



Smart Growth America
Making Neighborhoods Great Together

SMART GROWTH IMPLEMENTATION TOOLKIT

1. Quick diagnostic

Growing Smarter

Communities across the country are facing tremendous opportunities to shape their future and provide solutions to the most pressing local, national and global challenges of our time. Community leaders, serving as stewards of the future, have the power to change previous patterns of unsustainable growth and realize the benefits of smarter growth.

A growing number of local political, civic and business leaders understand that with smarter patterns of growth and development, our towns, counties and cities can enjoy the fruits of growth without the costs of poorly planned development. They understand that smart growth strategies can help communities to generate more jobs, enjoy a more stable tax base, provide more choice in the location and cost of housing and build a healthy economy while reducing our impact on the environment, securing our energy independence and creating safe and healthy neighborhoods for our children, our seniors and our families. They understand that communities that choose to grow smarter are also improving their ability to compete in the global marketplace for investments and talent.

While the challenge of building healthier and safer communities has not changed, the opportunities to move away from previous unsustainable patterns have increased. These opportunities are driven by dramatic demographic changes and shifting lifestyle preferences in our population and by a growing understanding of our shared responsibility for the future of our planet. At the same time, the prospect of ever lengthening commutes and rising gas prices is leading growing numbers of people to seek locations where they are not completely automobile-dependent. More and more people prefer neighborhoods where they can improve their health by choosing to walk or bike to the grocery store or shrink their “carbon footprint” (reduce their greenhouse gas emissions) by taking public transit to work or to school. They want to live where they can still be active citizens as they age and where their

children and grandchildren can enjoy healthy physical activity everyday.

Shortsighted planning sacrifices the long-term fiscal health of our communities — starving our established downtown businesses, overlooking existing investments in our older communities, eating up our farms and open spaces and damaging our environment. Many communities are envisioning an alternative future. They want to rebuild our existing communities and design new ones to better respond to the needs and preferences of their citizens

Getting there from where we are today can look like an overwhelming task because it asks community leaders to overhaul outdated plans. It requires rewriting laws and regulations to transform the existing development patterns.

The good news is that we can take advantage of the opportunities simply by allowing walkable, mixed-use development to happen in our communities. The tools in the Smart Growth Implementation Toolkit can help community leaders take the first step of removing the regulatory obstacles to smarter growth. The tools can help your community level the playing field to encourage development that meets your community’s goals and your citizens' aspirations.

The Goals of Smart Growth

Smart growth can help communities achieve their shared vision by building on these goals:

Healthier, Safer Communities

The central goal of any smart growth plan or project is to improve the quality of the neighborhoods where we live. Our efforts should make our communities healthier, safer, more convenient, more attractive and more affordable.

Protecting the Environment

Neighborhoods designed to reduce our dependence on automobiles also reduce our impact on the environment. By creating streetscapes that encourage walking or biking, we create opportunities for individuals to reduce their carbon footprint.

Better Access, Less Traffic

Mixing land uses, clustering development, and providing multiple transportation choices helps us to encourage healthier lifestyles, manage congestion, pollute less and save energy.

Thriving Cities, Suburbs And Towns

By guiding development to existing towns and cities, we maximize our investments in transportation, schools, libraries and other public services. Our public dollars can serve the communities where people live today.

Shared Benefits

Building a comprehensive transportation system and locating jobs and accessible housing within reach of each other expands opportunities for all income levels.

Lower Costs, Lower Taxes

Taking advantage of existing infrastructure keeps taxes down. Convenient transportation choices also reduce our household

transportation costs, leaving our families with more money for other needs.

Keeping Open Space Open

Protecting our natural resources creates healthier air and cleaner drinking water. From forests and farms to wetlands and wildlife, let us pass on to our children the landscapes we love.

