



Grow Smart RI Presentation to the Land Use Commission

Smart Growth: A Powerful Land Use Strategy for Improving Economic Opportunity and Quality of Life

Tuesday April 12, 2022



Smart Growth can achieve community development goals and improve quality of life

To do it, we'll need:

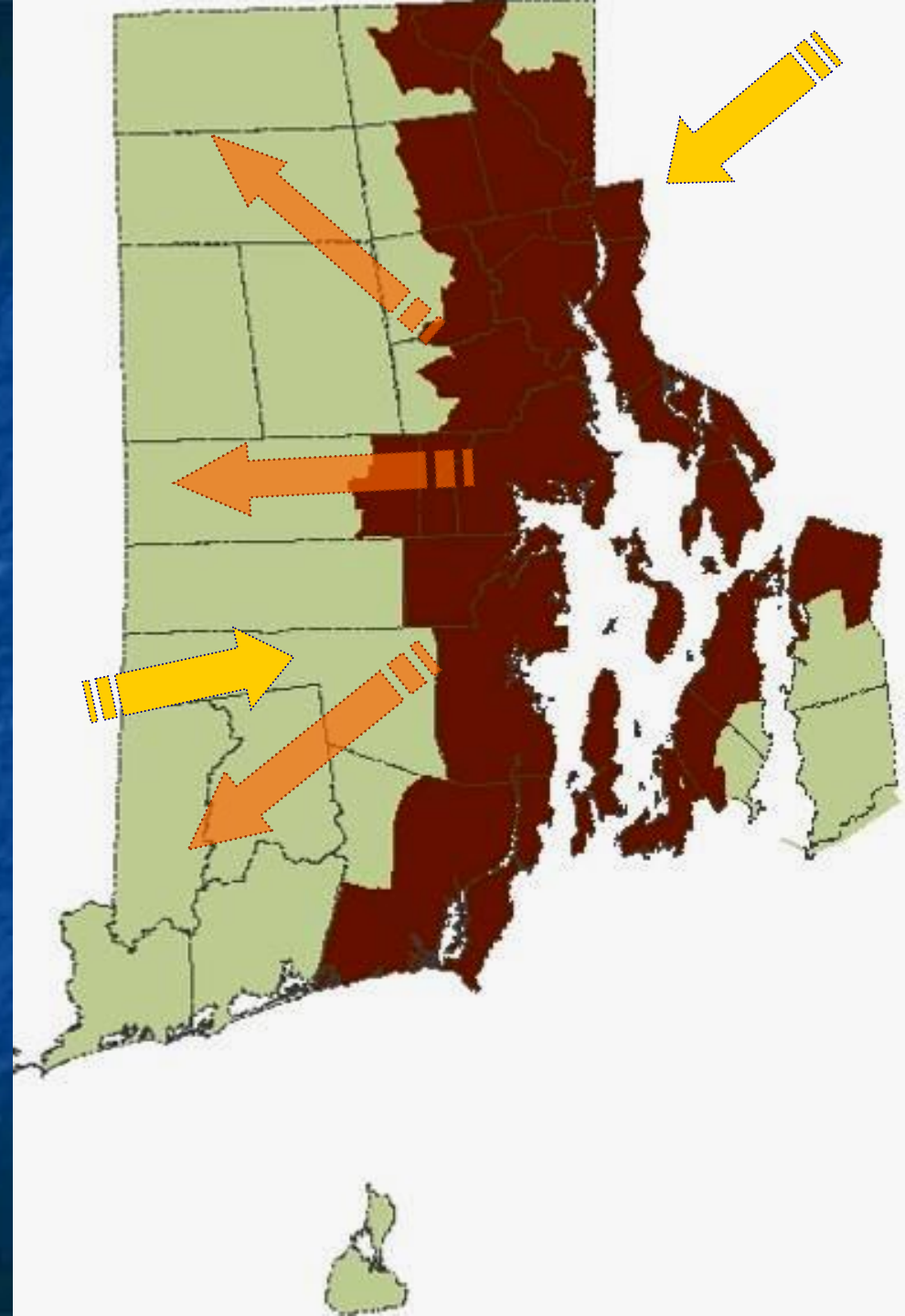
- Increased local capacity, education and training for officials and development practitioners
- Funding for infrastructure improvements to support density
- Incentives and technical assistance for zoning innovations
- Stronger partnerships between state and municipalities

