



Making Progress. Good for Everyone.

1383 Arcadia Rd, Lancaster, PA 17601  
(717) 509-4711 ■ [www.coalitionforsmartgrowth.org](http://www.coalitionforsmartgrowth.org)

## The Cost of Growth

### Introduction:

The Coalition for Smart Growth's 2009 Summit entitled "Cost of Growth and What it Means to Our Community" added a new dimension to the discussion about Smart Growth. In the past, discussions about Smart Growth often focused on topics such as density, revitalizing our urban areas, preserving open space, farmland preservation, livable communities and neighborhood amenities. This year we expanded the focus to include the costs of growth. The cost of growth is a topic that is both timely and vital.

In the current challenging economic climate, managing the costs of growth is essential if Lancaster County is to continue to grow. Compact development, green infrastructure, providing a variety of transportation options and mixed use development all have the potential to reduce the costs of infrastructure and public services in Lancaster County.

The Coalition asked two panels of experts to discuss and compare the costs of providing infrastructure and services in rural areas, traditional suburban residential developments, mixed-use developments and urban areas. The panelists were also asked to consider what effect the density of development has on infrastructure and public service costs.

The Summit panelists provided actual examples of how Smart Growth produced real savings in the costs of infrastructure and public services in local municipalities. Below are some of the case studies our panelists provided. Cost figures are for specific cases and may vary in other situations. For a more detailed summary of information presented at the 2009 Summit, visit our web site at: [www.coalitionforsmartgrowth.org](http://www.coalitionforsmartgrowth.org)

### Highlights of Presentations:

**Electric power** costs associated with electric lines and substations to serve a new development are added to the rate base. All electric customers pay costs added to the rate base.

- Costs of sprawl: PPL 12,000 volt line to new development—\$250,000/mile
- Costs of sprawl: PPL transmission line—\$1 million/mile
- Costs of sprawl: PPL upgrade to substations—\$6 million

**Sewer and water** costs associated with new development are paid for by the developer and ultimately are added to the cost of new homes.

- Traditional suburban development—5 to 6 units per acre—\$195.50 per lineal foot for new sewer and water lines
- Mixed use residential development—8 units per acre—\$162 per lineal foot for new sewer and water lines
- High density mixed use development—7.6 to 8 units per acre—\$119 per lineal foot for new sewer and water lines

**School building** costs are paid by property and business owners in the community. Comparing the costs/benefits of renovating an existing centrally located school with a replacement school at the edge of a borough:

- Building a new school at the edge of town requires a campus setting and consumes acres of open space (10 acres plus one acre for each grade level at the school)
- A school at the edge of town attracts residential growth and fills more quickly
- A centrally renovated school requires less busing—\$90,000/year savings
- A centrally renovated school better utilize near by community resources as part of the educational program

**Transportation** costs are paid by taxpayers and travelers. PennDOTs “Fix It First” policy results in over 80% of PennDOT funding and all federal stimulus funding going to highway and bridge maintenance. We are not building many new roads.

- Land use planning provides the origins and destinations for travel, while transportation infrastructure provides the mobility
- Smart growth reduces travel distance by locating work, home, schools and stores closer to each other in compact mixed use development
- Leverage public transportation by factoring existing bus routes into land planning decisions

**Public safety** costs are paid locally through tax revenues and assessments. Police salary is the main driver of costs. Key issues to consider:

- Desired response times—7 minutes for any call, 5 minutes for emergencies
- Volunteers help keep costs down (Friends of the Force)
- Police need to be included in comprehensive planning. They will be called upon to serve everywhere in the community, including park, schools, residential neighborhoods, commercial areas, streets, etc.

For **fire protection** demand for service is the main driver of costs.

- Demand for service increases fuel and equipment costs
- Sprawl increases fuel costs
- Higher density development increases the need for specialize equipment
- This is one area where Smart Growth is cost neutral

For a more detailed summary of information presented at the 2009 Summit, visit our web site at: [www.coalitionforsmartgrowth.org](http://www.coalitionforsmartgrowth.org)