



**SMART  
GROWTH  
MARYLAND**

A PROGRAM OF  
PRESERVATION MARYLAND

# Organizing for Smart Growth

## A Toolkit for Advocacy Across the State



**PRESERVATION  
MARYLAND**

Prepared by Preservation Maryland with the generous support of the Keith Campbell Foundation.



THE  
**CAMPBELL**  
FOUNDATION

# Contents

---

## **INTRODUCTION**

How To Use This Toolkit

## **DIVERSITY, EQUITY, & INCLUSION STATEMENT**

Smart Growth Alliance in Action

## **SETTING UP YOUR SMART GROWTH ALLIANCE**

Coalitions at Different Scales

Beginner Toolkit Guide

Intermediate Toolkit Guide

Advanced Toolkit Guide

Membership Survey

Policies & Procedures

Strategic Planning Meetings

Setting Up Large Group Meetings

Optional Steering Committee

## **ADVOCACY**

The Comprehensive Planning Process

Local Legislative Advocacy

1) Submitting Written Testimony & Sign-On Letters

2) Testifying at a Local Legislative Hearing

*Best Practices: Written Testimony & Sign-On Letters*

*Best Practices: In-Person Testimony*

## **OUTREACH & EDUCATION**

Online Communication

Website

Social Media Presence

Local Smart Growth Coalition Newsletter

General Plan Webinar Series

Print Communication

Smart Growth Infographics Pamphlet

Promotion from Preservation Maryland

Informational Advertisements

Op-Eds & Letters to the Editor

*Maryland Letter to the Editor Resources*

*Best Practices: Op-Eds & Letters to the Editor*

# Contents

---

## **OUTREACH & EDUCATION (CONT'D)**

In-Person Community Engagement  
Community Asset Mapping Workshops

## **CASE STUDIES**

Charles County  
Frederick County  
Howard County

## **CITATIONS**

## **APPENDIX: SAMPLE OUTREACH LETTER**



**PRESERVATION  
MARYLAND**

UPDATED 2023

COPYRIGHT PRESERVATION MARYLAND

3600 Clipper Mill Road | Suite 248 | Baltimore MD 21211  
410-685-2886 | [info@presmd.org](mailto:info@presmd.org)



# Introduction

---

Over the past 30 years, more land has been developed in Maryland than in the previous 300 years. Many of our cities and towns are struggling while forests and farms are lost to new, car-dependent developments. It is vital that the state grows in a way that fosters a more environmentally and economically sustainable future. One that creates opportunities for all Marylanders through better development patterns. This school of thought is known as “Smart Growth” and is an approach to planning and development that attempts to curb sprawl and worsening environmental conditions through policies that encourage communities to grow in socially, economically, and environmentally sustainable ways.

Launched in 2018 when Preservation Maryland, a statewide non-profit, absorbed the operations of 1000 Friends of Maryland, Smart Growth Maryland (SGM) focuses its work on achieving such a future for Maryland. Working at the local, state, and federal levels, SGM advocates for the programs and policies which incentivize smarter growth patterns and protect critical natural, cultural, and historic resources.

In Maryland, where and how a jurisdiction grows – and does not grow – is decided locally through a comprehensive planning process. SGM works directly on a range of revitalization, land-use planning, and resource conservation issues through county-wide coalitions of organizations with the common goal of creating more equitable, resilient, and sustainable communities.

## How To Use This Toolkit

One of the most effective ways to achieve Smart Growth objectives is to improve local zoning regulations and comprehensive plans to prioritize economically vibrant, socially equitable, and resilient communities. Public involvement is a critical part of that process, so plans reflect residents’ vision and goals for the community’s future. Local elected officials adopt these plans and implement them through a variety of means, including zoning, so local elections play a large role in the future of Smart Growth issues in a county. This toolkit is designed to encourage and enable the creation of local Smart Growth coalitions in all of Maryland’s 23 counties and Baltimore City, which will empower citizens to make an impact on growth issues in their communities.

Every county is different, so there will be certain things that may not apply to your local coalition. Look to this toolkit as a resource to guide you on your mission to promote Smart Growth principles in your county.