Key Points

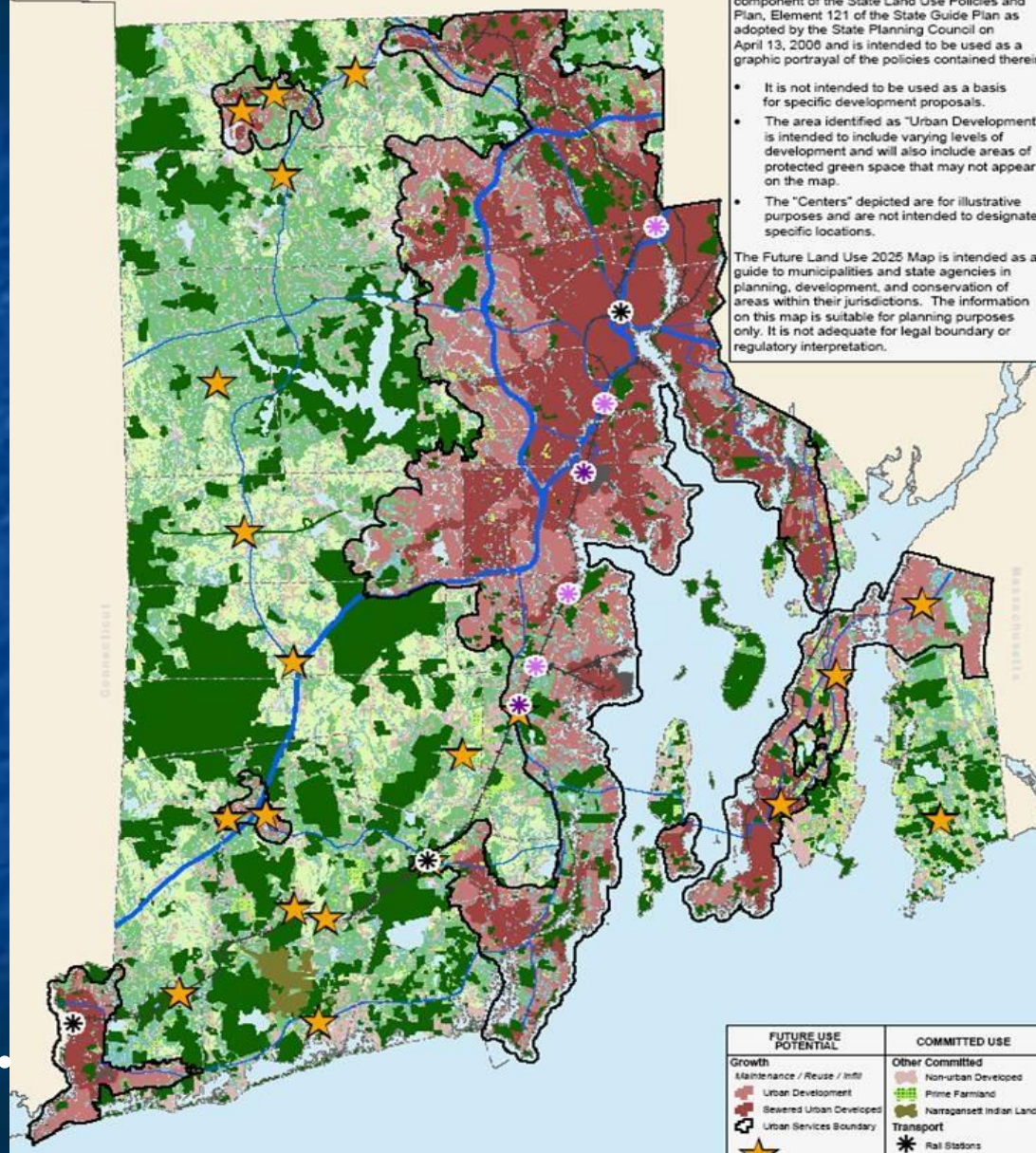
- RI land use laws are not perfect and need revision but aren't the main barrier
- Smart growth tools are already working
- Municipalities need training, technical assistance and funding
- Municipal solicitors need training on land use laws
- Developers/site designers need training
- A standing technical advisory group is warranted to carefully assess ongoing revisions to land use laws

