

Smart Growth America

Better Choices For Our Communities

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NEWS RELEASE

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Smart Growth America Founder Don Chen to Advance Community Development Strategies at the Ford Foundation

WASHINGTON, D.C. – After eight years as the founding executive director and CEO of Smart Growth America (SGA), Don Chen has accepted a leadership appointment at the Ford Foundation, the country's second largest philanthropy.

Chen will be joining Ford as program officer in Community Development, where he will manage a substantial grants portfolio and lead efforts to shape a new strategy for the foundation's community development work. Chen will remain at SGA through January, helping to manage a smooth transition to new leadership. The SGA Board of Directors intends to name a successor by the end of 2007.

"Don has been instrumental in bringing smart growth from a concept nobody had ever heard of to a growing force in shaping the future of communities around the country," said SGA board chairman Michael Woo, a former L.A. city councilman. "In his new role at the Ford Foundation, Don will bring cutting-edge thinking to one of the most influential foundations in the world."

Richard Moe, president of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, serves on both the SGA and Ford Foundation boards. "As a founding SGA Board member, it has been a great pleasure to watch Don build the organization from a start-up to a nationally recognized and respected force for community revitalization and smart growth. He will leave a huge legacy."

Chen has been a leader of the movement for more thoughtful building of our communities since the "smart growth" concept emerged in the mid-1990s. Influential early writings included "The Science of Smart Growth," in the December, 2000 issue of *Scientific American*, and *Once There Were Greenfields*, an authoritative review of the economic, environmental and social costs of suburban sprawl, which he co-authored. Widely recognized as an authority on urban topics, he has lectured in North America, Europe, Australia

and Asia, has testified before the United States Congress on smart growth issues, and is a frequent source for the news media.

Since its launch in October of 2000, Smart Growth America has grown into a nationwide network of more than 100 national, state, and regional organizations, with more than 20 staff and contractors. Over that period, SGA has released ground-breaking research documenting the pace and character of development among metro areas, as well as the impact of development patterns on Americans' transportation choices, health, water supply, and natural habitat.

SGA also created and houses the Smart Growth Leadership Institute, headed by former Maryland Governor Parris Glendening, and the Governors Institute on Community Design, which helps governors and their cabinet members grapple with growth and development issues. Under Chen's leadership, SGA also helped to launch the National Vacant Properties Campaign, a national effort to combat blight and abandonment in cities, older suburbs, and towns and lay the groundwork for revitalization.

Most recently, SGA has been among those taking the lead in addressing the links between urban development, transportation, oil dependence, and climate change. SGA co-produced the new book, *Growing Cooler: The Evidence on Urban Development and Climate Change*, and is leading a national effort to craft policies that can help the United States meet the demand for green, walkable neighborhoods while shrinking its carbon footprint.

"I'm very proud of our team at SGA," said Chen, "especially our work in places like New Orleans and our efforts to spark a productive debate about how to achieve smarter growth among citizens, business leaders, and public officials alike," Chen said. "I know that SGA and its coalition members will continue to have a major and positive impact on the way our communities grow."

About Smart Growth America

Smart Growth America is a non-profit coalition of national, state and local organizations working to improve the planning and development of America's towns, cities and metro areas. On the web at www.smartgrowthamerica.org.

About the Ford Foundation

The Ford Foundation is an independent, nonprofit grant-making organization. For more than half a century it has been a resource for innovative people and institutions worldwide, guided by its goals of strengthening democratic values, reducing poverty and injustice, promoting international cooperation and advancing human achievement. With headquarters in New York, the foundation has offices in Africa, the Middle East, Asia, Latin America, and Russia. On the web at www.fordfound.org.

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