FUTURE

SMART GROWTH SCORECARD —
Proposed Developments

An easy-to-use scorecard for identifying Smart Growth strengths and weaknesses in proposed development.

Scorecards are complimentary upon request. Membership support of New Jersey Future and its non-profit research and policy work is welcome. To become a member, and to learn more about our efforts to bring smarter growth to New Jersey, visit our website at www.njfuture.org or call 609/393-0008.

What is Smart Growth?

Smart Growth means adding new homes, new offices and businesses and new jobs to New Jersey's economy in a way that enhances the communities where we already live — without requiring higher taxes, adding to our road and traffic woes and without consuming or polluting our remaining farmland, beachfronts, woodlands and open spaces.

How do you know Smart Growth when you see it?

Smart Growth has two primary features: the "where" and the "how." It happens "where" development can be accommodated with minimal adverse impact to the environment, and in places where development takes maximum advantage of public investments already made. Smart Growth also addresses "how" the finished development will work with neighboring development to restore choices that are missing in places marked by sprawl: such as the choice to walk or use public transit, the choice to meet neighbors in attractive common spaces, or the choice to live in an apartment, a house, or a condominium.

About this scorecard

This scorecard is as much a conceptual model as it is a practical tool. It should be viewed as a way to help citizens and local officials evaluate development proposals and the potential benefits and drawbacks they may bring to the community. The card is best applied to larger projects, which tend to have larger implications for smart growth, but is a useful exercise for most development proposals.

It is important to note that local zoning and accompanying community requirements may not permit an applicant to build to the standards set in this scorecard. In such cases, those concerned about bringing smarter growth to their community will want to work with local leaders on improving zoning and local master plans to encourage these general criteria:

General criteria for Smart Growth

- Located near existing development and infrastructure
- Increases the range of housing options
- Protects open space, farmland and critical environmental areas
- Creates or enhances a vibrant mix of uses (residential, retail, office)
- Creates or enhances choices for getting around
- Walkable, designed for personal interaction
- Respects community character, design and historic features

Directions:

The scorecard is broken up into seven sections, one for each Smart Growth criterion. Simply read through the sections and circle the best answer for each measurement listed. Some questions might require additional information from your local planning and zoning office. The measurements are weighted differently so that the maximum score for each measurement reflects its importance to Smart Growth goals. To calculate the score, multiply the points for a given answer by the measurement's weight and enter it into the score column. Add up the scores for each measurement and write that number (subtotal) in the space provided.

I. Near existing development and infrastructure –
Makes the most of limited public resources and builds on public investments already made. Upgrading existing infrastructure and services is more efficient than building new in previously undeveloped areas. Creates opportunity for infill or redevelopment of under-utilized, abandoned and brownfield sites.

Measurement	Answer	Points	Weight	Score
Project is located adjacent to existing infrastructure: roads, water and sewer	Existing service Less than 1/4 mile 1/4 to 1/2 mile 1/2+ mile(s)	3 2 1 0	X 4	
Project is in State Plan Planning Area 1 or 2, a designated center (according to the State Plan) and/or a designated Area in Need of Redevelopment	Yes No	1 0	X 2	
Project is near at least three of the following – housing, restaurants, retail/convenience/services, schools, recreation centers, offices	Less than 1/4 mile 1/4 to 1/2 mile 1/2 to 3/4 mile 3/4 to 1 mile 1+ miles	4 3 2 1 0	X 2	
Project requires new/additional services and/or facilities (fire, police, school)	Not needed Needed	1 0	X 2	
			Subtotal	

II. Range of housing options –
Offers a range of housing types and sizes. Increases the choices available to households of all income levels.

Measurement	Answer	Points	Weight	Score
Project offers a mix of housing types and sizes (apartments, condos, townhouses, single-family, studios, 1BR, 2BR, 3BR, etc.)	Yes No	1 0	X 3	
Project has units with a wide-range of pricing options that will be sold or leased, with at least 15 percent priced as affordable housing	Yes No	1 0	X 2	
Project contributes to community's fair share of affordable housing (COAH number)	Yes No	1 0	X 2	
			Subtotal	

III. Protects open space, farmland and critical environmental areas –
Benefits the general public as it spares watersheds, scenic vistas and agricultural areas needed for drinking water, farm and tourism revenues and strong quality of life.

