water quality.

However, there are other parts of the state's planning statutes that undermine a county's ability to implement a true smart growth planning agenda.

- The downzoning statute requires a property owner's written consent if new land use regulations are written more strictly even if the objective is to promote regional open space, protect air quality, compact development, or control urban sprawl expansion. An August 2001 Pima County Superior Court ruling stated that the statute could not apply to Pima County. This case is under appeal and the next ruling will impact the legality of the statute statewide.
- A somewhat similar problem occurs in the specific plan statutes which require 100% written owner consent. This requirement undermines any attempt at assembling land parcels for a County initiated infill or refill rezoning concept using the specific plan process. Again one property owner refusing to sign can stop the process.
- Any open space designation in the comprehensive plan on state or private land must have an alternative one residence per acre designation.
- Further, lot splitting may continue to occur below minimum standards causing problems with increased dust, poor emergency vehicle access, and environmental deterioration, thus encouraging low density substandard growth areas that undermines compact development and mixed use policies.

IV. Smart Growth Principles Compared to Pima County Issues

Below is a comparison of eight smart growth principles derived from national definitions of smart growth with Pima County's problem issues.

A. SUPPORT A REGION WIDE GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE.

The Concept

Green infrastructure is the community's natural life support system incorporating an interconnected network of wetlands, waterways, forests, wildlife habitats, working farms, ranches, conservation areas, and other open spaces. Green infrastructure recognizes the need to balance the social, ecosystem, and watershed context of the community. The local jurisdictions provide planning, acquisition, protection, and development guidelines policies for establishing and maintaining these natural resource areas of the community as a basic component of the community's interconnected systems. Green infrastructure provides a platform to link national, state, and local conservation policy. It also acts as a rational backdrop to urban development smart growth policy and initiatives. In Maryland, the goal of its statewide smart growth policy is to have a green infrastructure annual budget similar to budgets for roads, sewers and other public services.

Pima County Issues

- 1. The cumulative impacts to riparian habitats and our riverine systems are not being accounted for by our current ordinances.** In 1986 and 1997 the voters approved bonds to purchase high value riparian areas within the County. These measures will reduce, but not stop or reverse the rate of loss or riparian vegetation. Additionally, not all communities have adopted ordinances protecting their riparian areas, nor do existing ordinances address attrition ongoing in natural areas.
- 2. An open space planning category on state or private land requires a one residence per acre option.** Growing Smarter Plus states that if the County designates private land or state land as open space, recreation, conservation or agriculture in the comprehensive plan without the written consent of the land owner, the County must also have an alternative land use designation which allows at least one residential unit per acre. It further mandates an award of attorneys fees to a land owner who prevails in a lawsuit to enforce the statute.
- 3. The downzoning statute restricts land use development standards changes to adapt to growth issues.** State statutes also state any changes in the zoning classification of the land or a restriction of the use or reduction of the value of the land cannot be done without the written consent of the property owner.

4. **Regional agreement on the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan(SDCP) is not finalized.** The Preliminary Biological Reserve of the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan currently covers large acreage of State and private land. Adaptive management strategies include approaches such as transfer of development rights, which is not a process allowed under state statutes. The County is still studying how land and development rights acquisition, voluntary conservation easements, and land use controls will work.

B. USE LAND EFFICIENTLY

The Concept

The principle to use land efficiently supports preservation of natural resources. To limit urban encroachment into natural areas, a need arises for development standards supporting compact development including infill development and moderate street and parking standards. Further, to encourage compact development, cooperative regional growth management is needed.

With a community committed to a more compact urban form opportunities arise to allow for more neighborhood parks, lessened dependence on the car, reduced energy consumption, and air pollution. Compact form also supports a more cost effective infrastructure than does low density fringe development. Additionally, compact form should enhance the architectural attractiveness of the community.

