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Grow Smart Earns Land-Use Training Award from APA

Providence (RI) Grow Smart Rhode Island, a non-profit public policy group representing a broad coalition of partners fighting sprawl, announced today that it and eight partners have been recognized for its Municipal Land-Use Training Program. The training program, entitled "Making Good Land Use Decisions", received the award at the New England Planning Conference sponsored by the Massachusetts, Connecticut and Rhode Island Chapters of American Planning Association (APA).

"In order for Rhode Island communities to provide for growth and prosperity while preserving the state's natural resources and unique sense of place, municipal officials and staff must well-versed in the principles and practices of sound land-use planning which has become more complex in recent years." said Sheila Brush, Grow Smart's Director of Programs and the chief architect of the training program. "Through the help of our partners, we've been able to deliver professional land-use training to more than 325 people in 26 Rhode Island communities." she said.

In 2000, Grow Smart Rhode Island convened a coalition of agencies and organizations to launch municipal land-use training initiative. The coalition

of agencies and organizations includes the American Planning Association – RI Chapter, Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission, Rhode Island League of Cities & Towns, Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, Rhode Island Statewide Planning Program, URI Coastal Resources Center, URI Cooperative Extension, and the United State Environmental Protection Agency.

The coalition's first training program "Making Good Land-Use Decisions," debuted in the late fall of 2001. This fall the coalition has expanded training opportunities to include workshops on Affordable Housing and Conservation Development.

As the convener of the Municipal Land-Use Training Initiative, Grow Smart also wrote grant applications to obtain necessary underwriting for training development and delivery costs. Funding was obtained from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission, USEPA, RI Builders Association, RI Housing, RI Statewide Planning and RI DOT. Other organizations have made in-kind contributions. Grow Smart also recruited a number of land-use attorneys who volunteer their time to the training effort.