Where are we?

- 80%+ Rhode Islanders still live in urbanized areas along the Bay & major rivers
- And nearly 80% already live within a 10-min walk of a transit stop



Future Land Use 2025



RI Vision from Land Use 2025

What is Smart Growth?

Smart growth integrates the work of diverse stakeholders to advance and support healthy, resilient, opportunity-rich, and sustainable communities for everybody, everywhere.

What Are the Benefits of Smart Growth?

- Sustainable Economic Growth
- More Affordable, Healthy Transportation Choices
- Housing Diversity and Affordability
- Environmental Stewardship – Climate Goals
- Quality of Life
- Improved Public Health

Smart Growth Land Use Techniques

- Transit Oriented Development (TOD)
- Downtown and Main Street Revitalization
- Mixed Use Zoning and Development
- Conservation Development
- Transfer of Development Rights

Transit Oriented Development

Conant Thread District
Pawtucket / Central Falls

EVALUATING THE POTENTIAL FOR TRANSIT-ORIENTED
DEVELOPMENT IN RHODE ISLAND



Vibrant Downtowns and Main Streets



The Benefits of Villages



South County Commons

Office: 54,000 sq.ft.

Retail: 70,000 sq.ft.

Residential: 460

Net Revenue:
\$1.3 million



Conservation Development

MUNICIPAL ADVANTAGES:

- Preserves land without buying it
- Reduces town services costs for roads
- Increases tax value of site



Economic Advantages Landowners

- Construction costs reduced by 40%
- Lots sell 47% faster
- CD Lots sold for 17% more \$ than standard
- National Association of Realtor's study found an increase of 20-29%

Source: *The Economics of Conservation Subdivisions*, Rayman Mohamed (2006). Urban Affairs Review

Conservation Development

Environmental Advantages

- Preserves vegetated buffers along wetlands, streams, and ponds to protect water quality
- Reduces stormwater runoff by cutting down on impervious surfaces like streets and driveways
- Protects critical habitat and travel corridors for wildlife
- Reduces fragmentation of forest blocks and other unique habitats

Transfer of Development Rights

Owner of "sending" parcel sells development rights in exchange for permanent conservation easement.

sending area



receiving area



Owner of "receiving" parcel buys development rights to build at densities higher than allowed under base zoning.







Additional Tools to Implement Smart Growth

- State Historic Tax Credit
- Rebuild RI
- Municipal Infrastructure Grants
- Super Tax Increment Financing
- Housing Funding and Incentives
- Brownfield Funding
- Reform of standards for granting zoning variances

Key Take-Aways

- Municipal Board/Commission Training
- Training for attorneys, developers, site designers
- Municipal Land Use Technical Assistance
- Funds: (Re)development Planning/Implementation

Next Steps

- Enable TDR
- Division of Planning Training / Circuit Rider
- Local Development Fellows Program (MA)
- Adequately Capitalize Municipal Infrastructure Grant Program
- Promote availability & use of existing housing incentives (FY2022 State Budget)
- Chapter 40-A Housing Choices TOD Zoning (MA)
- Chapter 40-R The Smart Growth Zoning Overlay District Act MA)
- CT Incentive Housing Zones (IHZ)
- Enact proposed funding for Main Street RI Program
- Renewable energy siting reform
- Reform statewide standards for granting zoning variances

Thank you....

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