

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**THE FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH PARTNERS WITH SMART GROWTH  
NETWORK TO  
BECOME FIRST PUBLIC HEALTH PARTNER IN THE NATION**

*~~ Land Use Planning a Critical Part of Public Health ~~*

**TALLAHASSEE** — Florida Department of Health (DOH) and Smart Growth Network officials today announced DOH as the first public health partner in the Smart Growth Network. The Network, formed in 1996, is a response to increasing community interest in developing communities able to boost the economy, protect the environment, and improve community life. The Network is supported by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) and partners include a variety of public and private agencies.

“Communities must be designed to encourage walking, biking, social interaction, prevent traffic injuries, and offer healthful services in near proximity,” State Surgeon General Ana M. Viamonte Ros, M.D., M.P.H. said. “In Florida this issue hits close to home because of our growing population over the age of 65, estimated to double by the year 2020. We have to plan ahead, use resources wisely, and have alternatives available.”

Motor vehicle traffic in Florida has continued to rise, while the number of trips people take on foot has dropped by 42% in the last 20 years, with 54% of all trips under a half mile being made in vehicles. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recently reported 60% of Florida adults are overweight or obese, 26% of Florida high-school students are overweight or at risk of becoming overweight, and 28% of low-income children between 2 and 5 years of age in Florida are overweight or at risk of becoming overweight.

The Florida Department of Health is encouraging Floridians to support land use decisions that improve the public health.

The Smart Growth Network supports 10 Principles as follows:

- [Create a Range of Housing Opportunities and Choices](#)  
Providing quality housing for people of all income levels is vital to supporting communities.
- [Create Walkable Neighborhoods](#)  
Walkable communities are desirable places to live, work, learn, worship, play, exercise, and know one's neighbors.
- [Encourage Community and Stakeholder Collaboration](#)  
Growth can create great places to live, work and play -- if it responds to a community's own needs and sense of how and where it wants to grow.
- [Foster Distinctive, Attractive Communities with a Strong Sense of Place](#)  
Smart growth encourages communities to create its own identity and set standards which respond to community values of architectural beauty and distinctiveness.

- [Make Development Decisions Predictable, Fair and Cost Effective](#)  
For a community to be successful and sustainable in supporting smart growth, decisions must be embraced and understandable to both private and public sectors.
- [Mix Land Uses](#)  
Smart growth supports the combination of mixed land uses in communities as a critical piece in achieving better places to live, living and aging in place, and improved choices in close proximity.
- [Preserve Open Space, Farmland, Natural Beauty and Critical Environmental Areas](#)  
Preservation strengthens the local economy, gives residents choices in natural amenities, and secures quality of life for future populations.
- [Provide a Variety of Transportation Choices](#)  
Providing people with more choices in transportation is a key factor in smart growth and public health.
- [Strengthen and Direct Development Towards Existing Communities](#)  
Smart growth encourages development in existing communities that already have public services or systems in place, making use of the resources that these existing neighborhoods offer, while conserving open space and irreplaceable natural resources.
- [Take Advantage of Compact Building Design](#)  
Smart growth provides a way for communities to bring in more compact building design as an alternative to conventional, land consumptive development.

By supporting Smart Growth, the Florida Department of Health also supports the Governor's Climate Change initiative and directive on Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification for state buildings. Better design of buildings and communities will reduce dependence on automobiles and reduce the use of energy and products that increase pollution. Better design also promotes more physical activity opportunities and less time traveling providing more community and family time."

For more information on the Smart Growth Network, visit the Web site at [www.smartgrowth.org](http://www.smartgrowth.org), or contact your local county health department. Or visit the Florida Department of Health at [www.FloridasHealth.com](http://www.FloridasHealth.com).

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