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Are State Budget Shortfalls Shortchanging Smart Growth Initiatives?

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Washington, DC – In the 1990s, public opposition to suburban sprawl spurred states to create a spectrum of innovative smart-growth initiatives. They included better planning rules and incentives, tax credits for historic preservation, funding for development rights purchases, and increased transit spending. Some of these initiatives were adopted by governors, some were established by legislation, and still others were born of ballot measures.

Despite recent signs of an economic recovery, states are struggling to balance their budgets for the upcoming fiscal year. Plummeting revenues have led to budget shortfalls of millions, and in some cases, billions of dollars. How are smart growth initiatives faring?

Although legislators are still deliberating over the fate of a range of state programs, there are some disturbing trends. Disregarding public support for smart growth programs, lawmakers in several states are proposing to cut them first. Given the success of these programs, such cuts would be, as the saying goes, penny-wise and pound-foolish. Gutting these programs or killing them outright may help balance today's budget, but it will present a much bigger bill later by threatening the local economy, the environment and public health.

[Click here to download the full report \(PDF\).](#)

[USA Today article "State budgets pinching anti-sprawl programs"](#)

Smart Growth America is the only national organization dedicated to researching, advocating for and leading coalitions to bring smart growth practices to more communities nationwide. From providing more sidewalks to ensuring more homes are built near public transit or that productive farms remain a part of our communities, smart growth helps make sure people across the nation can live in great neighborhoods. For additional information, please visit www.smartgrowthamerica.org.

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