

## Promoting Public Health through Community Planning: Using a Smart Growth Lens



Presentation to Vancouver  
Coastal Health Authority - RHS  
April 25, 2007

Tom Lancaster / Cheeying Ho  
Smart Growth BC



## Outline

- Smart Growth BC
- Impacts of current planning system
- Summary of research findings and Smart Growth BC report
- Principles of smart growth
- Role of health agencies
- A smart growth perspective of the Richmond City Centre Plan



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## Smart Growth BC

Founded in 1999, Smart Growth BC is a non-profit, non-government organization with a mandate to create more livable communities in British Columbia



- Research
- Advice and Assistance
- Policy Alternatives
- Outreach and Community Engagement
- Professional Development
- Implementation
- Advisory Services

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## What is smart growth?

- Smart Growth is a collection of development strategies that
  - ✓ enhances our quality of life,
  - ✓ protects our environment, and
  - ✓ uses tax revenues wisely
- Managing growth
- Providing choice

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## Smart Growth is...

More transportation choices and less traffic	Not against cars and roads
Vibrant cities, suburbs and towns	Not anti-suburban
Wider variety of housing choices	Not about telling people where or how to live
Well-planned growth that improves quality of life	Not against growth

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## What's wrong with the current system?

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## Environmental Impacts

- Air pollution
- Excess pavement and habitat loss
- Disposal of used cars/parts



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## Financial Impacts

- Costs to individuals to buy, insure, maintain, and gas up:
  - CAA estimates about \$8,000/year
- Costs to taxpayers of building and repairing roads, bridges, parking lots, stormwater systems...
  - \$70 billion in GTA over next 25 years

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## Social Impacts

- Loss of community identity and uniqueness
- Lack of housing and transportation choices
- Lack of access to services and amenities



## Health Impacts

- Air pollution
- Traffic accidents
- Physical activity, obesity, cardiovascular disease



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## Research findings

- In the last 20 years, child obesity rates have quintupled in Canada (Centre for Health Promotion Studies).
- In 1981, 10.6% of Canadian boys and 13.1% of Canadian girls were overweight or obese, compared to 29% of boys and 27% of girls in 2000/01 (Heart and Stroke Foundation).
- The number of fast food outlets decreases with neighbourhood wealth (Centre for Health Promotion Studies).

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## SMARTRAQ

- Every additional 30 minutes a person spends in a car translates into a 3 percent greater chance of being obese.
- People who live in neighborhoods with a mix of shops and businesses within easy walking distance are 7 percent less likely to be obese, lowering their relative risk of obesity by 35 percent.

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## Ontario College of Family Physicians

### Report on Public Health and Urban Sprawl in Ontario

- **Sprawling** urban developments lead to **increased driving** which contributes to increased **air pollution** with negative impacts on human health
- People who live in spread-out, car-dependent neighborhoods are likely to walk less, weigh more, and suffer from **obesity** and **high blood pressure** and consequent **diabetes, cardio-vascular** and other diseases, as compared to people who live in more efficient, higher density communities
- Urban (or suburban) sprawl leads to increased traffic, which in turn leads to **increased accidents and fatalities** (motorists, pedestrians and cyclists), as well as negative **mental health impacts** (stress, road rage and anxiety).

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## Heart and Stroke Foundation 2005 Report Card

### Has the American Dream Gone Sour?

- Car-dependent Canadians get far less physical activity and are at increased risk of being overweight or obese.
- Almost 50% of Canadian adults and 37% of Canadian children are now either overweight or obese.
- Individuals living in moderate-to-high density neighbourhoods that have community and commercial services within walking distance of where they live, are 2.4 times more likely to meet this 30-minute daily minimum [recommendation to be physically active].



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## Smart Growth BC Report

### "Promoting Public Health through Smart Growth" (2006)

- Examines the relationships between urban form, transportation patterns and physical activity.
- Explains how our built environment shapes our transportation choices, and in turn, human health.

