



Grow Smart!

NEWSLETTER OF GROW SMART RHODE ISLAND

OCTOBER 2002

Bringing Smart Growth Issues to the 2002 Campaign

In this election year, Rhode Island is facing tough challenges. One of the most difficult is reversing our decades-old pattern of land-use marked by suburban sprawl and urban decay. Across Rhode Island, people from different walks of life, ethnic groups and types of communities share a stake in changing our patterns of development. For urban residents smart growth means regeneration of local tax bases and revitalization of neighborhoods. For suburban and rural residents smart growth means preserving open space and community character. And for citizens in all parts of our state smart growth means evaluating our State's economic strengths and environmental needs and basing policy on long term sustainability, not quick fixes.

Tough challenges require strong leaders

We believe that the person occupying the Governor's office is the individual best positioned to provide the vision, coordination, planning and long term perspective required to tackle such critical statewide issues as reforming our approach to economic development, restructuring our property tax system, revitalizing our urban and town centers and finding stable funding sources for critical land conservation and affordable housing needs.

Despite the many clear benefits smarter growth would bring to Rhode Islanders, we in the smart growth movement cannot assume that our agenda will be a priority for the next administration, particularly because of the state budget crunch. That's why it is critical that smart growth advocates remind all candidates that the investments and incentives we propose will save taxpayers money. Continuing to waste our natural resources and urban infrastructure while subsidizing redundant infrastructure in outlying areas is a luxury we can no longer afford, and the state budget crunch should underscore this point.

Fortunately, there is a growing momentum for smart growth. We have a Governor's Growth Planning Council

advising the Governor on the many aspects of sprawl and the ways state government can encourage smart growth. The Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management and the Economic Development Corporation are working together on a unified program to promote brownfields redevelopment. We have one of the nation's most ambitious commercial historic preservation tax credits and a new state Building Rehab Code, both providing powerful incentives for revitalization of our urban, town and village centers. The Rhode Island Economic Policy Council is promoting a new strategy of economic development based on "authenticity of place." And Grow Smart has instituted a training program, *Making Good Land Use Decisions*, for town councilors and board and commission members throughout the state.

Release of Candidates' Briefing Book

To draw the 2002 gubernatorial candidates' attention to smart growth issues and to make discussion of those issues part of the campaign debate, Grow Smart Rhode Island released this July its candidates' briefing book, *A Strategy for Saving Rhode Island from Sprawl and Urban Decay*. The publication addresses twelve key issues concerning smart growth and advocates major changes in Rhode Island's approach to economic development, tax policy and growth management.

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INSIDE:
Candidates Myrth York and
Don Carcieri respond to ten key
smart growth recommendations

see page 3

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We distributed the book to the gubernatorial candidates (as well as candidates for other statewide and federal offices) during the primaries, and it has already had an impact. Reporting on the Environment Council of Rhode Island's gubernatorial debate, the *Providence Journal* (September 6, 2002) noted, "Drawing heavily on strategies put forth by the public policy group Grow Smart Rhode Island, the candidates agreed that urban decay and sprawl type development that destroys open space are closely related issues."

Following the primaries, we submitted ten of the key recommendations drawn from our briefing book to Republican candidate Donald Carcieri and Democratic candidate Myrth York and invited them to respond in writing. Their complete responses follow, beginning on page three. We encourage you to review each candidate's positions carefully and to let the candidates know what you think about their stands on smart growth issues. The more the candidates hear that voters consider suburban sprawl and urban disinvestment serious concerns, the more likely we are to see leadership and serious action to address these issues in 2003 and beyond.

Executive Order Promotes Investment in Growth Centers

With his Executive Order issued October 2, 2002, Governor Lincoln Almond took the State of Rhode Island an important step along the path toward smart growth. The order, based on research and recommendations from the Governor's Growth Planning Council, calls for the identification and promotion of selected areas as centers for residential, commercial and industrial growth. It is based on three premises:

- the right of municipalities to determine and regulate land use within their borders via the comprehensive planning process;
- the fact that public investment in the form of State and Federal dollars often affects public and private decisions about where growth will be located;
- the fact that Rhode Island boasts authentic places — urban neighborhoods, town centers, historic mill villages — that have the infrastructure to support growth and that can help to power our economy by serving as magnets for employers and talented workers.