# Diversity Equity & Inclusion Statement



Creating equitable communities is one of the main tenets of Smart Growth. As such, it should be a foundational part of your Smart Growth Alliance (SGA). Drafting a Diversity, Equity, Inclusion (DEI) statement is one of the first steps to establishing your SGA. The purpose of this statement is to hold the group accountable for their actions and create an environment that is accessible to all. This will establish the stance of the SGA and invite participation from all voices that make up the county.

The DEI statement will also help you develop a mission statement for the SGA. This mission statement will clearly outline the goals and principles of the new Smart Growth Alliance.

## ***SMART GROWTH ALLIANCE IN ACTION***

The following is an example from the Howard County SGA. Future SGAs can use this language as guidance for their own DEI and Mission Statements.

**Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Statement:** The Smarter Growth Alliance for Howard County embraces differences in age, color, disability, sex, ethnicity, race, religion, and other characteristics that make this County a unique and vibrant place to live. We seek and achieve a broad representation of experiences, perspectives, opinions, and cultures while valuing inclusiveness as an essential source of vitality and strength for the county. In the pursuit of diversity and inclusion, we recognize that environmental burdens and benefits have not been distributed equitably, and we address these disparities so that each of us can prosper in a healthy and livable Howard County.

**Mission Statement:** The Smarter Growth Alliance for Howard County is an alliance of local and state organizations working together to foster healthy, equitable, and sustainable communities through smarter development and transportation decisions and improved protections for the county's natural, historic, and cultural resources.

# Setting Up Your Smart Growth Alliance

---

## Coalitions at Different Scales

Not every coalition will have the same capacity or goals; this toolkit can be scaled to fit your county's needs.

### Beginner Toolkit Guide

- Guidelines/Vision
- Diversity & Inclusion Statement
- Case Studies on Past Smart Growth Groups
- Membership Survey
- Social Media/Website
- Smart Growth Logo

### Intermediate Toolkit Guide

- Guidelines/Vision
- Diversity & Inclusion Statement
- Case Studies Studies on Past Smart Growth Groups
- Membership Survey
- Social Media/Website
- Smart Growth Logo
- Hosting Large Group Meetings
- Steering Committee
- General Plan Webinar series

### Advanced Toolkit Guide

- Guidelines/Vision
- Diversity & Inclusion Statement
- Case Studies on Past Smart Growth Groups
- Membership Survey
- Social Media/Website
- Smart Growth Logo
- Hosting Large Group Meetings
- Steering Committee

- General plan Webinar Series
- Community Asset Mapping Workshops

## Identifying Alliance Members

Once you have decided to form a local Smart Growth Alliance, the first step is to reach out to other leaders working on land use, conservation, preservation, and environmental issues, at both the local and statewide levels, that you think would be interested in joining. We have provided a sample invitation to join for a kick-off meeting in the appendix of the toolkit.

Each Smart Growth Alliance should be comprised of local, regional and state organizations and individuals. Often, a core group of participants serve on a steering committee that meets on a regular basis. The steering committee identifies issues for the coalition to work on and plans a course of action for each issue. The full coalition is kept engaged and informed via email.

The kick-off meeting agenda should, at a minimum, include introductions, identification of issues for the Smart Growth Alliance to consider working on, and next steps.

