

Smart growth and the regional development councils

By [Jeremy Moule](#) on October 28, 2011

Smart-growth principles ought to be a part of the Finger Lakes Regional Economic Development Council's strategic plan. And to give credit where it's due, the initial public draft of the plan does include a few smart-growth elements, which is a pleasant surprise.

At last night's public forum at Monroe Community College, council member Sandy Parker, CEO of the Rochester Business Alliance, presented a rundown of the draft. One of the plan's strategies is strengthening and preserving the nine-county region's communities. Among the ways the plan proposes to do that: encouraging the adaptive reuse of buildings, encouraging historic preservation, and strengthening public transit.

These concepts are crucial, since the region can't afford continued infrastructure growth, especially when the population isn't growing.

The council is now working on the plan's specifics: how the strategies would be carried out.

Evan Lowenstein, a local smart-growth advocate who was at last night's forum, told me that the council should call for a regional land use and development plan. That would help encourage things like adaptive reuse, especially since the region has old infrastructure that could be modernized, he said.

"We have a competitive, rather than cooperative, way of doing development," he said.

The council meets again November 1 to discuss the plan further, including agreeing on the potential "transformative projects" it will recommend, says Bob McNary, Empire State Development's Finger Lakes regional director.