



Sustainable Land Use Pledge

For more information, see www.sustainablejersey.com.

The Sustainable Land Use Pledge is a public affirmation of a municipality's intent to support sustainable smart growth land-use policies. This tool provides a model resolution to be adopted by a municipality as a first step toward community sustainability. The adoption of the resolution commits the municipality to a thoughtful, longer-term re-evaluation of current land use practices and planning policies. The result will be land-use decisions that balance economic, environmental, and social needs and provide the highest possible quality of life for all residents.

Who should lead and be involved with this action?

The Mayor and governing body, by necessity, as well as the municipal Green Team, Planning and Zoning Boards, and the Environmental Commission should all be engaged to build community and political support for and awareness of the adoption of this resolution.

Timeframe

This resolution, with expected municipal legal review and local tailoring, could be adopted within three to six months.

Project Costs and Resource Needs

Depending upon the level of legal review and local tailoring, adoption of this pledge resolution should result in few if any costs beyond staff time. Members of the Sustainable Jersey Land Use and Transportation task force may be available to assist with general questions at no cost. Samples of adopted resolutions are available.

Why is it Important?

Where and how development takes place is one of the single largest determinants of long-term quality of life and sustainability in New Jersey and globally. Development decisions determine choices of how and where people live and move about, and have a major impact on the environmental, economic, and social conditions in the state. More recent development patterns have favored greenfield, low-density, and auto-dependant sprawl, resulting in land consumption rates that exceed population growth, loss of wildlife habitat, and impaired ecosystems, as well as urban disinvestment. This spread-out form of development has also increased the number of miles New Jerseyans drive, thereby contributing to the increase in greenhouse gas emissions from the transportation sector, 78 percent of which is attributed to private automobiles.

Smart growth land-use principles promote more sustainable development by encouraging compact, mixed-use development, varied housing opportunities, transportation options beyond passenger cars, and low-impact design. This form of development allows people to drive less by putting places to work, live, and play in closer proximity, allowing for more time spent with family and community.

The Sustainable Land Use Pledge reflects a municipality's intention to manage development and redevelopment in a way that is more protective of the environment and more livable for residents. While it is only a first step toward the planning and zoning changes that are ultimately needed to reinforce the goals of sustainable land use, the pledge commits your municipality to redirect future policy and decision-making within the community. Additionally, the act of approving a formal resolution is intended to initiate a public discussion of the issues and engage community members to pursue sustainable development.

What to do, and how to do it (“How to”)

Below we have listed the requirements for earning points for this action.

1. The governing body must adopt a Sustainable Land Use Pledge by resolution. The resolution must be in effect at the time of submission to receive credit for this action. Copies of the adopted resolution must be provided to the Planning Board, Zoning Board, Environmental Commission and other municipal boards and commissions.
2. The adopted Pledge must reflect all of the elements listed in the “What to Include in a Sustainable Land Use Pledge” section below.

We have provided extensive guidance and recommendations for implementing this action in the section that follows. You do not need to follow this guidance exactly as long as your final product meets the requirements.

What to Include in a Sustainable Land Use Pledge

At a minimum, the Sustainable Land Use Pledge must address the following elements to be eligible for credit:

Regional Cooperation – hold regular meetings with the administrations of neighboring municipalities concerning land-use decisions and consider development impacts on a regional scale. Local land-use decisions often have regional impacts, even though they are decided exclusively by one municipality. For example, a large mall built in one municipality can affect traffic and retail opportunities in neighboring towns.

Transportation Choices - create better transportation choices with a Complete Streets approach, offering access to all modes of transportation and creating connectivity among them. Re-evaluate parking requirements with the goal of limiting the amount of required parking spaces and promoting shared parking between multiple users and integration with multimodal transportation. Flexible parking requirements decrease the amount of land dedicated to parking lots, storm water runoff, land clearing, and heat island effects, while promoting transportation alternatives to individual automobile use.

Natural Resources – preserve, protect and plan for open space for its ecological, recreational, and agricultural value and avoid or mitigate development impacts to natural resources. Promote efficient use of water and appropriate reuse and recharge into the local environment as well as efficient use of energy and the opportunity for renewable energy generation and use. As the most densely populated state in the nation, open space in New Jersey is at a premium. Preserving what is left of our open space is critical for a sustainable future.

Mix of Land Uses – allow for a mix of land-use types (e.g., retail and housing options together) to promote walkability and more convenient access to housing, jobs, and amenities. A mix of land use types will reduce dependence on the automobile by allowing people to use other modes of transportation and reduce trip frequency and length.

