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“Smart Growth @ 10” Conference to Take Critical Look at Maryland’s Landmark Land Use Initiative

COLLEGE PARK, Md. – More than two dozen land use researchers and practitioners will join state legislators, local government officials, home builders, and environmentalists to critically examine Maryland’s “Smart Growth” program during a three-day conference marking the 10th anniversary of passage of the state’s landmark land-use initiative.

The “Smart Growth @ 10” conference will open in Annapolis on Wednesday, October 3, with a keynote address by former Maryland Governor Parris N. Glendening, who developed and introduced the Smart Growth program in 1997. Richard E. Hall, Secretary of the Maryland Department of Planning, will close the conference in College Park on the afternoon of Friday, October 5.

The central portion of the program on Thursday, October 4, and Friday morning, October 5, will feature research on various aspects of the Maryland program by 25 researchers and land use practitioners. Among the paper topics are: a survey of state efforts to manage growth, revitalization, the impact of suburban infill development, forest and farmland conservation, the effects of adequate public facilities ordinances, and the impact of state spending on transportation and sewer infrastructure.

The “Smart Growth @ 10” conference is co-sponsored by the University of Maryland’s National Center for Smart Growth Research and Education and the independent environmental research institute, Resources for the Future.

The full conference agenda may be found at www.smartgrowth.umd.edu.

“Maryland’s Smart Growth initiative has gained a lot of national attention. A 10-year interval is an appropriate time to assess how well it is working and how it might be improved,” said Dr. Gerrit-Jan Knaap, an Urban Studies and Planning professor at the University of Maryland and executive director of the National Center for Smart Growth.

“The trade-offs we face in urban planning, the competition between open space and sprawl, the tensions between population density and traffic congestion – all these issues have only intensified in the past ten years in Maryland and many other regions,” said Margaret Walls, Senior Fellow at Resources for the Future. “This conference will assemble leading authorities to examine future policy directions.”

In addition to remarks by Glendening and Hall, the conference will encompass panel discussions by former staff to Glendening at the time the initiative was developed and enacted; by Maryland municipal and county officials; by environmentalists, developers, and home builders; and by state legislators. All will be asked to reflect on the performance of the Smart Growth program over the past decade and comment on how they see the future of growth management in Maryland.

Due in part to its relatively small size, Maryland ranks as the fifth most densely populated state in the nation. The current population of approximately 5.5 million is expected to increase to about 7 million by 2030. Intense growth pressures are being experienced in virtually all parts of the state except for parts of Baltimore city and some areas of Western Maryland.

The Smart Growth @ 10 conference is also being co-sponsored by the Abell Foundation; the Office of the Provost, School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation, College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, School of Engineering, and School of Public Policy, all at the University of Maryland; the Development, Community & Environment Division and the National Center for Environmental Economics, both at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; the American Planning Association, Maryland Chapter; the Chesapeake Bay Foundation; Parsons Brinckerhoff; and, the Maryland departments of Agriculture, Business and Economic Development, Environment, Housing and Community Development, Natural Resources, Planning, and Transportation.