The order defines growth centers as "planned or existing dynamic and efficient centers for development that have a core of commercial, industrial and community services, residential development, and natural and built landmarks and boundaries that provide a sense of place." It directs the Office of Statewide Planning to articulate specific criteria for growth centers and a process by which municipalities can identify growth centers through comprehensive plan updates or amendments. It gives state departments and agencies responsibility for providing within 90 days an inventory of funding resources that can be targeted to growth centers. And it gives the Growth Planning Council responsibility for developing "preliminary recommendations for a process to prioritize growth centers for funding."

"This is an important step for Rhode Island," commented Scott Wolf, Grow Smart's Executive Director and a member of the Growth Planning Council's Task Force on Growth Centers. "States such as Maryland have already demonstrated the impact that targeted state investments can have in influencing the location and nature of growth. Now that the Governor has issued the Executive Order, the Growth Planning Council, state agencies, and all the constituencies interested in smart growth have two challenges. The first is to have a fleshed-out Growth Centers proposal ready to present to the next Governor in order to continue the momentum. The second is to make it clear to both gubernatorial candidates that the growth centers initiative can

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Grow Smart!

the newsletter of
**Grow Smart
Rhode Island**

www.growsmartri.com

345 South Main St.
Providence, RI 02903

401 273-5711
info@growsmartri.com

Here's how candidates Don Carcieri and Myrth York responded to Grow Smart's key recommendations

Grow Smart recently asked each gubernatorial candidate to respond in writing to a number of key policy recommendations from our Candidates' Briefing Book. We limited each candidate's set of responses to a total of 1200 words. What follows are the complete responses we received from each candidate.

To see a copy of A Strategy for Saving Rhode Island from Sprawl and Urban Decay, visit our website: www.growsmartri.com. From our home page, click on the Reports button.

RIEDC's real estate function

Grow Smart's recommendation: Remove the Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation's real estate function to a separate entity.

Carcieri: The real estate function of RIEDC should be removed to a separate entity.

York: State government needs to play an active role in helping to create new jobs and growing our economy. This means that the state needs to have an economic development agency that will focus on recruiting new businesses and helping existing businesses expand. Currently, RIEDC's real estate function too often distracts the agency from its crucial economic development mission and puts it in conflict with cities and towns. As governor, I will look at moving the real estate component out of RIEDC so that it can concentrate its resources and talents toward growing our economy.

Quonset Point/Davisville

Grow Smart's recommendation: Quonset/Davisville (QD) should only be used for enterprises that cannot be feasibly sited elsewhere in RI.

Carcieri: Quonset Point should be a model for the development of mixed-use high technology industrial parks. My vision for a Narragansett Bay Technology Park on the site takes advantage of the unique and special setting on Narragansett Bay to draw in companies and drive our economic base through the next century. We need to be focused on new generation technologies, the ones that will be the growth industries in the coming years. We should make use of this unique location to develop a park that can be enjoyed by all and still be a site that will attract business to our state.

York: Quonset Point will play a critical role in Rhode Island's future economic growth, and it is a unique asset for the state of Rhode Island. However for too many years, the threat of a large-load container port has jeopardized the growth and expansion of new businesses

and industries. As Governor, I will stop the EIS study and withdraw the application so that this threat no longer exists. I want to see Quonset Point become the Slater Mill of the 21st Century by creating a place where a new wave of biotechnology and biomanufacturing businesses, as well as progressive manufacturers can grow. We should maximize the large available space at Quonset to allow industry clustering that fosters the interchange of ideas and products.

Quonset Point/Davisville planning gaps

Grow Smart's recommendation: Address key gaps in planning for QD's future development identified in a recent Grow Smart report, including minimizing the impact of QD's growth on surrounding communities, resolving transportation funding issues, preventing local highway congestion and applying more effective planning to both storm water and wastewater at QD.