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## Smart Growth BC Report

### Findings:

- The three most important factors linked to increased walking were density, land use mix and connectivity.
- Residents of smart growth communities walk and bicycle more and drive less than residents of more isolated, automobile-dependent locations.
- This results in measurably better physical fitness, and reduced likelihood of obesity.

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## Street connectivity



Dr. Lawrence Frank, UBC

Images are the same scale, approximately 1.6 square km

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## Specific findings

- Linkages between school siting and children's travel patterns.
- Programs to promote physical activity in school activities and other interventions have only met with limited success.
- Building the opportunity to be physically active into daily routines is the most effective way to improve community fitness.

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## How do we plan our communities smarter and healthier?

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## 1. Mix land uses



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## 2. Build compact, walkable neighbourhoods

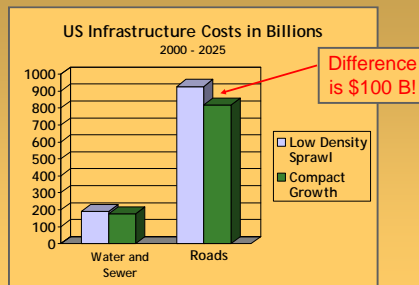


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## Costs of Services



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### 3. Provide transportation choices and efficient public transit

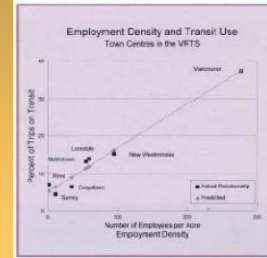
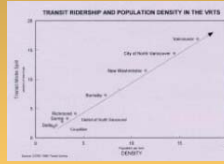


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### Density and transit usage



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### 4. Create diverse housing opportunities



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### Housing Choice



What type of housing is missing in your community?...How might that impact you or your family?...Who doesn't fit this "middle-class" mold?

### 5. Encourage growth in existing areas



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## Smart Growth Infill

- Utilizes existing infrastructure
- Builds upon existing community assets
- Can help revitalize and strengthen neighbourhoods

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## Infill Development

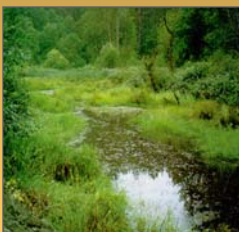


Urban-Advantage.com

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## 6. Preserve open spaces, natural beauty and environmentally sensitive areas



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## 7. Protect and enhance agricultural lands



The agricultural sector provides 50% of BC's food needs and \$2B/year in economic activity

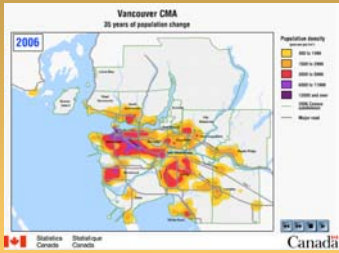


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## Urban containment



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## South West Richmond - 1954



## South West Richmond - 1984



## South West Richmond - 1995



## South West Richmond - today



## 8. Utilize smarter and cheaper infrastructure and buildings

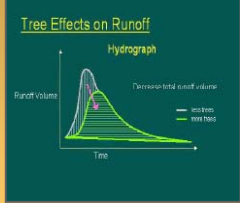


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## Tree Canopy



An urban and residential area of 700 acres, with 20% tree canopy coverage:

- saves approx. \$1.2 million in stormwater infrastructure
- stores 50 tons of carbon dioxide annually
- additional tree canopy coverage = more cost savings

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## 9. Foster a unique neighbourhood identity



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## 10. Nurture engaged citizens



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## Role of health agencies

- Coordinate health planning and goals with transportation and land use planning
- Include in educational campaigns the impacts of the built environment and transportation choices
- Support research and programs linking physical environment and health
- Promote the protection of farmland as a strategy for providing healthy, local food choices

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For more information

[www.smartgrowth.bc.ca](http://www.smartgrowth.bc.ca)

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