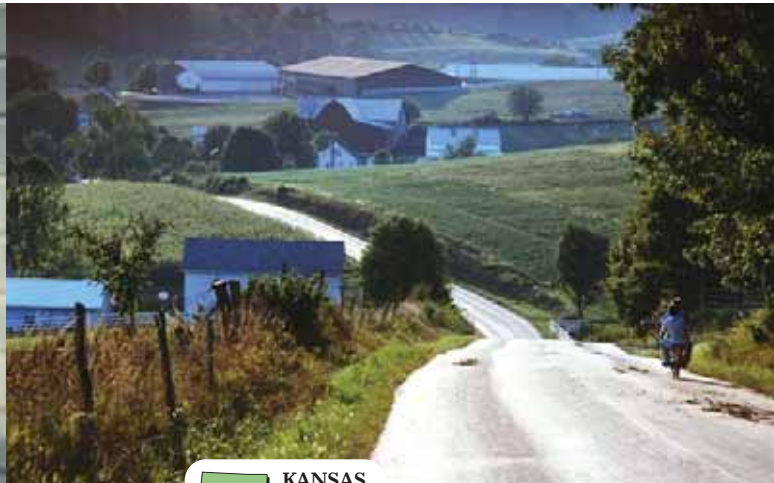


smart Growth in the states

Compiled by Gerald L. Allen, NAR Government Affairs



ALABAMA

Sidewalks are now required under new subdivision regulations approved by the Phenix City Planning Commission in December. The most noticeable changes for residents in the city are new curb and gutter regulations. All roadways within subdivisions are required to be surfaced for their entire width and include curb and gutter. The curb and gutter requirement includes sidewalks. The revised regulations have two conditions for waiver: (1) The curb and gutter requirement does not extend to subdivisions that lie more than 1.5 miles outside the corporate limits of Phenix City containing a minimum lot width of 100 feet; and (2) the regulations will not apply to a subdivision containing at least 20 lots having a minimum area of one acre per lot and average frontage of 200 feet (e.g., estate-type lots).



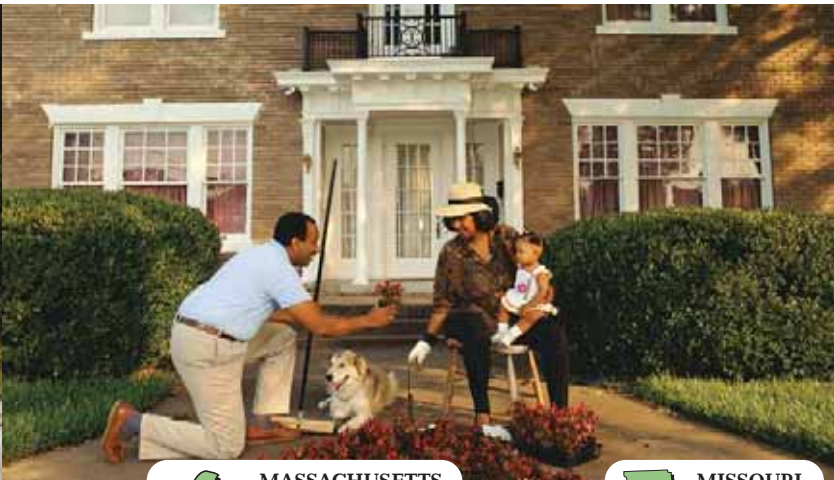
ALASKA

The Vision Fairbanks plan aims to incorporate urban design, economic development and land-use components into a guiding blueprint for the city's center. The project's task force includes local transportation and land-use planners and officials from the city of Fairbanks and the Fairbanks North Star Borough. The task force has hired a consulting firm to help work through this process. By way of smart planning, the Vision Fairbanks project offers Fairbanks a chance to attract investment in the relatively near future, said George Crandall, a partner at the firm leading the project.



KANSAS

City leaders in Lawrence have chosen six areas for scrutiny as a team of planning consultants visits the town seeking the community's input on a "smart code," which is essentially a set of building rules that developers can elect to use instead of the city's standard zoning code. The idea is that if the city offers incentives for developers to follow the "smart code," they'll opt to create pleasant, walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods. At the recent forum, people split into groups to brainstorm about what they like and what they'd like to see improved about the places being studied. A common question posed is whether the rules eventually could be made mandatory. Consultants said the rules can stand by themselves, but that the group usually recommends that city leaders make them mandatory only for newly annexed areas.



MASSACHUSETTS

True to his electoral plank on transit and transit-oriented development, Democratic Gov. Deval Patrick unveiled a \$1.4 billion plan for commuter rail from Boston to Fall River and New Bedford, some 50 miles to the south, confident the line will help bring private investment to the underserved corridor, expand affordable workforce housing, reduce car dependency and improve air quality. Announced just a week after the Transportation Finance Commission estimated the state's transportation repair and maintenance backlog at \$15 billion to \$19 billion, the project will be much harder to fund. Administration officials expect most of the \$1.4 billion to come from taxes generated by development in the rail corridor, hopefully even before line construction begins.