Smart growth implementation is shaped by ten principles:

1. Provide a Variety of Transportation Choices
2. Mix Land Uses
3. Create a Range of Housing Opportunities and Choices
4. Create Walkable Neighborhoods
5. Encourage Community and Stakeholder Collaboration
6. Foster Distinctive, Attractive Communities with a Strong Sense of Place
7. Make Development Decisions Predictable, Fair and Cost Effective
8. Preserve Open Space, Farmland, Natural Beauty and Critical Environmental Areas
9. Strengthen and Direct Development Towards Existing Communities
10. Take Advantage of Compact Building Design and Efficient Infrastructure Design

The Smart Growth Implementation Toolkit

The Smart Growth Implementation Toolkit is a set of practical tools to help your community grow smarter. It will help you untangle the thicket of policies and procedures that get in the way of smarter growth and sustainable development. Smart Growth America's Leadership Institute developed the tools through a four-year technical assistance program funded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

The tools are designed to help communities that are committed to (or are exploring) smart growth but struggle with implementation, with building support, with identifying the most problematic policies and with other issues that typically accompany a major change in development practice. The tools can help a community reach its goals, its vision for the future, and help leaders discuss how to retain the great parts of the community while improving other parts.

Each tool may be used independently or in combination with others. Each user should customize the tools appropriately for local or regional use. The tools are intended to be templates. The tools include:

Quick Diagnostic

The Quick Diagnostic is a simple flowchart that will help you to understand which of the Smart Growth Implementation Tools can best help your community.

Policy Audit

The Smart Growth Policy Audit will help you assess whether existing land use and development policies align with your community's aspirations for its future.

Code and Zoning Audit

The Smart Growth Code and Zoning Audit will help you check if the zoning codes and regulations in your community implement your vision for smarter growth.

Audit Summary

The Smart Growth Audit Summary will help you summarize the findings from the Smart Growth Policy Audit and the Smart Growth Code and Zoning Audit, and help you to begin to prioritize the opportunities that are ripe for action.

Project Scorecard

The Smart Growth Project Scorecard will help you to evaluate how closely a proposed development project adheres to your community's vision for smarter growth.

Incentives Matrix

The Incentives Matrix for Smart Growth Projects will help you mobilize available incentives to encourage specific smart growth projects in your communities.

Strategy Builder

The Smart Growth Strategy Builder will help you implement smart growth in your community by identifying the most promising avenues to lasting change. It will help you map the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges facing smart growth implementation in your community.

About the Smart Growth Quick Diagnostic

The Smart Growth Quick Diagnostic is a simple flowchart that will help you to understand which of the Smart Growth Implementation Tools can best help your community.

Most communities that begin the work of changing their growth and development patterns do so because they are facing one of the following situations:

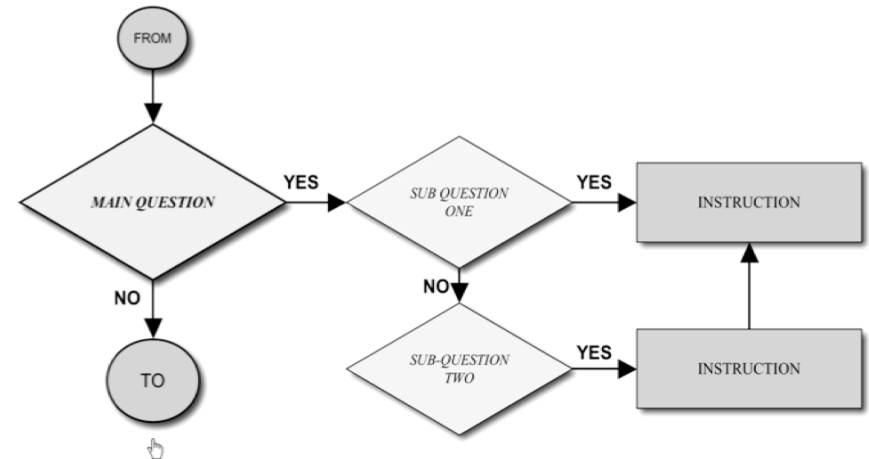
- Your community is facing issues related to land use (water, farm preservation, bases conversion, etc.);
- Your community is facing rapid growth and may be experiencing the adverse effects of that growth (congestion, stress on the local services, constrained budgets, etc.);
- Your community is considering a development or redevelopment project in a significant location;
- Your community is considering providing incentives to a project that will help achieve your community's vision for smarter growth;
- Your community is working on a new vision for your shared future; or,
- Your community is revising its plans, policies or codes to help achieve its new vision.