Housing Options - allow for a diverse mix of housing types and locations, including both single- and multi-family, for-sale and rental options, affordable to households at a range of income levels. This will allow residents and their families to live and work in the municipality throughout their lives.

Green Design – incorporate the principles of green design and renewable energy generation by establishing a green buildings policy for municipal, commercial, and residential buildings, and incorporating it into Site Plan and subdivision requirements. Green Design strategies not only improve the environmental performance of buildings; the strategies also lessen the impact of those buildings on the surrounding environment. Such strategies include energy efficiency, water conservation, indoor environmental quality, increased recycling, use of recycled renewable materials, construction waste reduction, reduced auto use, tree preservation, native planting, and conservation of environmentally-sensitive landscape features.

Municipal Facilities – consider factors such as walkability, access to transit, proximity to other uses, and opportunities for alternative energy sources when siting new or relocating municipal facilities. These municipal actions can set a positive precedent and encourage other public and private-sector entities to consider sustainable land-use practices when locating their own facilities.

A model pledge is provided in the Resources section.

Suggested Process for Adopting a Sustainable Land Use Pledge

1. The municipal Green Team should review the sample Sustainable Land Use Pledge and tailor it as needed to municipal conditions, taking care to address all of the required elements listed above.
2. Introduce the pledge and provide for a public discussion period. Then have the approved pledge officially adopted by the Mayor and governing body and distributed to elected and appointed officials and publicize.

What to submit to get credit/points

In order to earn points, your submission must meet the following standards:

1. The governing body must adopt a Sustainable Land Use Pledge by resolution. The policy must be in effect at the time of submission to receive credit for this action.
2. The adopted Pledge must reflect all of the elements listed in the “What to Include in a Sustainable Land Use Pledge” section.
3. The adopted Pledge must be distributed to the Planning Board, Zoning Board, Environmental Commission and other relevant boards and commissions.

Submit the following documentation to verify that the action was completed to the above standards. (Log in to the password protected webpage where you submit your online application for certification to write in the text box and upload documents).

1. In the text box, please provide a short narrative (300 word max) to summarize how this action was accomplished and describing when and how it was distributed to the Planning Board, Zoning Board, Environmental Commission and other relevant boards and commissions. Please tell us if the Pledge was publicized after adoption.
2. In "upload file 1," submit a certified copy of the resolution adopting the Sustainable Land Use Pledge.
3. OPTIONAL In "upload file 2," submit any press coverage of the discussion and/or adoption of the Sustainable Land Use Pledge.

Spotlight: What NJ towns are doing

Dozens of municipalities in NJ have adopted the land-use pledge as part of the Sustainable Jersey certification process including municipalities as varied as Woodbridge, Asbury Park, and the Borough of Woodbine in Cape May County.

In addition, many towns in New Jersey have taken steps to achieve the goals of smart growth, which the pledge promotes. Here are a few resources highlighting those successes:

NJ Department of Community Affairs (rural and urban successes)
<http://www.nj.gov/dca/divisions/osg/smart/success.html>

New Jersey Future Smart Growth Award winners:
<http://njfuture.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=user.contentsubcat1&ContentCat=4&ContentSubCat1=19>

Resources

The connection between land use and sustainability:

Climate Change & Land Use: Smart Growth Recommendations. New Jersey Future, October 2008. Addresses the relationship between climate change and land use decisions in New Jersey and provides recommendations on the role of land use in influencing carbon emissions.

<http://www.njfuture.org/Media/Docs/Climate%20Change%20for%20web%20site%20-%204%20pager.pdf>

Growing Cooler: Evidence on Urban Development and Climate Change. Ewing, Reid and Keith Bartholomew, Steve Winkelman, Jerry Walter and Don Chen, Urban Land Institute, 2008. National study that makes the connection between greenhouse gas emissions, vehicle miles traveled, and development patterns.