Pima County Issues

Regarding efficient land use, unincorporated Pima County traditionally tends toward low density areas that run counter to using land efficiently. Low density represents a cherished lifestyle and has appeal in the short run for the economy. However, it is not sustainable in the long term growth of the community as can be seen in the shortfalls in our ability to provide a compatible low density, car-oriented transportation system. Below is a list of issues the County faces:

1. **High density comprehensive plan categories are consistently underzoned.** The main planning categories of the Comprehensive Plan for high density development are Medium Intensity Urban (MIU) at a maximum ten residence per acre and Medium High Intensity Urban at twenty-four residence per acre. For MIU and MIHU in actual approved rezonings the density averaged at only 2.6 and 8.08 residences per acre respectively. This represents a consistent under use of high density planning since 1992.

2. **State law continues to allow wildcat lot splitting to remain a prevalent rural land development pattern.** There is no compensating help from the state to reduce lot splitting's environmental and financial impact. In 1997, 41% of new residential dwelling units in unincorporated Pima County were in unplatted subdivisions. In a 1998 Pima County study comparing square mile sections of land with regulated subdivisions and unregulated lot splitting, regulated development averaged 458 parcels per square mile where lot split areas averaged 179 parcels.[County Administrator memo 2-24-98]
3. **Projections for continued population growth and housing demand create a land consumption dilemma.** Current conservative estimates of land consumption for urban development in Pima County is at around 7.2 square miles per year. A more concerted effort in tracking the relation among urbanizing areas, population growth rates and natural areas needs to be studied. Such a measurement standard can tell the community how well or poorly it is doing in attaining better land use efficiency.

C. USE A MIX OF DENSITIES AND TYPES OF LAND USES.

The Concept

Smart development combines many activities in the same area, reversing the pattern of single-purpose neighborhoods. The idea is to locate residents, offices, stores, schools, and recreation spaces within walking distance of each other in compact neighborhoods with pedestrian-oriented streets. This design encourages independent movement for children and the elderly to walk, cycle, or ride transit. It also promotes safety in commercial areas because of round the clock presence of people. It also reduces the need to drive and encourages shorter car trips. It allows for a variety of housing choices so an affordability strategy is ensured so young and old singles and families and those of varying economic ability may find a place to live.

Pima County Issues

In public hearings about Pima County rezonings, it is common to hear concerns about high density development, traffic congestion, and the loss of neighborhood character.

1. **A national survey is reflective of the low density land use preference of unincorporated Pima County residents.** In a 1999 national survey done by the National Association of Homebuilders, the survey reported that 77% of the respondents would oppose building single family homes at a higher density in their neighborhoods. 54% would oppose building townhomes in their neighborhoods and 78% would oppose building multifamily apartment buildings in their neighborhoods.

Furthermore, when asked if they had the option of buying a \$150,000 townhouse in an urban setting close to public transportation, work, and shopping or purchase a larger detached single family home in an outlying suburb with longer distances to work, public transportation, and shopping 83% chose the detached home in the suburban area. The results are consistent with responses from earlier surveys in 1989 and 1995. The survey questions could be considered skewed, however, the sentiments in the responses sound familiar to anyone attending Pima County rezoning public hearings.

2. **There has been a steady increase in Pima County's population regardless of policy orientation.**
 - The current population of Pima County is 866,000. Over a 35 year period regardless of anti or pro-growth sentiments Pima County has consistently added population.
 - Since 1990 the population has grown by about 17,000 new residents/6,000 new units per year.
 - In the unincorporated area, the population increased from 247,540 in 1990 to 328,000 in 2000 - an increase of 33%.
3. **Multifamily housing remains a minor portion of housing in unincorporated Pima County.**

In the last decade, for example, there were only two successes in four attempted rezonings to apartments. One of the successful ones was annexed into Tucson and the remaining one along River Road for 240 units remains unbuilt. Since 1996 only 125 townhomes and three duplexes were built. During the same time, about 3,200 apartment units were built from an inventory of past rezonings. During the same time period, 12,607 single family residences were built in the unincorporated county.
4. **The idea of a mixed use rezoning in Pima County is a rare occurrence.** Since 1990, out of 33 approved rezonings to CB-1 only one case included residential dwelling units. For the approved TR rezonings, less than one-third were for residential use. The predominant rezoning type is for single use low density zones.