Each situation will require different tools in the Smart Growth Implementation Toolkit (in different combinations). This very simple flow chart will direct you to the right set of tools and the best order to use them.

Organization

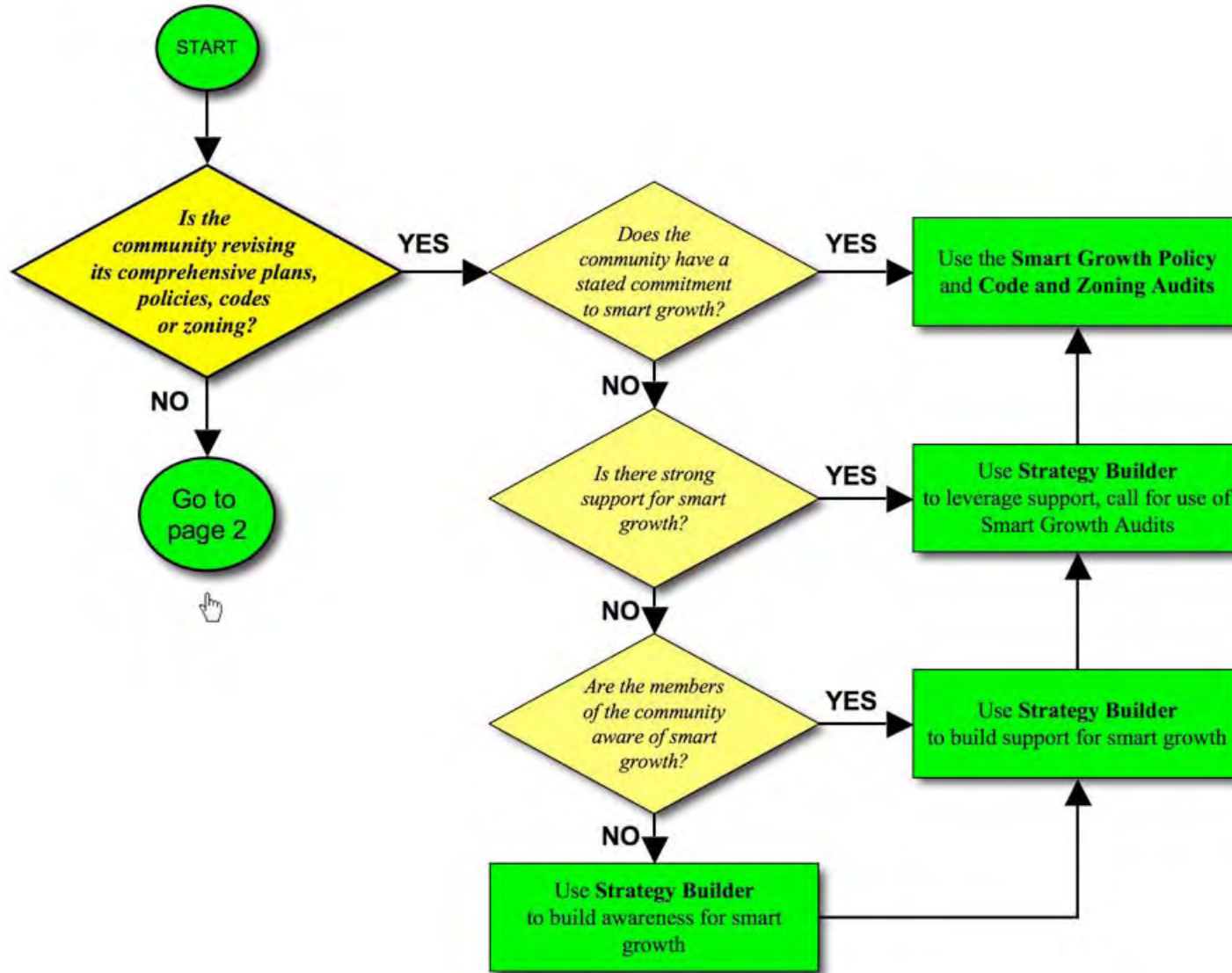
The first part of the tool is a **simple flow chart** that asks questions answerable with **yes or no**. Follow the arrows and redirections (e.g. –"go to page 3") to get to the recommended tools and actions.

