

Smart Growth for Mobile Policy Document



Prepared by the Urban Development Department Planning Staff
in cooperation with Mayor Michael C. Dow

January 2003

Smart Growth for Mobile

Policy Document

In May of 2002, Mayor Michael C. Dow directed the Urban Development Department to begin a new planning initiative for the City of Mobile entitled, *Smart Growth for Mobile*. The purpose of this initiative is to develop planning policies and practices to address the manner in which inevitable growth and development will occur in Mobile. Like most American cities, Mobile's prevailing development practices have greatly contributed to inefficient land use practices, increased traffic congestion, consumptive development of environmentally sensitive areas, and wasteful use of city infrastructure and resources.

To tackle these and other issues, the Smart Growth Steering Committee was formed to establish a Smart Growth Policy to guide Mobile's development process and to offer alternatives to existing development standards. Appointed by Mayor Dow, the Steering Committee is comprised of representatives from the City of Mobile Planning Commission and City Council, environmental professionals, members of the development community, representatives from the Mobile Chamber of Commerce, other governmental agencies and city staff. Using the expertise of this Committee, this policy document was created to develop a comprehensive framework used to guide the city's development future.

The policies outlined within this policy document are intended to offer an alternative approach to development. These policies should not be viewed as development mandates. Although highly encouraged based on their ability to improve the city's function and livability, these policies are in no way meant to serve as additional development requirements or regulations. Smart Growth policies for Mobile merely offer a viable development option capable of effectively dealing with continued and foreseeable growth and redevelopment.

Methodology

The purpose of the Smart Growth Policy Document is to provide a framework of policies and informed decisions regarding Mobile's development future. The following Action Plan describes the process used to develop this document. A flow chart of this process is illustrated in the Appendix A.

∞ Establish Steering Committee

Committee appointed by Mayor; members consisting of representatives of the Planning Commission and City Council, environmental professionals, members of the development community, representation from the Chamber of Commerce, governmental agencies and city staff.

∞ **Introductory Meeting**

Sustainability Assessment of Mobile's current growth trends and adopted land use policies supporting Smart Growth principles. Discussion of overall goals, scope and charge of the Committee and time line for completion of charge.

∞ **Policy Meetings**

Five half-day meetings were held once a month in 2002 to discuss/establish policies and implementation strategies. Each meeting focused on one of the following Smart Growth policies: Design Alternatives, Development Incentives, Strengthening the Existing Community, the Preservation of Open Space and Critical Environmental Areas, and Transportation Alternatives.

∞ **Consensus Meeting**

The Committee decided and agreed upon a series of objectives based on the five established Smart Growth goals. These goals and objectives identified by the Committee are the basis for this Smart Growth Policy document.

Smart Growth Policy Formulation

As discussed earlier, the purpose of this policy document is to provide a framework for decision-making regarding local development practices. To accomplish this goal, the Smart Growth Steering Committee has met over the past six months to explore the Smart Growth development concept, its principles, as well as the formulation of policies applicable to the City of Mobile development process.

As a result of these meetings, the Smart Growth Steering Committee formulated a series of goals and objectives which represent policies for Smart Growth. Upon adoption, policies identified in this document will provide a plan of action for the execution of the Smart Growth Implementation Initiatives Document to be developed in the next several months.

The Steering Committee has reached consensus on its Smart Growth policies and is now seeking adoption from the Mobile Planning Commission and the Mobile City Council. The following is a list of objectives identified for each of the broad Smart Growth policies.

I. Design Alternatives

- ∞ Establish neighborhood character through compatible street, development type, scale and design elements.

- ⌘ Encourage mixed use development by integrating neighborhood oriented businesses of compatible scale into residential areas, and residential uses into commercial areas.
- ⌘ Improve streetscapes through landscaping, traffic calming, and walking/biking trails.
- ⌘ Improve the functionality and design of commercial uses through architectural style, alternative parking, and improved accessibility.
- ⌘ Reinforce and maintain community character by designing community gateways, designating areas for open space development, and by encouraging infill development.