D. MAKE FULL USE OF URBAN SERVICES.

The Concept

This principle's focus is on creating neighborhoods where people will have a more efficient use of existing services like water lines, sewers, roads, emergency services, and schools. Inefficient land use places a financial strain on communities trying to provide for infrastructure needs. A strategy to use efficient services to save on land acquisition, construction, and maintenance costs requires frugal land development policies.

Building more compact residential and mixed use areas does not mean all areas must be densely developed. The goal can be an average density for an area that makes full use of the urban services. Averaging allows for areas to have a mix of low and high densities. Mixing densities means having a high level of building and siting compatibility while still encouraging neighborhoods to have privacy and character.

Streets should be sized for their use. Lower density areas that have little through traffic could be served by slower, narrower streets while transportation corridors that move region-wide traffic need wider travelways.

Pima County Issues

Many places where new residences could be accommodated with the lowest cost to public infrastructure are the same places where neighbors strenuously oppose any type of infill development. There are neighborhoods in Pima County with density deficits, that is, not enough people live there to support a full array of urban services adequately.

1. **Cost of transportation improvements by 2025 will have a \$4.1 billion shortfall.** Through the year 2025 costs are projected to be \$10.37 billion and the revenue projected for the same time period is \$6.6 billion leading up to the \$4.1 billion shortfall.
2. **The current transportation impact fee in the years it has been in effect has raised only enough money to build one mile of a four-lane road.** Since the \$5 million dollars generated by the impact fee program is spread across and restricted to several benefit areas, however, we currently have not been able to offset any costs of growth.
3. **Population increases will require a more updated wastewater management infrastructure.** The current fee system is structured to recover the operations and maintenance, repair, rehabilitation, and replacement cost of the sewer system on a regional basis. In 1997 Pima County had 2,700 miles of sewer serving about 184,000 customers.
 - Infill incentive programs may occur in areas at conveyance capacity and cannot accept additional flows without a surcharge costs to help finance upgrading the system.
 - The sewer system has never lead growth but follows where growth occurs. Any added capacity improvements if done in advance by the County will need a payment formula so new development is eventually paid for by the developer and residents.
 - Some parts of the current regional conveyance system were constructed in the 1920's.

4. Septic system development continues to grow in the unincorporated County.

- A 1998 Wastewater Department report stated an estimated 52,405 households would be on septic by 2000. The county is adding to septic development by 1,100 units per year.
- An outer ring of septic development areas continues to grow in Avra Valley, Picture Rocks, Saguaro National Park East vicinity, Rincon Valley, Sahuarita Road Corridor, and Santa Rita Foothills with each property served by a separate septic system.
- The proliferation of septic systems that are not properly maintained poses a long term threat to groundwater pollution from leaking waste that may infiltrate through the soil to the aquifers below. The responsibility of maintenance to assure no leaking wastes on all of the approximate 50,000 septic units falls on the individual owners without government oversight.
- Septic tanks do not allow for the use of effluent as reclaimed water but instead the septic effluent can become a pollutant.
- Septic development has no incentive to connect with the expansion of sewer service connecting nearby higher density development thus underutilizing a nearby new sewer system.

5. In developing recreation parks land availability and specific population needs do not always match. Certain areas of the county present few opportunities for park development where needs exist. Lighting of many existing parks would increase their use by youth sports groups. However, the lighting could be considered intrusive by nearby neighborhoods.

6. There is no comprehensive process to address the cost of development throughout the region. The concept of development paying for itself is popular and stated in the Growing Smarter Plus statute, yet it is unclear what that entails. Urban services could include everything from roads, sewers, landfills, police, indigent care, schools, parks, justice system, libraries, administration and so on.