MISSOURI

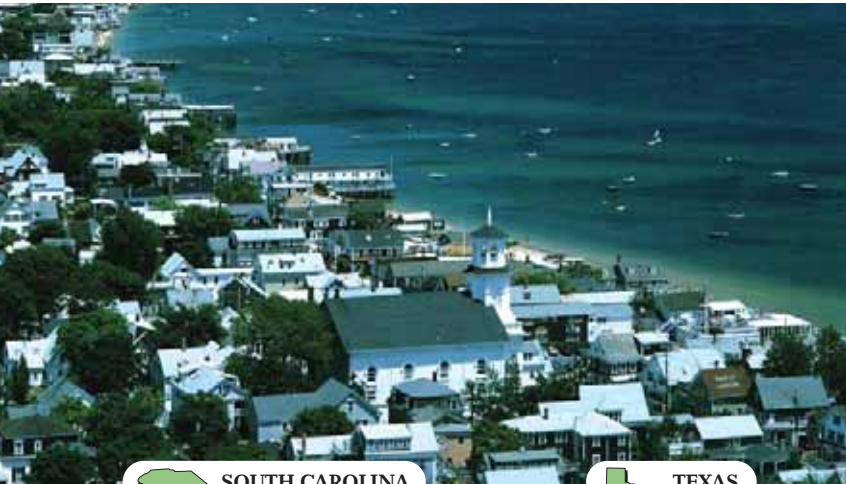
Kansas City is about to overhaul its zoning ordinance for the first time in half a century, with major changes anticipated for landscaping, parking and housing throughout the city. City officials say the public will have plenty of opportunity to comment and if all goes as planned, the city council could vote on the new rules sometime in the summer or fall. The revisions are intended to permit more pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use development, such as corner grocery stores, and would provide for improved landscaping and lighting standards and greater attention to a neighborhood's character when builders construct infill housing. A significant goal for the consultants was producing a zoning ordinance that is much easier for the average person to understand. Illustrations and graphics were provided to make the regulations easier to administer and enforce.



OKLAHOMA

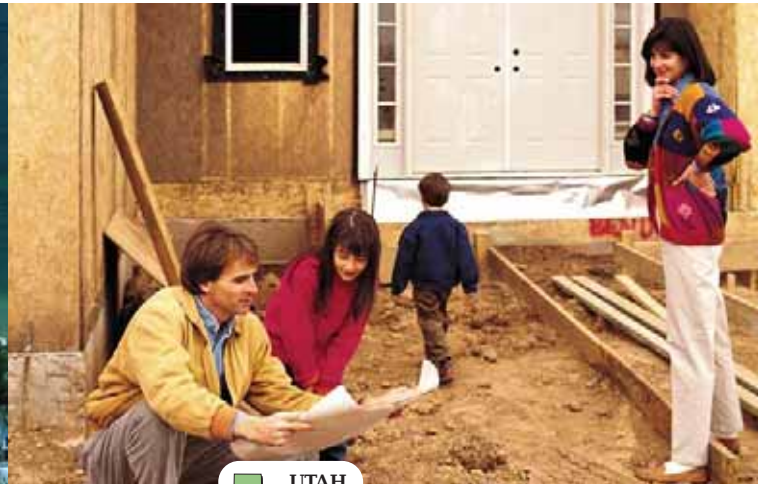
The Oklahoma City Council recently responded to the growing downtown housing market by rezoning the area to make way for residential and retail development amid the downtown offices and skyscrapers. The change is intended to make it easier to turn downtown into a community where people can live, work and play. The new rules will simplify downtown zoning, replacing the current 20-plus types of zoning districts with just three. All three zones will allow for mixed-use development, including residential, retail and commercial. The new rules will also make it harder to build new industrial developments downtown as they will now require special permission from the city. New developments will be subject to a design review committee similar to the one that oversees Bricktown development. The committee will review major developments to make sure architecture and design match other buildings in the area.

smart Growth in the states (continued)



SOUTH CAROLINA

Worried about "profound quality of life issues" caused by sprawl and traffic in North Charleston, across Columbia's suburbs and along the northwestern I-85 corridor, Republican Gov. Mark Sanford told a state planning conference that he seeks "constructive ideas that work" and is "struck by the lack of trust" between developers, environmentalists and planners. Expecting South Carolina's population to increase from 4 to 5.3 million within two decades, Gov. Sanford stressed the importance of smart decisions on growth to improve the state's status in the national competition for jobs, businesses and retirees. The governor is supporting the Priority Investment Act, now in the general assembly, which would require localities to coordinate their comprehensive plans.