Measurement	Answer	Points	Weight	Score
Project avoids critical environmental areas (State Plan Planning Area 5, prime watersheds, unbroken forest and grassland areas, critical wildlife areas/wildlife habitat)	Yes No	1 0	X 3	
Project located on land that is physically suitable for development (avoids steep slopes greater than 20 percent, floodplains, stream corridors, aquifers and aquifer recharge areas)	Yes No	1 0	X 2	
Project does not intrude into agricultural and/or open lands	Yes No	1 0	X 2	
Project cleans up a brownfield site	Yes No	1 0	X 2	
Project is energy efficient (example: exceeds standards in NJ energy code, meets standards of NJ Energy Star Homes program, etc.)	Yes No	1 0	X 2	
Project uses at least 30 percent recycled or "low impact" building materials	Yes No	1 0	X 1	
			Subtotal	

IV. Mix of uses – Creates a vibrant community where places to work, shop, live and play are integrated.

Measurement	Answer	Points	Weight	Score
Project is mixed use (any combination of housing, retail, office, commercial, public buildings, etc.)	4+ uses 3 uses 2 uses 1 use	3 2 1 0	X 2	
Project provides a new type of development to an existing neighborhood such as employment, housing, retail, civic, educational, cultural, recreation, neighborhood-serving retail/service	4 uses added 3 uses added 2 uses added 1 use added 0 uses added	4 3 2 1 0	X 2	
Project adds to the diversity of uses within an existing community	Yes No	1 0	X 3	
			Subtotal	

V. Choices for Getting Around – Sited near existing transit service to decrease dependency on the automobile, thereby reducing traffic and encouraging walkability (see VI. below).

Measurement	Answer	Points	Weight	Score
Project is accessible by multiple modes of transportation (auto, bus, rail, walking, biking)	4+ modes 3 modes 2 modes	2 1 0	X 4	
Project is in walking distance to public transit (bus, rail, jitney)	Less than 5 mins 6-10 minutes 11-15 minutes 16-20 minutes 20+ minutes	4 3 2 1 0	X 2	
Project has an interconnected road system without cul-de-sacs OR the project is located on an existing street network that is interconnected	Yes No	1 0	X 2	
			Subtotal	

VI. Walkable, designed for personal interaction – Designed at the human scale, rather than for the automobile, to help reduce traffic and create places with increased potential for social interaction, walking and sense of community.

Measurement	Answer	Points	Weight	Score
For residential: Average number of dwelling units/acre (including on-site right-of-way and open space) **For commercial:** High floor-area ratio (exclude structured parking and right-of-way)	14+ DU/acre 10-13 DU/acre 7-9 DU/acre 4-6 DU/acre < 4 DU/acre —or— 1.0+ FAR .76 - 1.0 FAR .51 - .75 FAR .4 - .5 FAR < .4 FAR	4 3 2 1 0 4 3 2 1 0	X 2	
Project parking is located where it does not visually dominate the development from the street and allows easy and safe pedestrian access to buildings	Parking in rear Structured parking On-street parking Lot in front	3 2 1 0	X 2	
Project density is equal to or greater than that of surrounding areas	Greater density Equal density Lower density	2 1 0	X 1	
			Subtotal	

VII. Respectful of community character and design –
In keeping with the local architecture, especially in historically significant areas. Enhances the community's desirability as a place to live, work, shop and recreate.

Measurement	Answer	Points	Weight	Score
Project reuses or rehabilitates existing and/or historic structures	Yes No	1 0	X 3	
Project building design follows existing or desired architectural style	Yes No	1 0	X 1	
Project contributes to public streetscape with pedestrian-friendly amenities such as benches, lighting, street trees, trash cans, and windows at street level	Yes No	1 0	X 1	
Project creates or enhances community spaces such as public plazas, squares, parks, etc.	Yes No	1 0	X 1	
			Subtotal	

Final calculations:

1. Starting at Table I below, enter the subtotals for each section into Column 2 (Section Scores).
2. Divide Column 2 by Column 1 (Total Possible) and enter that number into Column 3(Calculation).
3. Multiply Column 3 by 100 and enter that number into Column 4. This is the Final Score for the section.
4. Using Table II below, enter the letter grade for each section into Column 5. This is the Final score for the section.

Once the calculations are complete, take a look at the areas in need of improvement. Does the project score well in terms of proximity to infrastructure, but poorly in terms of its proximity to public transit and other choices for getting around? Is the building design in keeping with the local architectural style, but inaccessible to pedestrian traffic? Making determinations of this nature will help guide a new development in the right direction, toward Smart Growth.

TABLE I

Smart Growth Criteria	Column 1 Total Possible	Column 2 Section Scores	Column 3 Calculation (Col 2/Col 1)	Column 4 Final Score (Col 3 x 100)	Column 5 Final Grade (A-F)
I. Near existing development and infrastructure	24				
II. Range of housing options*	7				
III. Protects open space, farmland and critical environmental areas	12				
IV. Mix of uses	17				
V. Provides choices for getting around	18				
VI. Walkable, designed for personal interaction	16				
VII. Respectful of community character, design and historic features	6				
TOTAL OVER ALL CRITERIA	**100**				

* If there is no housing component to the project under review, deduct 7 points from column 1, bringing the total possible to 93 points. Divide the total for column 2 by the new total possible (93 points) to find the project's overall score.

TABLE II

Final Score	Letter Grade
100 – 90	A
89 – 80	B
79 – 70	C
69 – 60	D
59 – 0	F