7. The Pima County property tax base has declined substantially since 1977 when viewed on a per capita basis. At the same time the tax structure of Arizona county governments rely heavily on property tax as a source of revenue. Counties within a national study that had populations ranging from 750,000 to 850,000 tend to have budgets ranging from \$1.1 billion to \$1.8 billion approximately twice the Pima County budget in 97/98.

E. SUPPORT MORE THAN ONE TRANSPORTATION OPTION.

The Concept

Smart Growth requires transportation to be safe, convenient, and interesting in the context of several options. These performance factors affect sidewalks, street and transit stop design, placement of parking, and location of buildings fronts, doors and windows. Properly designed bike lanes and sidewalks protect people from traffic accidents. A connected network of streets provides a community convenience by furnishing alternative routes within neighborhoods and reasonable walking distances between destinations.

A properly designed network also promotes neighborhood safety by routing heavy traffic around neighborhoods without sacrificing street connectivity. Studies show people are unwilling to walk farther than about 300 feet through a parking lot to reach a desired destination yet will walk three times that distance along a street of storefronts.

Providing compact mixed use development connected by safe convenient and interesting networks of streets and paths promotes walking, cycling and transit as viable attractive alternatives to driving. Building compact development near transit stops can also encourage less traffic congestion and air pollution. Having a variety of uses necessary to support transit and alternative routes thereby dispersing traffic congestion lowers traffic speeds can make neighborhoods safer.

Pima County Issues

There are practical issues complicating the increase of transportation options in Pima County related to jurisdiction control of the transit service and transportation funding. Below is a list of key transportation issues facing Pima County and surrounding jurisdictions.

- 1. Vehicle miles traveled (VMT) continue to increase at a much higher rate than population increases.** From 1990 to 1995 population increased by 12% and VMTs increased by 30%. VMTs estimated from the year 2000 to 2025 is expected to increase by 75% while population will increase by about 66%.
- 2. Travel under heavily congested roadway conditions is expected to increase in the future.** Pima Association of Governments reports that overall daily person trips between 2000 and 2025 are expected to increase by about 60%. Trips by automobile are expected to increase from 2.8 to 4.5 million per day, while trips by transit are expected to increase from 65,000 to 108,300 per day. From 2000 to 2025, heavily congested roadways will increase by 31%. Travel under severe congestion, however, is expected to increase from about 5% in 2000 to 23% in 2025. This is a direct result of the region's inability to finance capacity improvements at the level needed to deal with system needs.

3. **Costs per bus passenger are rising faster than revenues per bus passenger. Additional revenues dedicated to transit services will be necessary to maintain the existing transit system.** During fiscal year 1999-2000 the City of Tucson's Sun Tran's total cost per passenger was \$1.91. Farebox revenues provide 21.4% of this cost. The total cost per mile operating costs have grown from \$1.79 in 1980 to \$3.65 in 99-00.
4. **County-wide transit service will continue to serve between 2% and 2.5% of total person trips regionally even with the expansion of the urban service area.**
5. **Bikeway routes are anticipated to double from the existing 488 miles to 976 miles within the next 10 years with a goal of reaching a total of 1,388 bikeway miles by the year 2020.**

F. SUPPORT A RESPONSIBLE REGIONALISM OF GROWTH.

The Concept

As metropolitan areas grow and become decentralized, urban problems seem to frustrate both national and local attempts at solutions. National solutions are often too generic and ill-fitting to be effective. It is unclear whether tools available to municipal or county government can address the physical, social, economic, and environmental problems encountered. Rapid growth, fragmented decision making, the size of the fringe suburbs, the lack of a regional vision, and outdated land use techniques are interrelated and act as barriers to the community at large to deal with community problems. Local solutions are often narrow, not taking into account cross jurisdictional impacts, or too reactive, rather than proactive. What we need may lie in strategies that attack local problems with the planning and financial resources of the entire region.

