FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: April 5, 2012

U.S. Census data shows growth declining in far suburbs, indicates pressing need to adapt federal policies and investments to market trends

Anderson: Congress can take advantage of changing demand, demographics to get U.S. economy back on track

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WASHINGTON DC — Analysis of U.S. Census estimates released today reveals that population growth in town and city centers is outpacing that of suburbs for the first time in more than two decades. The estimates, taken as of July 2011, indicate that more than three years after the official end of the recession, Americans continue to avoid moving to counties on the farthest edge of metropolitan areas, opting instead for neighborhoods close to the center of town.

“Our organization has long advocated for walkable neighborhoods with smart growth features, and this news confirms that they’re even more popular than we realized,” said Geoff Anderson, President and CEO of Smart Growth America. “But it’s not enough for us to look at this data and do nothing about it – we have to take advantage of its momentum. If the U.S. is going to get back on track and continue to compete globally, we must change how the country invests in and legislates around real estate and transportation.”

Today’s news confirms that many Americans want to spend less on gas, desire shorter commutes and would like to live in neighborhoods near stores and restaurants. Congress as well as state and local legislators should support programs that allow the market to respond to changing demands.

“As a country, we can either adapt and take advantage of these new market forces or we can continue to stick our head in the sand,” Anderson adds. “A lot of people will look at this analysis and say we’re at a turning point. The truth is, we’re already well past it. Dozens of communities are already working to catch up – legislators can either obstruct these efforts or work to help make them happen.”

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 transportation 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 visit www.smartgrowthamerica.org.

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