

# Smart Growth Online

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## Principles of Smart Growth

### Create Walkable Neighborhoods

Walkable communities are desirable places to live, work, learn, worship and play, and therefore a key component of smart growth. Their desirability comes from two factors. First, walkable communities locate within an easy and safe walk goods (such as housing, offices, and retail) and services (such as transportation, schools, libraries) that a community resident or employee needs on a regular basis. Second, by definition, walkable communities make pedestrian activity possible, thus expanding transportation options, and creating a streetscape that better serves a range of users -- pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, and automobiles. To foster walkability, communities must mix land uses and build compactly, and ensure safe and inviting pedestrian corridors.

Walkable communities are nothing new. Outside of the last half-century communities worldwide have created neighborhoods, communities, towns and cities premised on pedestrian access. Within the last fifty years public and private actions often present created obstacles to walkable communities. Conventional land use regulation often prohibits the mixing of land uses, thus lengthening trips and making walking a less viable alternative to other forms of travel. This regulatory bias against mixed-use development is reinforced by private financing policies that view mixed-use development as riskier than single-use development. Many communities -- particularly those that are dispersed and largely auto-dependent -- employ street and development design practices that reduce pedestrian activity.

As the personal and societal benefits of pedestrian friendly communities are realized -- benefits which include lower transportation costs, greater social interaction, improved personal and environmental health, and expanded consumer choice -- many are calling upon the public and private sector to facilitate the development of walkable places. Land use and community design plays a pivotal role in encouraging pedestrian environments. By building places with multiple destinations within close proximity, where the streets and sidewalks balance all forms of transportation, communities have the basic framework for encouraging walkability.

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**"Growth may be inevitable; sprawl is not."**

*-- Hollister, California resident and architect  
[Christine Breen](#)*

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