Pima County Issues

1. **Regional governmental cooperation on growth areas is held together only by voluntary efforts. There are six jurisdictions making fragmented land use decisions.** There is an opportunity to think in regional terms on the location of growth areas. It may occur later once the individual jurisdictions adopt their general plans and have some experience with the growth area concept.
2. **There will be increasing pressure for federal compliance on local land use decision-making.** While the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan will move Pima County towards compliance with the Endangered Species Act and Clean Water Act, there will still need to be regional monitoring of compliance with the Clean Air Act.

G. DESIGN URBAN SETTINGS AT A HUMAN SCALE RATHER THAN AT CAR-ORIENTED SCALE ONLY.

The Concept

Community acceptance of compact, mixed use development requires building design to ensure privacy, safety, visual coherency, and architectural attractiveness. The effective use of building orientation to the street, the presence of windows, doors, porches, and other architectural elements and effective use of landscaping all contribute to successful compatibility among diverse building types.

Designing at a human scale design versus the car-oriented scale supports streets and paths as preferred routes for pedestrians, and cyclists while creating a calmer environment for motorists. Smart street design considers the role of pedestrians and the relationship with car traffic. Having on-street parking may be a hindrance to a car-oriented arterial but can be a traffic calming benefit by reducing speeding and creating a protective sidewalk environment.

Designing streets with pedestrian-oriented uses ensures more balance among pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists and promotes the development of community through the informal meeting of neighbors. The ambience of safety comes from neighbors knowing each other and watching over each others homes.

Pima County Issues

- 1. Past planning has emphasized car-oriented development.** The Catalina Zoning Plan is a prime example of a single use car-oriented development outcome, even though the concept of a pedestrian-oriented village center was first offered in this plan from the early 1960's. The development market then and now favors development accommodating the near unlimited mobility of the car.
- 2. The major County road system is an arterial road system that tends to be pedestrian hostile.** There is no class of roads in Pima County that could easily be transformed into a road with traffic calming on-street parking, pedestrian sidewalks, and a mixed use land pattern.
- 3. The unincorporated county has tended to grow as an urban edge to the City of Tucson and has few core areas in which to build human scale development.** Community opposition remains strong against mixing densities and uses during the rezoning process. In addition, reliance on an arterial road system has encouraged car-oriented commercial development to become the expected norm.

H. HAVE A REASONABLE DEVELOPMENT REVIEW PROCESS.

The Concept

Smart growth requires an examination of its development review processes. A review should focus on ways the process can be streamlined so developers are encouraged to apply the smart growth principles.

Costly delays due in part to inflexible standards will almost certainly doom any innovative approach. Providing for flexibility and certainty in the application of standards including providing for performance standards and administrative approval of minor variances can help promote creative development that complies with the principles.

Creation of a more flexible zoning district like a planned unit development (PUD) process can also relieve some of the regulatory barriers for developers and lighten the administrative load for planners as can adopting a flexible process for applying design review standards.

Incentives for redevelopment, infill and target growth area concepts should be part of a review process that encourages the ends the local government is trying to accomplish.

Pima County Issues

- 1. The current cluster option process is seldom used because of the complexities in preparing a submittal.** Further, the process can raise neighborhood complaints because the developable area usually will have lots smaller than the typical adjoining neighborhood's lots. Only five were done in the last five years.
- 2. The current specific plan process which would allow for mixed use proposals can be complicated for infill development.** This ordinance is due for a revision. With infill opportunities in designated growth areas and the need to coordinate development activity with the State on State Trust Lands the specific plan could be a useful zoning tool to accomplish urban and environmental objectives.
- 3. The tracking of development, for example septic development and unpaved roads can be improved from current practices.** The current information needs to be studied for improvements to insure this information is available to policy makers as land development policies are formulated.

V. Smart Growth Policy Considerations for Pima County

Below is a list of policy considerations to begin addressing growth issues in Pima County as they relate to smart growth principles. Some considerations are from previous County Administrator memos to the Board of Supervisors, and some are preliminary in nature and need further revision and drafting to address growth problems. In some cases, the policy considerations overlap into several principles.