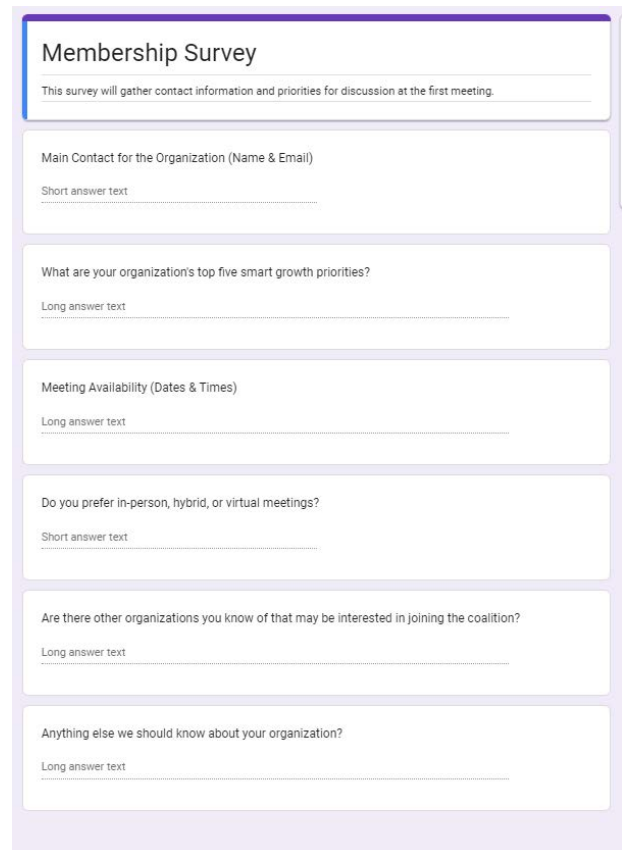
## Membership Survey

After crafting your DEI and Mission Statements, identifying organizations or groups that would like to join your SGA, and hosting your kick-off meeting, you are ready to send out a membership survey. This survey will help establish administrative policies as well as goals for the group. Google Forms is a helpful tool for survey creation. You should create a membership survey that fits your groups specific needs, but always include the following:

- Priorities/goals of the member organization
- Main contact representing the organization
- In-person, online, or hybrid meetings
- Availabilities times
- Option to suggest other organizations that should be included in the coalition

The membership survey will allow you to collect important feedback from your members, make improvements to your coalition group, and show the members that you genuinely care about their input and goals. This survey will also allow your coalition to determine its legislative priorities since there will likely be a variety of organizations involved. After all members have completed the membership survey, the next step is to step is to discuss the policies and procedures.

It is good practice to send out a membership survey annually to help focus the SGA's priorities for the year



The image shows a screenshot of a Google Forms survey titled "Membership Survey". The survey contains the following questions and input fields:

- Membership Survey**  
This survey will gather contact information and priorities for discussion at the first meeting.
- Main Contact for the Organization (Name & Email)  
Short answer text
- What are your organization's top five smart growth priorities?  
Long answer text
- Meeting Availability (Dates & Times)  
Long answer text
- Do you prefer in-person, hybrid, or virtual meetings?  
Short answer text
- Are there other organizations you know of that may be interested in joining the coalition?  
Long answer text
- Anything else we should know about your organization?  
Long answer text

and ensure that all member organizations are on the same page.

## Policies & Procedures

Establishing administrative policies and procedures will set the tempo of your local SGA group operations and ensure it runs smoothly. For example, you should have in place guidelines on how the group will handle Smart Growth legislation before your group submits testimony in local public hearings. Policies should include designating who will facilitate the meetings and who will write, gather, and submit sign-on testimony. We recommend selecting individuals who are already active in public meetings and hearings. They can help guide



conversation during the SGA meeting and are a valuable resource on local issues. You can choose an established lead or rotate facilitators every meeting.

## Strategic Planning Meetings

Strategic planning meetings allow each member to discuss their organization's priorities/goals and how the local Smart Growth Alliance can be a resource. It is helpful to have this meeting as a first activity for coalition members. Plan to have a strategic planning meeting at least once a year, especially if you bring in new members or a new development or policy in your county needs to be addressed. These planning meetings will establish legislative priorities for the coming year and are an opportunity to discuss policies and procedures for legislative advocacy.



As you collaborate with different organizations, you will realize that priorities may change. Through strategic planning meetings, the SGA can establish what they think are the most important upcoming or ongoing Smart Growth issues in the community.

## Setting Up Large Group Meetings

The results of your membership survey will determine the frequency, location, and timing of your regular SGA meetings. It is usually best practice to consider when local legislation is introduced as well as the schedule of the legislative process for your county. It is recommended that you meet at least two weeks before local public hearings on priority legislation to ensure testimony is submitted before the deadline. Monthly meetings during the legislative season ensure your SGA stays on top of important issues. As a group, you can decide whether you will meet in-person, online, or in a hybrid setting. If the group is more comfortable meeting in-person, a local library is generally a good location. As for the virtual option, the group can meet on a conferencing platform like Zoom or Microsoft Teams.

Once you set up a meeting time, calendar invites should be sent to all members. As the meeting approaches, have a group member write up an agenda to ensure the meeting stays on course. The meeting agenda should include updates and action items for priority issues, new issues, and an opportunity for members to share relevant events or information about what they are working on.

This meeting setup allows members to be informed about local legislation and set tasks on agenda items. Designated note takers should write the meeting notes, which are sent to the group afterward.