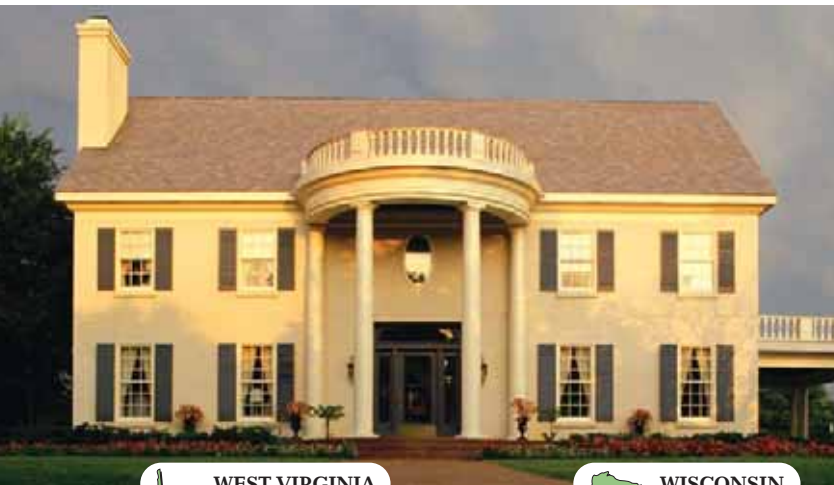
TEXAS

Villa Muse, a \$1.5 billion, mixed-use project near Austin, was recently announced by developers. The anchor would be the \$125 million, 200-acre Villa Muse Studios, with facilities for film, television, advertising, music and video game makers. The development would include a 50,000-square-foot soundstage and recording studios and an outdoor amphitheater with seating for more than 70,000. As planned, Villa Muse would transform 681 acres in eastern Travis County, near the Texas 130 toll road about 10 miles south of Manor, into a small city 15 minutes from downtown Austin.



UTAH

St. George city planners have come up with a design for Little Valley that strikes a balance between residents who don't want to see developers take over the rural area and pressures for new development. The 5.2-square miles in southeast St. George is one of the largest tracts of undeveloped land within city limits. Under the preliminary plan, a majority of the land would be zoned residential, but the existing "equestrian enclaves," with horse trails traveling through the developed areas and connecting with canals and the Virgin River, would be preserved. The residential developments would be built around mixed-use, commercial town centers.



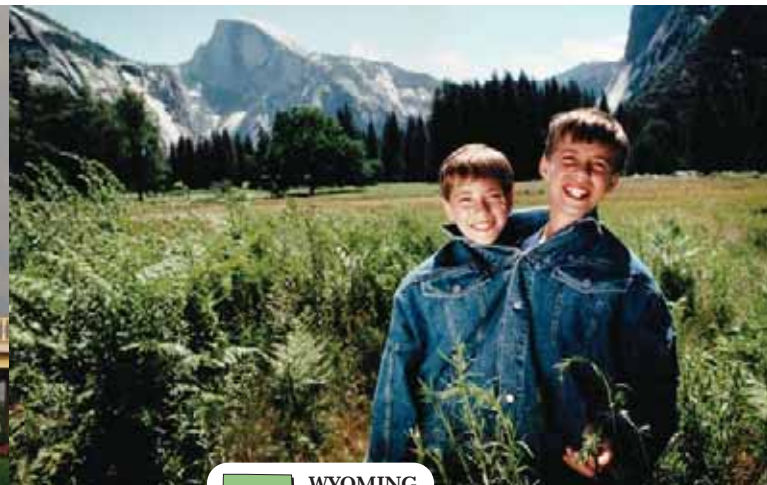
WEST VIRGINIA

Despite some concerns about restrictions, Charleston planning commissioners approved a bill that will amend regulations and make it much easier for residents to form conservation districts to try to protect the architectural integrity of their neighborhoods. Residents already have the ability to form Neighborhood Conservation Districts, but the process has been described as being too tedious. The measure will now go to the city council.



WISCONSIN

Launched in 2000 and saved from budget cuts two years ago, "Wisconsin's Smart Growth program is a model for the nation" as it puts localities "in charge of their future, allowing local decisions to determine the direction that each community takes," said Gov. Jim Doyle, announcing almost \$2.3 million in 2007 Local Comprehensive Planning Grants for 12 multi-jurisdictional applicants, representing 145 villages, municipalities and counties, with a total population of more than 350,000. Under the program, designed to encourage intergovernmental cooperation and public participation in local growth planning, the state has already helped 964 communities that matched the grants to complete their plans by 2010 and qualify for future state development and infrastructure funds.



WYOMING

Casper and Natrona Counties would like to make it easier to convert vacant parkland to other uses, most notably for school construction. However, county managers say that state law prevents them from doing so. Currently, new schools require a certain amount of acreage for parking, but communities are having problems finding enough land to meet the parking requirements. The state law prevents them from converting the vacant parkland into parking lots. Consequently, these schools may be forced out to the fringes, with the city facing higher infrastructure and service extension costs. Managers argue that several hundred thousand dollars could be saved if the county were able to convert vacant parkland into parking lots.