A. Considerations Supporting a Region-wide Green Infrastructure

1. **Provide a zoning framework for preserving rural land uses consistent with open space preservation.** The classification would carry a minimum lot size of about twenty acres with a restriction that majority of the property should remain open space. Such a change is likely to be controversial but it is a strategy to confine continued rural lot splitting and has been used in other communities throughout the country. [County Administrator memo 2-24-98]
2. **Prepare a consolidated environmentally sensitive lands ordinance.** This effort is currently on-going with an appointed subcommittee the goal to develop a set of standards that considers the most environmentally sensitive features in the community and regulate them in a manner to assure comprehensiveness and flexibility while limiting internal conflicts among regulations. Also the goal is to develop a sensible wildlife impact assessment and mitigation process to better relate development to areas of sensitivity in the biological reserve areas. [County Administrator memo on Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan (SDCP) 9-26-00] The cumulative impacts of small areas of riparian disturbance in certain habitats, for example, the Tanque Verde Creek are not addressed by current ordinances. The ongoing ESLO committee is beginning to explore this issue.
3. **Ask the electorate every five years to authorize general obligation bonds to purchase open space.** The amount of bonds that would be periodically requested for authorization would be determined by an analysis of the growth in assessed value of the County over the prior five-year period. Given that approximately 75 percent of the growth in assessed value has been due to new construction, future open space acquisitions would be largely financed by new development. [SDCP 9-26-00]
4. **Amend the buffer overlay zone (BZ) to eliminate golf courses as a method of achieving the 50% open space requirement and develop ecological based buffers around public preserves rather than follow the geographic land survey boundaries.** This change has already been adopted into the BZ regulations which state, "All other functional open space including golf courses shall receive no credit towards natural open space requirements." [SDCP 9-26-00]

5. **Limit development on protected peaks and ridges.** There is an on-going process developing a classification system and attempting to balance environmentally sensitive land, watershed protection, and property rights. The original 1998 direction of the Board is an ongoing research project with a pilot project in the process involving the Tucson Mountains. The analysis is complicated by the level of resources and financial investment needed to complete the orthophotography analysis and the number of mountain ranges (20) requiring in depth study.
6. **Use effluent as a consistent renewable resource that can be used to enhance riparian areas and replace groundwater pumping.** The Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan already displays many riparian restoration sites using effluent throughout the major riparian corridors of Eastern Pima County. Effluent can also be considered for golf course irrigation. However, prioritizing of effluent use will become more important in the future, and recharge for groundwater pumping will be a priority use.
7. **Consider regional water conservation fees.** To conserve water resources, the Board should consider adopting a water conservation sewer impact fee with the proceeds of the fee dedicated to water conservation programs such as mandatory plumbing retrofit requirements upon the sale of residential and nonresidential property. [SDCP 9-26-00]
8. **Consider a revision to the landscaping standards to have a water harvesting reviewed during site planning.** Pima County Planning and Zoning Commission has also shown interest in Pima County pursuing this type of review.
9. **Evaluate the effectiveness of mitigation plantings for the native plant preservation ordinance and the riparian habitat ordinance.** With the advent of the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan, an effective on-site monitoring program needs to be in place to ensure the desired results are being attained.

B. Considerations to Use Land Efficiently

1. **Focus rezoning review on land use efficiency.** There has never been a need to concentrate on land use efficiency because it has always been readily available. The development interests focus on market trends and the expectations of conservative lending institutions, while homeowner groups focus on privacy and keeping the status quo character of the neighborhood. These types of concerns have had a major influence and guided land use decision beyond land use efficiency concerns.
2. **Consider how subregions should be looked at for land consumption tendencies and what opportunities for compact development exist or better circulation efficiency can be obtained.** Creating more compact development opportunities contains as many threats to existing residential areas as it contains opportunities to the community at large in slowing land consumption. Compact development schemes when developed as infill areas must strike a balance among attractiveness and livability features for the development while creating multimodal transportation options and addressing existing neighborhood privacy and character concerns.

