

## Smart Growth Community Assessment for Planning Projects

### Introduction

The New York State Smart Growth Community Planning Program funds community plans and zoning regulations that incorporate the DOS Smart Growth planning principles. Communities have found that aligning planning and zoning with these principles helps lay the groundwork for resilient, healthy, vibrant, and unique places.

This exercise is meant to facilitate an open discussion on how conditions in your community relate to the Smart Growth principles outlined below.

### Instructions

- Think first about current community conditions as they relate to the principles.
- Identify specific geographic locations where questions are relevant.
- Designate a note taker to document key takeaways of the discussion
- Optional: use a map to make notes and guide the discussion.

## Assessment

### **Community Background**

- Describe your community and how it has or has not changed in the past 30 years.

**Mixed-Use Neighborhoods:** Develop plans and land use regulations that allow for and encourage mixed-use neighborhoods.

- Are there areas in your community that support a mixture of uses within walking distance in the same neighborhood or within buildings, such as residential and commercial uses together?
- Are there neighborhoods where it's difficult to access day-to-day necessities?

**Diversity of Housing:** Enable a diverse mix of housing types, providing opportunity and choice for all.

- What neighborhoods in your community support different housing types, such as apartments, townhomes, and single-family homes?
- Does the community allow for and support a range of housing that is accessible, affordable, and available for people at different income levels and ages?

**Infill and Redevelopment:** Prioritize infill and redevelopment of existing buildings to revitalize neighborhoods and downtowns, including areas around public transit.

- Are there underutilized or abandoned spaces within developed areas of your community that could better be used? For instance, are there vacant lots where buildings used to stand, buildings that have sat vacant, or underutilized parking lots?

**Public Spaces:** Provide well-planned, equitable, and accessible public spaces.

- What kinds of community gathering spaces or public spaces exist in your community? How are those spaces used and by whom?
- Do these spaces serve all members of your community?

**Compact Neighborhoods:** Encourage compact neighborhood design and concentrated development around existing infrastructure.

- What are the most compact areas in your community?
- Where is new development happening in your community?

**Open Space:** Preserve open space, agricultural resources, and natural resources.

- How would new development impact open spaces, agricultural lands, and natural resources in your community?
- What are the areas that are most important to protect?

**Alternative Transportation:** Prioritize transportation options such as walking, cycling, and public transportation.

- How do people without cars get places safely within your community?
- What would encourage you to walk, bike, and use public transit more within your community?

**Climate Resilience and Mitigation:** Promote climate resiliency and adaptation, preferably through nature-based solutions, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

- What major weather events, such as heavy snow, flooding, tornadoes, extreme heat, drought, etc. have affected your community and how?
- Are there areas in your community that are particularly susceptible to damage from a major weather event?

**Sense of Place:** Build on unique traits to create an attractive and welcoming community with a strong sense of place.

- What are the strongest characteristics about your community? What makes your community unique?
- Are there public artworks, gathering spaces, views, or landmarks that are particularly treasured by community members and visitors?

**Community Engagement:** Engage in an inclusive, collaborative public planning process that considers the needs and character of the community.

- What community engagement activities have been successful in your community?
- What community members or groups have been historically difficult to reach or otherwise absent from community planning discussions?