Carcieri: If Quonset is to be properly and successfully developed, we must address the impact of a large number of new jobs on the southern part of the state. Infrastructure issues such as schools, sewage, water, housing, transportation and commercial development in the surrounding areas must be outlined and addressed. Traffic congestion must be adequately dealt with in an overall plan. In addition, environmental concerns in managing stormwater and wastewater must be planned for. In short, an overall plan dealing with the myriad issues raised by the Grow Smart report must be produced.

York: As Quonset Point grows, the surrounding communities and the Bay will inevitably feel some impact. We must do everything we can to minimize this impact and protect our natural resources while factoring in the transportation challenges to the surrounding community. This issue demands real leadership from the Governor's Office, and that is why I am committed to developing and implementing a comprehensive plan to ensure that the future development of QD is environmentally sound and economically sustainable.

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Candidates, continued

Property Tax as a sprawl driver

Grow Smart's recommendation: End Rhode Island's over reliance on the property tax by considering seriously at least three alternatives: a statewide property tax, regional property tax sharing, or a transfer of some of the burden for education funding from the local property tax to an existing state tax such as the income or sales tax.

Carcieri: I am open to considering a range of suggestions regarding property tax issues. The Grow Smart report includes a number of intriguing ideas that will need to be carefully examined by the next Governor. I will have a working group in my administration to address these and other ideas and to propose the most workable options.

York: I believe that all of our children deserve a high-quality education. We have world-class standards in Rhode Island, and I am confident that when our children meet these standards they will be able to compete for any job in the world. Our state's over-reliance on local property tax has created an excessively large burden on our cities, our towns and our families. It has also created a disparity in the school systems throughout the state. I do believe that we need to reduce our over reliance on the property tax, yet our state is currently in a fiscal crisis. Realistically, the state will not be able to absorb additional school aid costs at this time. As Governor, I will investigate a variety of options and work to create a long-term plan so that we can move away from this over reliance on property taxes.

Growth Centers

Grow Smart's recommendation: Target state public investments to compact mixed use growth centers that would be identified by local municipalities through the comprehensive planning process. Identify and eliminate regulatory hurdles that discourage development in growth centers.

Carcieri: We need a coordinated development plan for the State of Rhode Island, one which makes best use of our greatest assets, Narragansett Bay and our unique history and environment. This plan would, as a key component, layout where and how we want development to grow in this state. It needs to be a Big Picture plan with a philosophy that drives development. Much like Grow Smart's emphasis on "growth centers" the Rhode Island Economic Policy Council has begun their "Places" Initiative, which seeks to drive growth and

development with an effort to utilize Rhode Island's "authenticity of place." These ideas need to be embraced in development. In addition, we must support and encourage state-wide zoning to concentrate such growth centers.

York: As Rhode Island communities and businesses expand, we need to make sure that our state's growth is managed in such a way that we maximize land use, reduce destruction of our environment, and prevent avoidable costs to our communities. As Governor, I will work with the Office of Statewide Planning, the Governor's Growth Planning Council and local municipalities to explore opportunities for mixed-use, growth centers. These centers reduce sprawl and can be particularly beneficial for seniors and teenagers, two populations that can benefit from easily accessible civic, commercial and recreational facilities. We need to identify existing growth centers and determine whether there is room for expansion, as well as carefully plan for the development of new centers.

Status of Statewide Planning

Grow Smart's recommendation: Elevate the status of the Statewide Planning office by pursuing one of two options: (1)Return the office to the division-level within the Dept of Administration, with the head of Statewide Planning appointed by and serving at the pleasure of the Governor. (2)Create an independent cabinet-level agency for Statewide Planning similar to the structure that exists in Maryland.