3. **Revise the cluster development option to make it a more appealing development process.** The current process is cumbersome and avoided by developers because of the complications. A simpler administrative process modeled on the recently adopted conservation subdivision ordinance tied more closely to conservation concepts may be more attractive to use.
4. **Consider setting minimum density standards for planning categories to discourage underplanning of areas.** The concept of a minimum standard was originally an early idea developed during the 1992 Comprehensive Plan process. It was rejected at the Planning and Zoning Commission level and never resurfaced. Any acceptance of higher densities should be connected with design standards promoting a more attractive and liveable community. Maryland requires a density standard in its priority funding areas for infrastructure fixes and expansions. It combines state and local commitment to the concept.
5. **Promote conservation subdivisions in low density areas.** In support of providing the community with a variety of housing types, the development of designated low density areas need to be facilitated by standards that evaluate and protect as best possible the natural resources in the area. The conservation subdivision approach incorporates that ideal. Weighed against this approach is better growth management of septic development expansion.

C. Considerations to Create a Better Mix of Land Uses and Densities

1. **Use specific plans to promote sustainable master planned community based on smart growth concepts.** Up to now this planning concept has tended toward golf course communities near public preserves. The master plan concept is widely accepted in the Southwest and the West. It is in the County's best interest to encourage specific plans that promote mixed use communities that encourage conservation-based planning.
2. **Create a planned unit development concept to retrofit areas of low density sprawl.** This concept would require further research as a zoning code text amendment. It would be best used as an infill development concept for mixed uses and densities in areas where the opportunities for multimodal development exist.

D. Considerations Making Full Use of Our Urban Services

Below is a list of policy considerations offered to the Board of Supervisors in the last few years that represent attempts to begin moving toward the smart growth principle of making full use of existing urban services:

1. **Use public infrastructure investment as a tool to guide urban development.** County public infrastructure has historically followed growth. Most past investments have been reactions to where urban growth has occurred and not used as policy tool to guide urban development. The County should determine where urban growth should occur with the least environmental, public, and economic cost and infrastructure investments designed to encourage development of specific geographic areas of the County. [County Administrator memo 2-24-98]
2. **Promote urban infill based on sound engineering and economic standards.** Infill is valuable but it must be measured, deliberately directed, and architecturally attractive. The County should support infill that occurs in areas where 1) there is a demonstrated surplus or availability of public infrastructure capacity in either sewer, water, street, flood control or schools; 2) Also where segments of the community are economically depressed based on national standards of income. [County Administrator memo 2-24-98]
3. **There should be no public subsidization of infrastructure in areas prone to unregulated lot splitting.** The County should not use public funds to pave roads or extend sewers to such areas. We should not place a burden on existing County residents who have moved to such areas as of a specific date selected by the Board. These areas should be grand-fathered as of a specific date selected by the Board. [County Administrator memo 2-24-98]
4. **Pursue amended state legislation that grants counties the ability to deal with the current and past lot splitting.**
 - Create a small subdivision process to regulate any new lot splitting.
 - Create a State lots split public improvement infrastructure bank for financing lot split improvements districts for existing substandard lot split areas to pay for essential public infrastructure for safety and health. An area could begin forming a lot split improvement district and apply for a grant that could be considered to pay for a significant portion of the cost of improvements.
 - Create a State-funded grant program to finance the improvement of private and public dirt roads and easements in existing areas of intensive unregulated development to reduce particulate emissions and improve regional air quality. No grant could be made to an area of lot split development to provide road enhancements unless a lot split improvement district was formed by the affected property owners to pay for a significant portion of the cost of the improvements. [County Administrator memo 9-26-00]
5. **Expand County impact fee authority to include all public facilities and services provided to growth areas such as schools, parks, solid waste, public transit and police facilities.**

6. **Continue partnering with school districts for recreation parks and extending use periods of existing sports fields by placing lighting in them.** The efficiency of placing recreational parks near neighborhoods and working with school districts needs to continue. The use of unobtrusive lighting fixtures needs to be explored to ensure the efficient use of recreational parks.
7. **Consider a priority funding area approach to target growth areas under Growing Smarter Plus.** As growth areas are modeled to accept higher densities and create infill and economic development, areas judged most suitable for growth may receive priority funding for public works projects over other areas. An area designated for new residential communities which meet certain density and mixed use standards could also be included in a priority funding concept.