II. Strengthen the Existing Community

- ⌘ Develop infill development strategies to attract potential residents and businesses to existing areas.
- ⌘ Adopt infrastructure strategies targeting redevelopment to existing areas having substantial infrastructure and located where major public facilities are already in place.
- ⌘ Revise all appropriate codes and ordinances to eliminate excessive and/or restrictive development standards.
- ⌘ Address barriers to the redevelopment of Brownfield Sites.
- ⌘ Provide community information on proposed infill developments.

III. Preservation of Critical Environmental Areas and Open Space

- ⌘ Encourage and promote conservation of environmentally valuable areas.
- ⌘ Provide walkable, enjoyable green space contributing to community character while maximizing natural habitat preservation.
- ⌘ Advocate open space development that conserves natural areas, provides community recreational space, and promotes watershed protection.
- ⌘ Improve water ways for recreational use by reducing soil and contaminant runoff.
- ⌘ Minimize floodwater volume increases attributable to increased impermeable surfaces.
- ⌘ Protect water quality from soil and other contaminant runoff caused by unmanaged construction practices.

IV. Investment in Multi-Modal Transportation Options

- ∞ Coordination of the land use and transportation planning processes to more effectively locate transportation systems in proximity to residential developments and community services.
- ∞ Roadway design that considers connectivity accessibility, function, and speed as they affect the safety and security of non-motorists, such as pedestrians and bicyclists.
- ∞ Coordination with other transportation agencies to focus on and develop alternative modes of transportation, resulting in less reliance on the automobile.
- ∞ Provide Americans with disabilities easy access to sidewalks, streets, parks, and other public and private services.

Implementation Initiatives

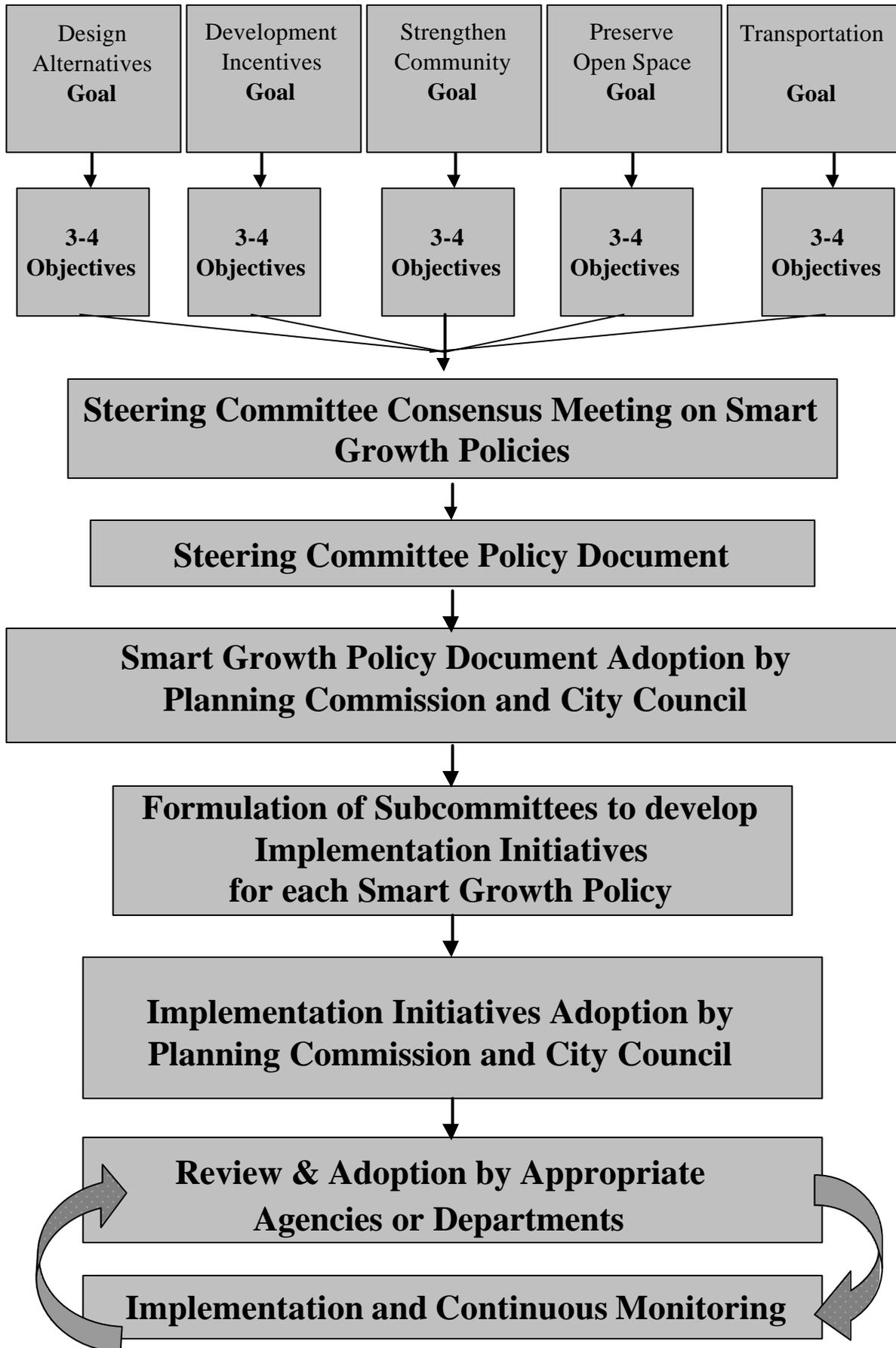
Upon adoption of the Smart Growth Policy Document by the Mobile Planning Commission and the City Council, the next phase of implementation will involve the development of specific measures employed to carry out the above outlined Smart Growth policies.