Carcieri: Statewide planning for development will be a priority in my administration. We need to completely reevaluate the process Rhode Island uses for planning and economic development. We need to make sure that there is a prioritized statewide view of all development in the state. That means we need a plan for how we are developing affordable housing, what we are doing to make sure that infrastructure issues are being addressed on the state level and a master plan for Narragansett Bay. This means setting priorities and then sticking by them. The Statewide Planning Office needs to take on a greater role to help make this happen.

York: Planning is critical for the economic development of this state and the quality of life for all Rhode Islanders. As Governor, I want to effectively plan for both short-term and long-term growth so that we protect and capitalize on our state's assets. Statewide planning must play a greater role in the development of policy and programs. The form in which planning takes in this enhanced role is yet to be determined.

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Transportation funding crisis

Grow Smart's recommendation: Integrate the decision-making processes concerning all modes of transportation with a view toward creating a State-level department that provides viable alternatives to the current transportation imbalance that under-funds public transportation in the form of rail and bus.

Carciari: Our transportation system is in trouble. The DOT has a current budget shortfall of almost 50% of its budget in just this calendar year. Our infrastructure is deteriorating and we do not have the money to keep up with restoration, let alone major new projects. For instance, temporary bridges have spanned the Barrington and Warren Rivers for going on 10 years now, as the historic bridges await state money to be repaired. We need to find money to make sure that what we have is maintained and safety is not compromised. At the same time, we should be working on long term plans for infrastructure and public transportation, determining where we want to go and what we need to do to get there, so that when we do have the resources to make substantive changes we can. My Administration will ensure that there is coordinated decision making between all state agencies dealing with transportation.

York: I believe the state needs to do a better job of coordinating decision-making throughout government in order to plan more effectively and efficiently. For too long, state government has operated in its individual silos. We need to break down the artificial barriers between agencies, departments and programs in order to maximize the use of taxpayer dollars and balance the needs of all our citizens. This is certainly the case with the issue of transportation. As Governor, I will work to create a state-level approach that integrates all of the important pieces of the transportation puzzle.

Brownfields revitalization

Grow Smart's recommendation: Introduce legislation providing for a state brownfields income tax credit to help developers offset the costs of assessment and remediation, and provide additional staffing for brownfields within RIDEM and RIEDC.

Carciari: If we are going to have a plan that targets growth and attempts to revitalize the urban centers of our state then we are going to need to develop tax and incentive programs to bring developers back into those

regions. It is going to take some state investment of money and man-hours to reap the rewards of better economic development and coordinated growth down the line.

York: As Governor, I plan to redevelop Rhode Island's brownfields by applying for and maximizing the use of available federal dollars and introducing legislation for a state tax credit. The 74 brownfields that have already been redeveloped in Rhode Island have produced over 950 jobs and generated \$4.3 million annually in income tax revenue. As Governor, I will do all that I can to increase the reuse of brownfields.

Affordable housing

Grow Smart's recommendation: Make a commitment to fully fund in a predictable way the multi-year Neighborhood Opportunities Program and consider providing a more permanent and reliable source of funding for affordable housing and land conservation through appropriations and or a dedicated funding stream to the Rhode Island Housing and Land Conservation Trust Fund.

Carciari: We need to make a concerted effort to increase affordable housing in this state. I support the Neighborhood Opportunities Program and was vocal in my opposition to Governor Almond's decision to freeze the \$5,000,000 allocated to it. We do need to create a cohesive and consistent funding system for this program, and others like it so that multi-year, long term plans can be made to affect change in housing.

York: Providing affordable housing for low- and moderate-income families is a top priority for my administration. The \$10 million bond that Governor Almond's administration authorized is a good first step to ensure that we are able to provide safe and affordable housing to Rhode Islanders. However, this is not a reliable or long-term solution to a very real problem. I served on the board of SHAC, and as Governor will welcome the opportunity to continue to work with interested parties to discuss ways to provide more permanent and reliable funding for affordable housing.

Municipal capacity building

Grow Smart's recommendation: Identify a mechanism to ensure long-term, broad availability of training and technical assistance to municipalities, including assistance in GIS capacity building and in the development of ordinances to promote land

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Candidates, continued

conservation through such techniques as cluster development, transfer of development rights, etc.

