Blue Back Square, West Hartford, CT

COURTESY OF LORI BROWN

DID YOU KNOW?

Connecticut DOT needs

$279 MILLION

per year to maintain 3,733 miles of roads and 3,701 bridges in a state of good repair

RESPONSIBLE LAND USE

Transportation and land use are inextricably linked. Transportation itself uses land, from superhighways to rail lines to bike paths. Decisions about transportation also profoundly effect land use far from the transportation itself and vice versa. If we keep sprawling outward from the core cities, we will need to build more highways to move people around. If we build subdivisions far from services, we must build roads to service them and we sacrifice green space and farmland in the process. If we build compact, walkable community centers, we save open space and energy. If we plan our new development to coordinate with mass transit, we save infrastructure costs, keep our air cleaner, reduce the miles that must be traveled by car, and create community rather than sprawl. The symptoms of poorly planned development and transportation are not hard to find.

Due to an over reliance on municipal property taxes, Connecticut's 169 cities and towns are locked into competition for development projects, which may be undesirable apart from their contributions to the tax rolls. These projects frequently end up on farmland or undeveloped land because it is the type of land on which development is easiest and least expensive. How we link land use and transportation is the key to reversing this trend.

FACT ***The Connecticut Council on Environmental Quality found that in NEARLY THREE QUARTERS OF CONNECTICUT, homes and wild natural lands are intermixed, a higher percentage than any other state.***

Billings Forge Farmer's Market, Hartford, CT

COURTESY OF BILLINGS FORGE COMMUNITY WORKS

Many Connecticut families own several cars because there is little public transportation, especially in the suburbs, to take them to a job, grocery store, doctor's office or neighborhood park. The vast majority of workers (about 70%) in Connecticut commute to their jobs in single-passenger vehicles, which is the most expensive and environmentally harmful mode of travel.

We need to rethink our patterns of development in Connecticut and grow smarter. Smart growth will encourage development in areas with existing roads, sewers, and water systems and discourage development in pristine areas, farmland, and historic places. Smart growth policies can revitalize cities and provide greater choice in transit, housing, and jobs.

Proponents of smart growth policies advocate land conservation, transportation and environmental planning, infrastructure redevelopment, community investment and historic preservation. Opponents argue that these policies limit economic development and potential tax revenue. But smart growth does not mean no growth. Smart growth guides responsible development in the right places, so that cities become robust, communities remain livable, and open space is preserved.

COURTESY OF BILLINGS FORGE COMMUNITY WORKS

Brownfields are sites that have contaminated, abandoned and frequently neglected buildings, and are often located in central urban areas where public transit is available. Creative reuse of these sites leads to multiple benefits by creating jobs and housing in areas accessible by public transit, putting unused and often blighted properties back on the tax rolls and preserving the historic character of our towns and cities.

An outstanding example of brownfield redevelopment is Billings Forge Community Works in Hartford, where housing, jobs and entertainment are located in refurbished factory buildings served by two public bus lines. This project is bringing back jobs, life and economic vitality to the Frog Hollow neighborhood of Hartford.

DID YOU KNOW?

Connecticut has

4,916 FARMS

with 321,393 acres of cropland, pasture and woodland. 85% of our farmland remains unprotected.

Source: Working Lands Alliance, March 2010

FACT ***28% OF ALL TRIPS in America are one mile or less with the majority taken by car, according to the organization, America Walks.***