For each Smart Growth policy, subcommittees will be formed. The subcommittees' responsibility will be to develop implementation initiatives for each policy. Facilitated by the planning staff, the subcommittees will meet independently of the Steering Committee to develop initiatives for each policy.

Initiatives identified by the respective policy sub-committee will detail specific implementation measures. Where appropriate, the expertise of outside agencies will be solicited to assist the sub-committees in the development of specific initiatives to address policies previously identified in this document.

The outlined strategies will then be used to develop the Smart Growth Implementation Initiatives Document. After consensus is reached by the Steering Committee, this document will then be forwarded to the Mobile Planning Commission and the City Council for adoption, as well as all appropriate agencies for specific action.

Steering Committee Policy Making Process



Appendix B

***Smart Growth for Mobile
Steering Committee Members***

Mayor Michael C. Dow

Mr. Christopher Lee

Mr. John Bell

Mr. Frederick D. Richardson, Jr.

Mr. Ben Brooks

Mrs. Connie Hudson

Dr. Judy Stout, Ph.D.

Mr. Herbert Guy

Captain David W. Yeager

Dr. Harold Dodge, Ph.D.

Mr. James M. Apple, III

Mr. Bob Hyman

Dr. George F. Crozier, Ph.D.

Ms. Emily Sommer, CCM

Mr. Robert S. Frost

Mr. Terry Plauche

Dr. Victoria L. Rivizzigno

Ms. Mickie Russell

Mr. Richard Weavil

Mr. Terry Harbin

Mr. Malcolm Steeves

Mr. Willard Rogers

Mr. Jeb Schrenk**

Ms. Wanda Cochran

Mr. Steve Walker

Mr. Stillman Knight

Ms. Casi Callaway

Mr. M. Don Williams, III

Mr. John Saint

Ms. Jennifer White

Ms. Tina Sanchez

Planning Staff

Ms. Laura J. Clarke

Ms. Margaret Pappas

Mr. Richard Olsen

Ms. Shayla Jones

Ms. Jennifer Henley

**** Mr. Schrenk reported on Steering Committee Meetings, but was not a member of the Steering Committee**