The basic flow chart will look like this:

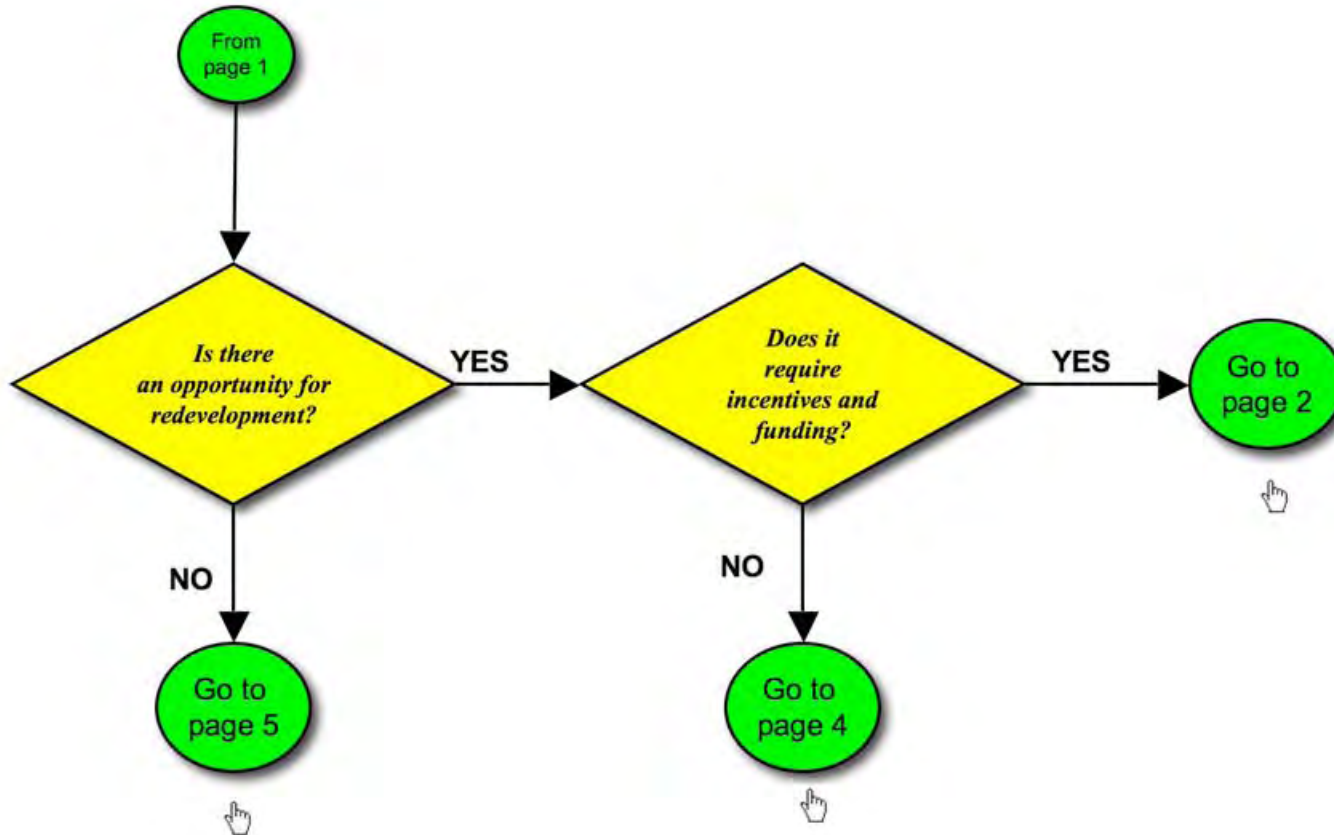


The last page of the tool is a matrix that lets you to select the tools you need and defines your primary task to help your community achieve its vision for smarter growth.

