



Smart Growth and Urban Infill Guidance

Choosing smart growth over sprawl is one of the most powerful decisions city and other local governments can make to reduce climate emissions and air pollution, conserve local habitat, and improve the health of their communities. Urban infill, which involves increasing density through adding new housing, commercial, retail, and public facilities to already developed neighborhoods, is a key strategy for minimizing sprawl and vehicle miles traveled.

The Sierra Club's new [Smart Growth and Urban Infill Guidance](#) was created to help staff and volunteers at all levels of the organization implement the [Urban Infill Policy](#) adopted by the Board of Directors in May 2019. It provides information about how to put the policy pieces together, and offers information about smart growth principles and practices. **To be clear, this guidance document is advisory only—it does not set any new policy for the Sierra Club.**

To provide comprehensive guidance for Sierra Club members who plan to apply the Urban Infill Policy at the local level, the guide includes an overview of how land use decisions get made; how to get involved in the planning process; what types of housing and transportation projects, plans, and policies we should support or oppose; and how to guarantee adequate and meaningful public participation, especially by communities historically underrepresented in urban planning. It provides context-sensitive solutions that range from missing middle solutions that should be allowed in nearly every single family neighborhood, to more intensive transit-oriented

development forms that can enhance transit oriented corridors and centers.

The document includes examples of good and bad infill development projects from around the country, as well as, recommendations for how community members can influence their local councils or boards to turn away from sprawling development and adopt progressive infill policies, plans, and programs.

The new guidance covers:

- **Infill development:** Smart growth that is compact, walkable, and transit-supportive or transit-oriented. It also covers misconceptions around infill and how to address them.
- **Housing access for all:** This includes the creation of more housing across the full spectrum of affordability, with an emphasis on increasing the supply of deeply affordable housing. The Urban Infill Policy explicitly states that access to affordable housing is a human right and that every neighborhood needs to do its part.
- **Active transportation:** Any self-propelled, human-powered mode of transportation, such as walking, bicycling, or rolling. The guidance discusses how Sierra Club members can support active transit programs. Climate resilience: How we must adapt existing structures and push for land use policies that mitigate climate change impacts.
- **Labor:** A deep dive into supporting the right to organize and how environmentalists can work to promote quality union jobs and family-sustaining wages.

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