Carcieri: There needs to be more coordination between state and local agencies in regards to economic development. There is no reason that, in a state our size, our state economic development planners are fighting with the municipalities, who are also fighting amongst themselves, to get companies to buy their land. We should be helping municipalities in any way we can, while at the same time encouraging them to attract new business and support old business in such a way as to bolster not only their local interests but also our state as a whole.

York: Thoughtful, strategic, long-term planning must occur on both the state and local level. I commend the many citizens across the state that serve their communities in planning functions. However, I recognize that cities and towns offer varying amounts of training and staff assistance to these individuals. I will seek opportunities to make professional development classes available to them.

Grow Smart awarded Rhode Island Foundation Challenge Grant

The Rhode Island Foundation recently awarded Grow Smart Rhode Island a \$58,000 Challenge Grant for continued funding of our research position, website, information clearinghouse activity, and this newsletter. To secure the funds from this grant, we need to raise an equal amount in funds from new sources and or expanded existing sources. None of the Rhode Island Foundation's grant money will be released until we have raised \$14,500 in funds from these sources, so a major push is underway to reach out to new prospects and previous donors willing to raise their level of support for Grow Smart. We hope that many of you will consider supporting Grow Smart this fall. (You can use the fundraising form below to do so.) Please remember that if you haven't given to us before, or are able to give us more this year than last year, your donation will generate some matching funds from the RI Foundation.

By its nature, a Challenge Grant presents new challenges, but we think that this grant can be a useful tool for us in expanding our funding base. It's also worth noting that if we can meet the conditions of the challenge, we will receive \$ 11,000 more in funds from The Rhode Island Foundation in the current grant year than we did in the previous year.

We need your help!

To help Grow Smart continue to play a leadership role in protecting our special places and revitalizing our cities and town centers, please help us with a tax-deductible contribution of:

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RI's Transportation: What's Next?

Funding challenges can be a catalyst for choice

by Ken Payne

Last month the RI Public Expenditure Council released an important study on an impending crisis in the way the state funds transportation. This report, Rhode Island at the Crossroads, presented two major findings: (1) the current system of transportation finance is unsustainable, and (2) Rhode Island lacks an integrated organizational system to make decisions about transportation. Grow Smart believes that this represents a great opportunity to engage Rhode Islanders in a discussion of transportation--a vital component of smart growth. The following article is adapted from some thoughts on the subject of transportation that were offered to our Advisory Council by Ken Payne of the Senate Policy Office.

Our readers are encouraged to visit the website of the RI Public Expenditure Council for a look at Rhode Island at the Crossroads (<http://www.ripec.org/pdf/Transportation%20Paper1.pdf>).

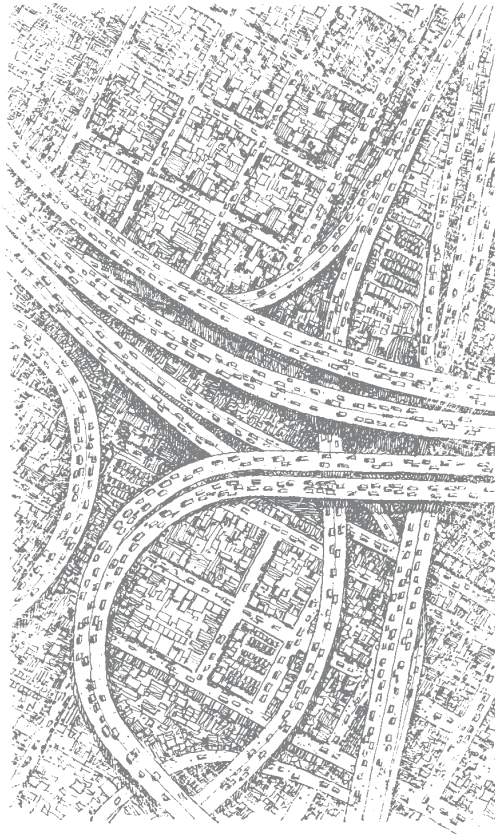
It could well be that Rhode Island is at an important turning point. Following the recommendations of a 1958 report to the Governor, Rhode Island began to borrow money to match Federal funds to build interstate highways. The plan was to use this borrow-to-match strategy only during the period of interstate construction. Previously the State did not go into debt to build roads; it was a pay-as-you-go approach to financing. But the construction of Rhode Island's portion of the interstate system required more funding than was available on a pay-as-you-go basis, and interstate highways were a vision for the future.