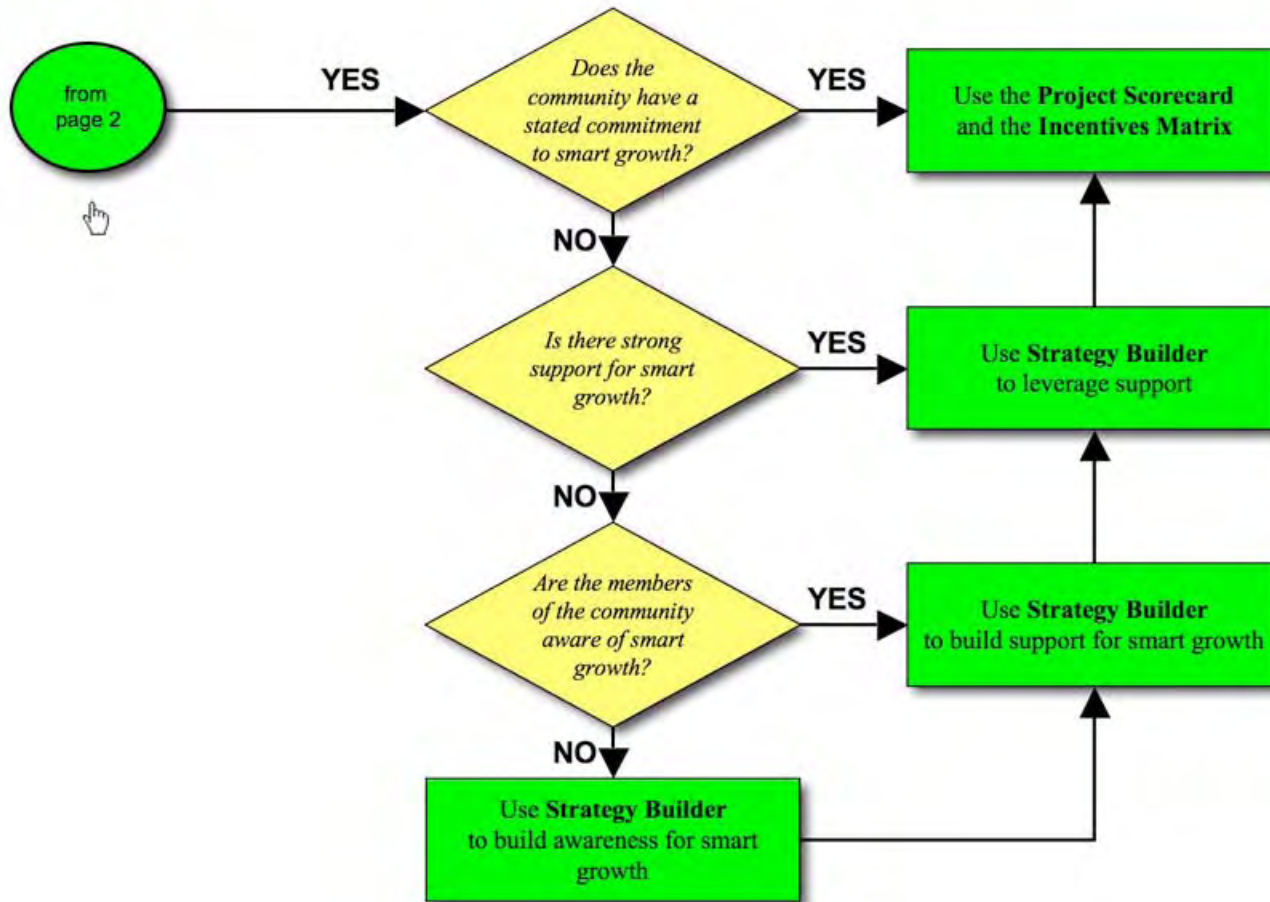
If your community **is revising** its plans, policies, codes and zoning:



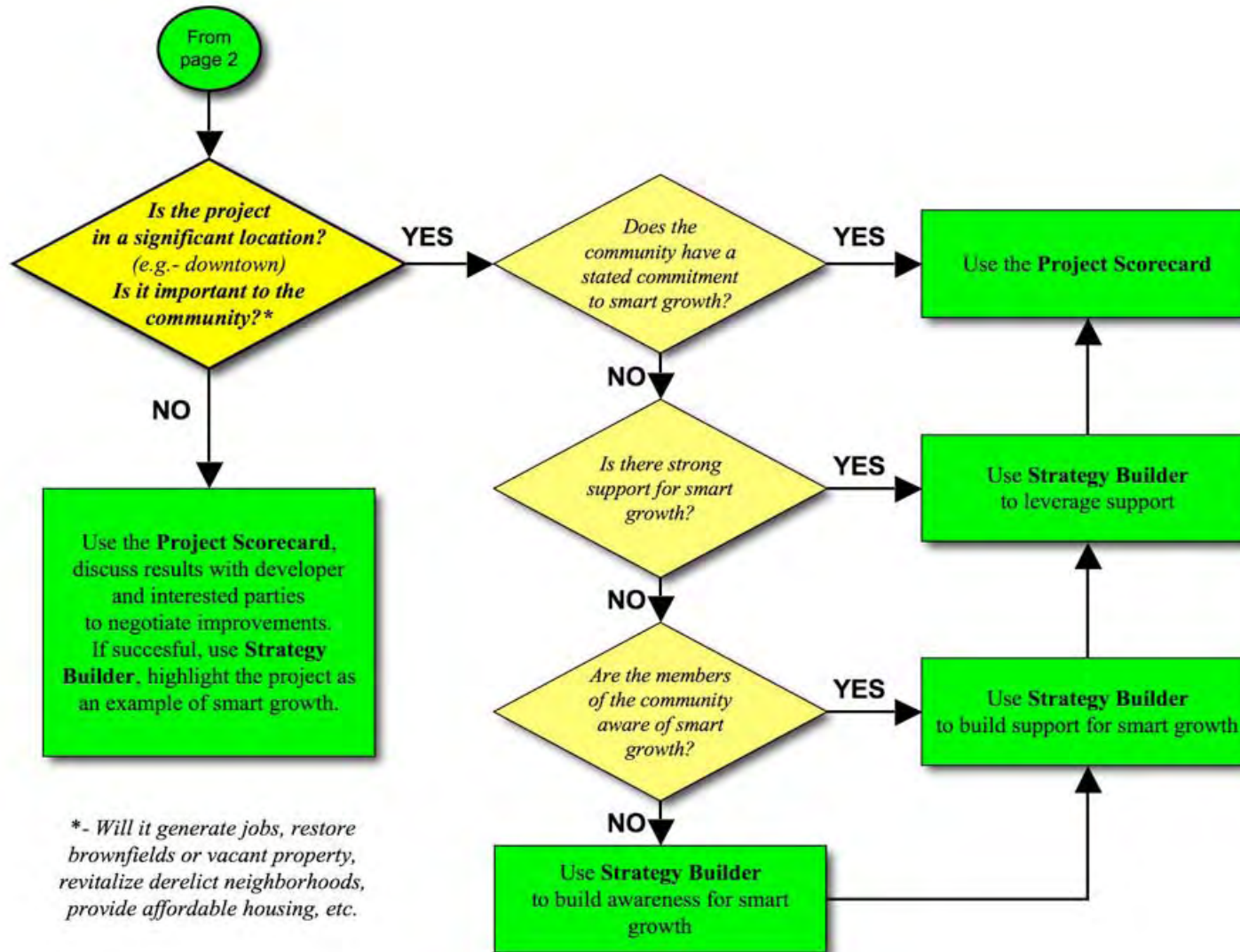
If your community is **NOT revising** its plans, policies, codes and zoning:



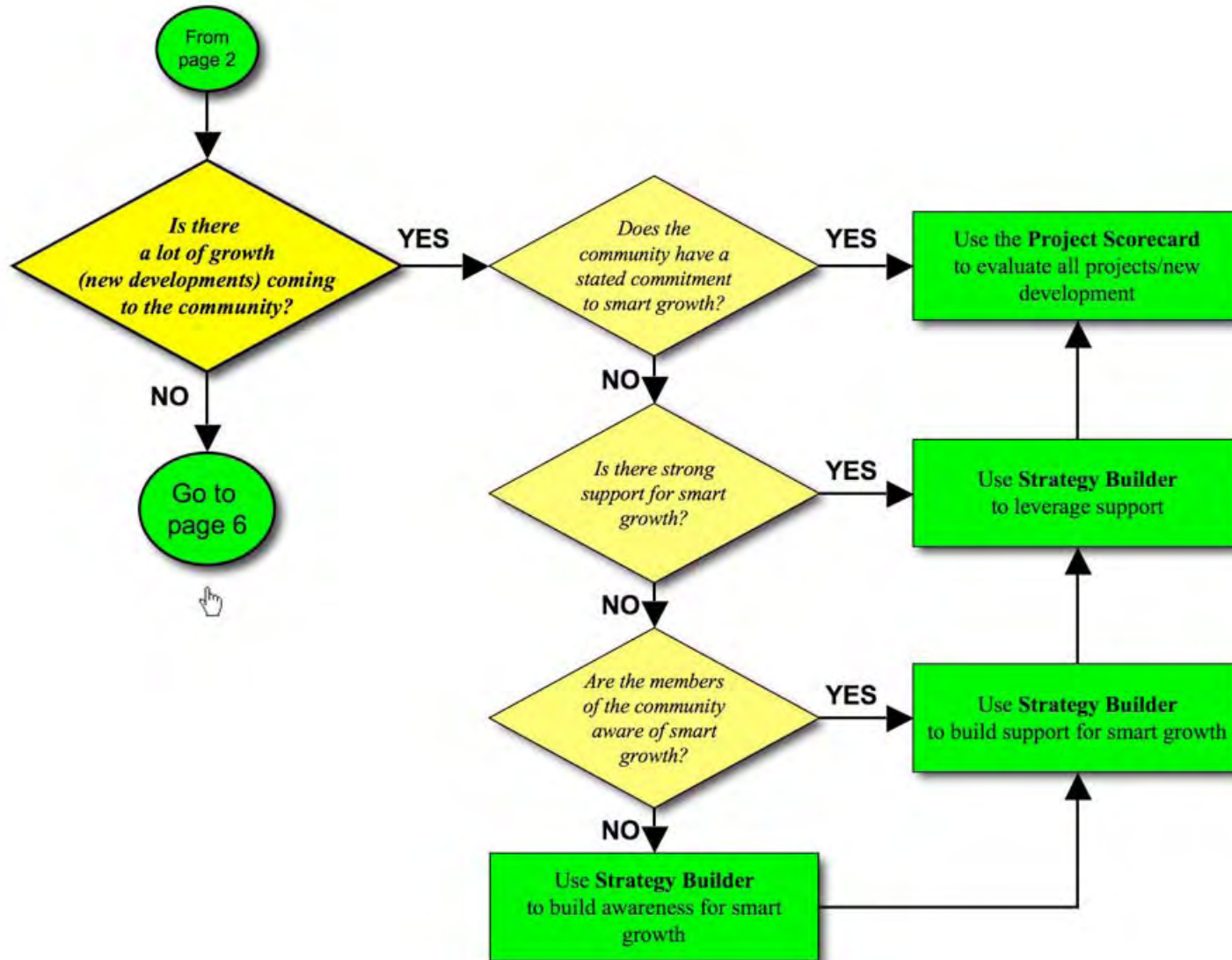
If your community has an opportunity for development or redevelopment that requires incentives:



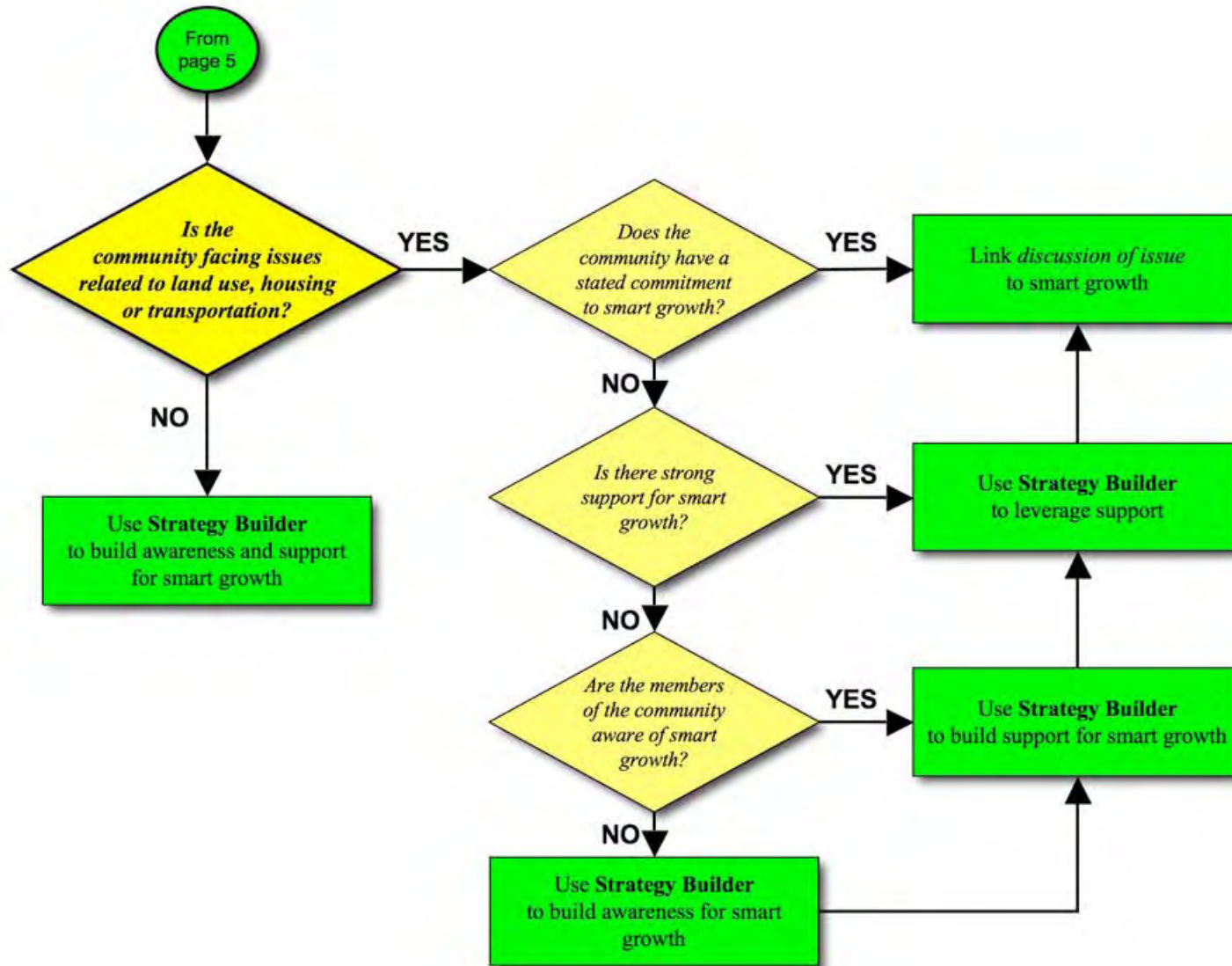
If your community has an opportunity for development or redevelopment that **DOES NOT** require incentives:



If your community is facing rapid growth:



If your community is facing issues related to land use, housing or transportation:



Smart Growth Implementation Tools Quick Diagnostic Matrix

Use the left most column to select the row that best describes *the level of awareness or support for smart growth in your community*, then use the first row to select the column that best describes *the opportunity your community is currently facing*.¹ Use all the tools layered below the column/s you selected (e.g. *Incentives Matrix* + *Project Scorecard* + *Strategy Builder*, etc.) The rightmost column describes your *primary task* as you work to achieve your community's vision for smarter growth.

If your community:	Is facing issues related to land use, housing or transportation	Is experiencing rapid growth	Has an opportunity for development or redevelopment	The development or redevelopment project requires incentives	Is revising its plans, policies or codes	Your primary task is:
<i>Is not aware of smart growth</i>						Build awareness and support
<i>Understands smart growth.</i>						Build support
<i>Strongly supports smart growth.</i>						Leverage support
<i>Has a stated commitment to Smart Growth</i>						Call for use of tools
<p>STRATEGY BUILDER</p> <p>PROJECT SCORECARD</p> <p>INCENTIVES MATRIX</p> <p>SMART GROWTH AUDITS</p>						
<p>Use the Strategy Builder to move your community from the top (yellow) row to the bottom (green) row.</p>						

¹ Note: your community may be facing more than one opportunity.