## Optional Steering Committee

If there are issues that need more attention than others, we recommend setting up a steering committee. The steering committee meets regularly and identifies issues for the coalition to work on and plans a course of action for each issue. This allows for more effective meetings, with the steering committee presenting on their findings and action items to the full coalition. However, if your SGA group only consists of few members, you may not need a steering committee.



# Advocacy



One of the most effective ways to achieve your Smart Growth Alliance's goals is through civic engagement, advocating for local policy and for Smart Growth-minded comprehensive plans. This section explores what advocacy might look like for your Smart Growth Alliance, what tools & strategies are available, and how they can be beneficial.

## **The Comprehensive Planning Process**

Maryland's counties must review and update their comprehensive plans every ten years. Determining when your county will begin this process is an important first step. You can view your county's current comprehensive plan and the Maryland Department of Planning's Comprehensive Plan Report and Review Schedule on the Department of Planning website. Another way to establish where your county is in this process is to contact the county's Planning Department or local Maryland Department of Planning staff. There is a clear public process for comprehensive plan review, so determining when important hearing and meeting dates are, as well as any deadlines for comments, is vital to the work of your Smart Growth Alliance.

## **Local Legislative Advocacy**

In addition to participation in the comprehensive planning process, implementation of the plan and other pieces of legislation also have an impact on Smart Growth issues, from development plans to forest conservation to Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance changes. It is important to determine when new legislation is introduced, as well as the usual schedule for hearings, so that the steering committee can assess if the SGA should take action on any bills.

If the steering committee determines that the SGA should support or oppose a bill, there are several ways to take action:

## **1) Submitting Written Testimony & Sign-On Letters**

The steering committee should develop the written testimony onto which SGA members will sign. After the steering committee drafts the written testimony, it is sent to the full coalition for edits and sign-on support. This allows individual organizations to easily lend their support to the SGA's position. Timing is key, so be sure to leave enough buffer before the submission deadline for members to seek comment and approval from their organization's executive board if necessary. Sign-on signatures should include the representative's name, title, and organization. After you collect signatures for the letter, you should submit the written testimony. Members are also encouraged to submit their own organizational testimony.

## **2) Testifying At A Local Legislative Hearings**

The legislative hearing process provides local elected officials and commission members more opportunity to closely study a bill. If you feel strongly enough to testify on a bill, sign up to speak! It is important that you know your audience, understand the issue and become familiar with the process. Speaking at the public hearing allows you to highlight the personal impact of the issue on you and your community. Facts and figures are great, but personalized testimony is the most effective method.

***BEST PRACTICES: WRITTEN TESTIMONY & SIGN-ON LETTERS***

**ADDRESS ELECTED OFFICIALS PROPERLY.** i.e. “The Honorable \_\_\_\_\_” or “Commissioner \_\_\_\_\_”

**IDENTIFY YOURSELF.** Be sure to include a brief description of the Smart Growth Alliance, so officials know who you are and who you are working for.

**WRITE YOUR OWN THOUGHTS AND WORDS.** Write about a personal experience and how the issue affects you and other citizens in the county.

**USE FACTS AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE.** Back up your opinions with facts.

**MAKE YOUR POSITION CLEAR.** State your position clearly and precisely. Avoid being hostile.

**BE SPECIFIC.** If appropriate, cite a specific bill number and name, list its sponsors, and include a brief summary of the contents of the bill.

**REQUEST ACTION.** Ask the elected official to vote for or against a particular bill or amendment.

***BEST PRACTICES: IN-PERSON TESTIMONY***

**INFORM YOURSELF OF REQUIREMENTS TO SIGN UP.** There is often a deadline for submission of written testimony and sign up for oral testimony. This will vary by county, check your county government’s website or call the appropriate staff person. Calendar of local hearings can

be found on the County Government website.

**ARRIVE EARLY.** It is advised to arrive thirty minutes before the hearing is scheduled to begin. If it’s a virtual hearing, be sure to test your computer before the hearing begins.

**SIGN IN** at the door when you arrive, if the hearing is in-person.

**BRING COPIES OF YOUR TESTIMONY IF REQUIRED.** Hand copies of your written testimony to the administrator before you begin. Make sure your name and contact information are at the top of the page.