Non-stop borrowing

In 1960 the borrowing began, and it has not stopped. Rhode Island continues to borrow, but the State pays more in debt service (\$43 million per year) than it gets from the issuance of new bonds (\$30 million per year). Debt service is gnawing away at the State's transportation budget and is threatening our ability to maintain our roads and bridges.

Furthermore, Rhode Island compared with other states is disproportionately reliant on Federal funds. The late Senator John H. Chafee did an admirable job using his positions on key committees to make sure Rhode Island was well taken care of; but experience teaches that disproportionate Federal largesse rarely lasts forever. The incremental transfer of the RI gas tax from the General Fund to transportation and the creative use of unique Federal provisions have kept the RI Public Transit Authority (RIPTA) operating without sharp reductions in service. RIPTA costs continue to grow

moderately, while its revenues are essentially stagnant and its Federal support is expiring. RIPTA is faced with substantial deficits. Are major service cuts the answer?



So it appears that something basic has to change in transportation finance in Rhode Island. This is among the conclusions reached by a committee convened by the Rhode Island Public Expenditure Council (RIPEC).

Complicated issues of public finance land like a thud in most public debates. For good reason. Taxation is more vexing than inspiring for most of us. What is interesting is what is done with our money.

Future options

What kind of transportation future does Rhode Island want? *There* is a question that resonates. Try to imagine Rhode Island twenty years from now. Will it be more of the same, more roads and more traffic? Will it be the same roads well maintained and the same traffic? Will it be the same roads, but in worse condition, and the same traffic? Will there be public transportation to a meaningful extent? Will the future be qualitatively different from the present?

In 1958, people thought about the future of transportation. Highways were the stuff of world's fairs and visionary architects such as Frank Lloyd Wright. Yes, it was a vision created in part by marketing, but it touched a popular chord, and the public responded. The system of finance set forth in 1958 is ceasing to function. The interstates are built. Several major

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Transportation, continued

projects, most notably the I-195 relocation in Providence, are underway or planned. But is this the stopping or the starting point for our collective imagination?

It is precisely on this note that Grow Smart is an important sounding board. RIPEC's analysis now provides a basis for further discussion. The time may be at hand for communicative action on Rhode Island's transportation future. What you think?

Growth centers, continued

have important benefits for economic development and needs to be continued in the next administration.”

For the full text of the Executive Order and its accompanying press release, go to www.gov.state.ri.us/News%20Releases/Growth%20Center%20rel.htm.

To view a PDF file of the Governor's Growth Planning Council Growth Centers report, go to www.planning.state.ri.us/gpc/gpc.pdf.

Fall Municipal Training Schedule

“Making Good Land-Use Decisions”

Cumberland/Lincoln: Monday, Nov. 18; Monday, Nov. 25; Monday, Dec. 2

Coventry/West Greenwich: Tuesday, Nov. 26; Tuesday, Dec. 3; Tuesday, Dec. 10

Barrington/Bristol/Warren: Thursday, Nov. 21; Thursday, Dec. 5; Wednesday, Dec. 11

Town Council, Planning Board, Zoning Board, and Conservation Commission members will receive announcements by mail. For further information, contact Sheila Brush at 273-5711, ext. 3 or sbrush@growsmartri.com.

HDC Commission Assistance & Mentoring Program: Saturday, November 23

HDC members have already received registration info. For further information, contact workshop planner Christie Kilgus at 245-5561 or ckilgus@aol.com.

Grow Smart Rhode Island

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