E. Considerations to Have More than One Transportation Option

1. **The regional pedestrian system needs to be inventoried and assessed. Further an improvement program needs to be developed and prioritized.** The 2000 Regional Pedestrian Plan set out the commitment of PAG member jurisdictions to plan for pedestrian travel in both urban and suburban settings, however, resources are not in place to begin this effort.

F. Considerations Obtain Responsible Regionalism of Growth

1. **Increase jurisdictional cooperation on urban growth.** Each of six jurisdictions determines land use policy. There needs to be increasing cooperation on land use decisions. Each jurisdiction should define within their boundaries where growth should occur accomplishing minimal environmental and public costs as well as promote infill areas. [County Administrator memo 2-24-98]
2. **Become a development partner with the State Land Department.** State Land controls about 40 square miles of trust land within the boundary of City of Tucson. The land is prime for development and can be made to be consistent with county goals and objectives. The properties should be encouraged to enter the development market through rezoning and infrastructure investment. [County Administrator memo 2-24-98]
3. **Consider a regional transportation impact fee.** The Board should consider asking other jurisdictions to adopt a uniform transportation impact fee with the proceeds of all fees being deposited in a single regional account and funding distributed to resolve the most severe congestion problems in the region without regard to jurisdictional boundary. [SDCP 9-26-00]

4. **Support master planning/specific plans to comply with the regional growth area element of the jurisdictions comprehensive/general plans.** The City of Tucson suggests the development of 'desert villages' for growth occurring on future expansion to State Trust Lands. The development of urban cores with a conservation identity in future expansion areas is a more sensible regional strategy in comparison to single use, car-oriented, golf course community residential tracts that is more representative of the market trends of the present.
5. **Consider a transit district zoning with it own set of minimum required densities for key designations to help shape regional compact development.** More emphasis on building growth areas around transit stops is being used as a strategy in other smart growth communities. The time may have come for more regional coordination on this concept.
6. **Consider investing in computing resources to perform regional land use image analysis to monitor the on-going relationship between the urbanized area and the Biological Reserve.** With the scientific approach toward the development of the SDCP a similar reliance on tracking of urban land should be studied to better understand actual land consumption in relation to population growth rates as compared to policy objectives about land consumption.

G. Considerations to Achieve the Development of Human Scale Urban Settings

1. **Strengthen standards to express our southwestern heritage.** Urban Design Commission and ULI work needs to be reviewed to create development standards consistent with Pima County's southwestern heritage. [County Administrator memo 2-24-98]

H. Considerations Having a Reasonable Development Review Process

1. **Strengthen development standards.** Standards need to protect the natural environment to ensure connectivity with preserved lands. [County Administrator memo-2-24-98]
2. **Strengthen long range comprehensive land use planning resources.** One idea is to increase professional planning staff in the Development Services Department to not only react by commenting on private land use proposals, but to proactively provide alternative design concepts that promote natural and cultural resource protection and quality urban design and minimize resource consumption. [County Administrator memo 9-26-00]

VI. Conclusion

This report focused on eight principles of smart growth to begin modeling governmental decision making. The principles envision a future where the green systems of the environment are balanced against the gray systems of the urbanizing areas for people. Increasing spending on infrastructure, relying more on densification of urban areas and on transit services are not widely popular solutions to the problems the County faces. As future decision makers make decisions on funding choices, intergovernmental relationships, land use, natural resource systems, infrastructure systems, and governmental development processes, if the focus of future plan updates and annual amendments engage principle-based continuous improvement in these areas we will be moving towards a growth management process that can better weather the future crises and population growth problems the future holds.