THE POLITICS OF STRENGTHENING SMART GROWTH IN MARYLAND

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Notes from her presentation at CNU 2000: The Politics of Place

CONGRESS FOR THE NEW URBANISM

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JUNE 16, 2000, 1:15 PM

Executive Power:

- Maryland has a strong executive branch, which, during most of the tenure of Governor Glendening, has had a positive impact on growth. It is dangerous, however, to rely so heavily on one person for good policy.

- Glendening issued an Executive Order which is much stronger than the 1997 Neighborhood Conservation and Smart Growth Act, requiring state agencies to further target resources within Priority Funding Areas and to institutionalize the ideals of smart growth.

- The Governor's control over the budget can be used as a tool to achieve certain goals. The Governor can refuse to fund certain projects that are contradictory to smart growth, and the Governor can withhold the supplemental budget until certain that the legislature will pass a specific piece of legislation.

- The Governor stands behind difficult decisions, such as state spending on schools, the removal of five bypasses from the state budget, and the location of a new branch of the University of Maryland.

State versus local land use control:

By definition, Maryland's smart growth law, which limits state spending on growth-related projects to Priority Funding Areas, does not affect local land use control, which is where many of the most pertinent land use decisions are made.

Maryland General Assembly:

- In order to continue to pass legislation at the state level, we need to work with individual legislators. Maryland does not allow ballot initiatives.

- Although urban and suburban jurisdictions have more votes than rural jurisdictions, the leadership of the legislature is almost always from rural jurisdictions, in order to sidestep the antagonistic relationship between the Baltimore and Washington regions. As a result, rural jurisdictions yield a lot of power in the state legislature.

- It is not always true that rural jurisdictions are less likely to support smart growth than urban or suburban jurisdictions. The Glendening administration has worked closely with the Maryland Municipal League to ensure that rural municipalities and villages benefit from smart growth. The 2000 Smart Codes legislation, which eases rehabilitation require-

ments by merging disparate codes into one document and defines five different levels of work, received widespread support from rural jurisdictions.

- Growth is a bipartisan issue. However, due to poor relations with the Governor, several Republicans regularly vote against his priority issues, which are often related to growth.

Local Land Use Control:

In order to strengthen smart growth in Maryland, we need to change local policy.

- County councils vary in their support of smart growth. Many people agree in principle but when it comes to making tough decisions "on the ground", they change their stance.
- Development was a major factor in the 1998 elections as the local level, resulting in upsets in Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Carroll, Montgomery, St. Mary's, and Worcester Counties.

Inter-County Connector:

The Inter-County Connector is a good example of a heated political battle that began as a local land use and transportation issue and has become a statewide tug-of-war between smart growth advocates and their opponents.

- **Factual information is important but not enough.** Power, money, connections, diversified support, and a clear message play an equal role in the politically charged decision-making process.
- **Never underestimate the power of the press.** A traffic reporter from a local radio station merged her traffic reports with a paid advertisement from the Board of Trade (BOT) in support of the ICC. A major newspaper in the area financially supported "Endgridlock", a front group for the BOT. Smart growth advocates revealed the connection.
- **Never underestimate the power of money.** The BOT has $6 million and a large staff to support pro-road candidates around the region. Compared to the BOT, the ICC opponents have far fewer resources, although most of the ICC opponents are able to dedicate personal resources—time and money—to the cause.
- **One clear message resonates better than a complicated message, or multiple messages.** ICC proponents have a clear (although misleading), which resonates better than a complicated message.
- **Local issues generate statewide attention.** When the Montgomery County Council considered selling land within the ICC right-of-way, the leadership in the General Assembly generated support for a bill to rescind Montgomery County's local land use authority. As a result, the County Council agreed to take NO action until after the next general election until 2002.
- **Agencies involved in the NEPA process are not immune to politics.** NEPA buys time for good decisions, but does not by itself insure good decisions. The political environment made it easier for federal agencies to come out against the ICC twice.
- **Growth is a bipartisan issue**. In Montgomery County, Democrats are just as likely as Republicans to support or oppose the ICC.