**BE PREPARED TO ADAPT YOUR REMARKS.** Avoid making the same points made by previous speakers.

**CLEARLY STATE YOUR POSITION.** Give a clear and concise description of your position on the issue, policy or appropriations bill you are speaking on.

**SPEAK FROM YOUR OWN EXPERIENCE.** Stick to the facts and avoid reading from your written testimony. The decision-makers will appreciate your testimony if you speak with your own words.

**REQUEST ACTION AND OFFER SOLUTIONS** by stating exactly what you would like the committee to do.

**BE RESPECTFUL AND COURTEOUS.** Never make accusatory remarks, stay within the time limit, and thank the decision makers at the end of your presentation.

# Outreach & Education



Community outreach and public education are key aspects to any Smart Growth Alliance. Social media, email, direct mail, and tabling at events have all been used by the different alliances to connect with residents, improve turnout for key hearings, and increase communication about our issues between citizens and elected officials.

# Online Communication

The online presence of an organization has become very important in recent times. It is a way of constantly staying connected, making information more accessible and readily available, and providing constructive feedback. Your SGA should aim to create communication platforms through websites and a strong social media presence.

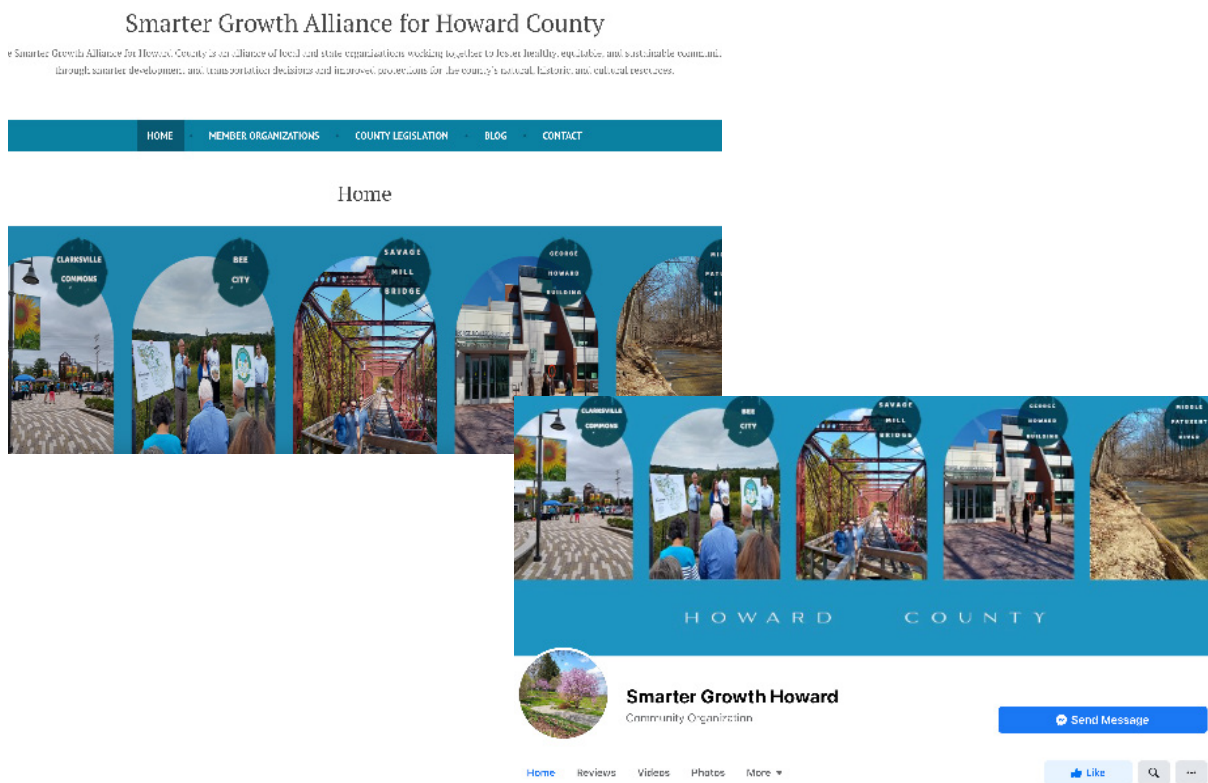
## Website

After you set up your coalition, the next step is to create a website. This website is a platform to store and share information on Smart Growth issues occurring in the county with the public. Locals will be able to learn the status of current and past legislation and engage in the legislative process. When it comes

to advocacy, some individuals do not know where to begin. Your website should have an instructional component on how to submit written and oral testimonies on legislation.