Best practices

How to handle parking? An article in Volume 3, Issue 1 of Transit-Friendly Development provides background information on innovative parking strategies including shared parking. This newsletter is a joint effort between NJ TRANSIT and the Bloustein School's Alan M. Voorhees Transportation Center (VTC) at Rutgers University. <http://www.policy.rutgers.edu/vtc/tod/newsletter/vol3-num1/TODParking.html>

Plan Endorsement Guidelines, NJ Department of Community Affairs, Office of Smart Growth, 2004

<http://www.nj.gov/dca/divisions/osg/docs/2004peguidelines.pdf>

Smart Conservation for Towns, New Jersey Future, 2004

<http://njfuture.org/Media///Docs/smartconserve.pdf>

Smart Growth Scorecards, New Jersey Future, 2002.

http://www.njfuture.org/index.cfm?ctn=9t45e1o30v9g&emn=5u92y86g2h42&fuseaction=user.xcontent&XContent=3_17

Sustainable Abbotsford, British Columbia, Canada. “Smart Growth” is seen by Abbotsford as one component of building community sustainability. As set out in the City’s “Charter of Sustainability”

(<http://www.abbotsford.ca/AssetFactory.aspx?did=1702>)

Abbotsford is taking numerous steps toward building a complete and sustainable community. The end result will be a community where economic, environmental, and social needs are balanced in such a way that a higher quality of life is provided for all its residents without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. The Charter focuses on four key principles: Responsible Growth, Pollution Prevention and Resource Conservation, Social Well-being, and Shared Responsibility. To see how Abbotsford integrated these principles to their municipal comprehensive sustainable master plan, visit

http://www.abbotsford.ca/planning_services/environment/sustainability.htm

Organizations

Smart Growth America: A coalition of national, state, and local organizations working to improve the ways we plan and build the towns, cities, and metro areas we call home. The website contains a wide range of information and resources.

<http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/>

Urban Land Institute (ULI): Over the past decade, ULI has been at the forefront of smart growth efforts. In addition to working with communities to implement smart growth policies and development practices, ULI is one of the leading voices in the smart growth debate through its research and education efforts. ULI is a resource that a variety of stakeholders at the national, regional, and local levels turn to for information, advice, and concrete ideas on implementing smart growth. <http://www.uli.org>

Model Sustainable Land Use Pledge Resolution

WHEREAS, land use is an essential component of overall sustainability for a municipality; and

WHEREAS, poor land-use decisions can lead to and increase societal ills such as decreased mobility, high housing costs, increased greenhouse gas emissions, loss of open space and the degradation of natural resources; and

WHEREAS, well planned land use can create transportation choices, provide for a range of housing options, create walkable communities, preserve open space, provide for adequate recreation, and allow for the continued protection and use of vital natural resources; and

WHEREAS, Given New Jersey's strong tradition of home rule and local authority over planning and zoning, achieving a statewide sustainable land use pattern will require municipalities to take the lead;

NOW THEREFORE, we the town of _____, resolve to take the following steps with regard to our municipal land-use decisions with the intent of making _____ (MUNICIPALITY) a truly sustainable community. It is our intent to include these principles in the next master plan revision and reexamination report and to update our land-use zoning, natural resource protection, and other ordinances accordingly.

Regional Cooperation - We pledge to reach out to administrations of our neighboring municipalities concerning land-use decisions, and to take into consideration regional impacts when making land-use decisions.

Transportation Choices - We pledge to create transportation choices with a Complete Streets approach by considering all modes of transportation, including walking, biking, transit and automobiles, when planning transportation projects and reviewing development applications. We will reevaluate our parking with the goal of limiting the amount of required parking spaces, promoting shared parking and other innovative parking alternatives, and encouraging structured parking alternatives where appropriate.

Natural Resource Protection - We pledge to take action to protect the natural resources of the State for environmental, recreational and agricultural value, avoiding or mitigating negative impacts to these resources. Further, we pledge to complete a Natural Resources Inventory when feasible to identify and assess the extent of our natural resources and to link natural resource management and protection to carrying capacity analysis, land-use and open space planning.

Mix of Land Uses - We pledge to use our zoning power to allow for a mix of residential, retail, commercial, recreational and other land use types in areas that make the most sense for our municipality and the region, particularly in downtown and town center areas.

Housing Options - We pledge, through the use of our zoning and revenue generating powers, to foster a diverse mix of housing types and locations, including single- and multi-family, for-sale and rental options, to meet the needs of all people at a range of income levels.

Green Design - We pledge to incorporate the principles of green design and renewable energy generation into municipal buildings to the extent feasible and when updating our site plan and subdivision requirements for residential and commercial buildings.

Municipal Facilities Siting - We pledge, to the extent feasible, to take into consideration factors such as walkability, bikability, greater access to public transit, proximity to other land-use types, and open space when locating new or relocated municipal facilities.

Agenda and Date Voted: xx/xx/xxxx

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify this is a true and exact copy of a resolution adopted by the XXXXXXXX Township Committee on xx/xx/xxxx