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The following is a statement from Smart Growth America President and CEO Geoffrey Anderson in response to President Obama's State of the Union address, February 12:

“‘Stronger families. Stronger communities. Stronger America.’ In his State of the Union speech on Tuesday President Obama described a broad, shared prosperity built on a thriving middle class that has always been the source of our progress at home.

In order to achieve this prosperity, the United States must invest in its communities. Now is the time for bipartisan leadership on the issues that will ensure the long-term prosperity of the United States' towns and cities. Many of the issues President Obama discussed on Tuesday are part of this work.

I was pleased to hear President Obama speak confidently about the chances for tax legislation this year. Part of bipartisan tax reform must include a review of America's real estate spending to make sure taxpayers get the most for this investment. Smart Growth America recently released a report detailing the \$450 billion in programs and line-items affecting our real estate market. That spending and commitments has a dramatic effect on how towns and cities get built, as well as their economic potential and fiscal resiliency.

President Obama also proposed a much-needed “Fix-it-First” infrastructure program, similar to policy reforms put forth by Smart Growth America and our program Transportation for America. Fix-it-first policies maintain the country's existing infrastructure, and ensure the safety of roads and bridges while making a better use of taxpayer dollars and limiting government waste. It is time to work together and follow the leadership of local elected officials who know that strong communities need safe and modern infrastructure.

Addressing the nation's housing needs and the challenge of vacant properties is likewise critical to keep America moving forward. National efforts to support families working to become homeowners will strengthen the economy and grow the middle class. These are outcomes Smart Growth America strongly supports through enhancing access to financing as well as investments in workforce housing.

Reinvesting in existing infrastructure and communities will also support the Administration's laudable goal of addressing climate change. Investing in places where people have the option of walking to work or to the supermarket creates low cost and low carbon options for workers and families.

President Obama's vision for a stronger America and stronger middle-class is a smart growth vision. Today's economic challenges are deeply interconnected, and the Administration is right to champion comprehensive initiatives and reforms. America's existing communities are the seed of future success and if properly nurtured and cared for, they will help us “restore the basic bargain that built this country – the idea that if you work hard and meet your responsibilities, you can get ahead, no matter where you come from, what you look like, or who you love.”

In the next year, I look forward to working with the Administration to address America's most pressing issues. Smart growth and these challenges go hand in hand, and I am fully confident in our ability to continue making our country a better place to live, work and raise a family, not just in 2013, but for decades to come.

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