It should also serve as a notice board to inform the community which local organizations are members of the coalition group. The list of organization names can help locals engage and work with local Smart Growth organizations. The website should also include an interest form in case other organizations are interested in joining your local Smart Growth Alliance.

There are many resources available online to create and host your online



presence. You should designate members to be co-administrators of the website. Co-admins should work with your local coalition group to ensure the website accurately represents what you would like to show the to the public. Your coalition group website could look like the Smarter Growth Alliance for Howard County (SGAHC) website one the prior page.

## **Social Media Presence**

A Facebook page is a good tool to keep organization members and residents engaged and updated on Smart Growth issues in their county. Your local coalition group members should be co-admins of the page. This page can post information on county council meetings and advocacy efforts on current legislation. Lastly, the Facebook page can be a space where coalition group members can host online Smart Growth events and workshops for the community. Twitter and Instagram can also be helpful to share information with the public.

## **Local Smart Growth Coalition Newsletter**

Initiating a monthly e-newsletter with up-to-date information about membership and legislation can be an effective way to relay information with members of the local Smart Growth Alliance as well as other supporters. Platforms such as MailChimp are free to use up to a certain number of subscribers and are very user friendly.

## **General Plan Webinar Series**

Another online communication option is hosting a General (or Comprehensive) Plan Webinar Series. This event series can have experts and professionals discussing Smart Growth issues in the community. It can be a monthly event where professionals open a Q&A for residents to ask questions about Smart Growth problems and how they can be a part of the process of resolving them. Webinars can be hosted through Facebook Live, Zoom, or other virtual conferencing platform.



Current Smart Growth Maryland Logo



# Print Communication



## Smart Growth Pamphlet

A Smart Growth pamphlet can be another physical communication method for the public. As your SGA continues to expand, you may have residents ask what Smart Growth is and how it works in their community.

Members can share this pamphlet with their individual organizations, new members, and locals in meetings and events. Overall, this pamphlet can encourage locals and future members to be a part of the Smart Growth solution process in the community. Above is a sample pamphlet design for Kent County, MD.

## Promotion from Preservation Maryland

Preservation Maryland has an existing monthly newsletter and a strong Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter presence. SGA event information can be shared through these channels.

## Informational Advertisements

Smart Growth Alliance coalitions can work with local newspapers to include advertisements about their work, membership, and upcoming meetings. The coalition group can create an initial membership fee to fund these different forms of outreach.

## Op-Eds & Letters to the Editor

One way to publicize your coalition's stance on local legislation or other issues is by submitting a Letter to the Editor or Op-Ed on the topic to a newspaper.

### ***BEST PRACTICES: WRITING OP-EDS OR LETTERS TO THE EDITOR***

**KEEP IT SHORT AND ON ONE SUBJECT.** Many newspapers have strict limits on the length of letters due to their limited space to publish them.

**MAKE REFERENCES TO THE ARTICLE.** While some papers print general commentary, many will only print letters to the editor that refer to a specific article. It is best to reference the article in the first part of your letter.

**BE ACCURATE.** Support your letter with facts, statistics, citations, or other evidence.

**OPEN YOUR LETTER WITH A STRONG STATEMENT.** The statement might point out an error or misrepresentation in an article, disagree with an editorial position, or add to the discussion by pointing out something readers need to know.

**SEND LETTERS TO WEEKLY COMMUNITY NEWSPAPERS OR BLOGS.** The smaller the newspaper's circulation, the more likely it is that your letter will be printed.

**INCLUDE YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION.** Many newspapers will only print a letter to the editor after calling the author to verify their identity or address. Newspapers will not give out that information and usually only print your name and city should your letter be published.

### ***MARYLAND LETTER TO THE EDITOR RESOURCES:***

*Baltimore Sun:* [www.baltimoresun.com/bal-letters-box-htmlstory.html](http://www.baltimoresun.com/bal-letters-box-htmlstory.html)

*The Gazette:* [www.gazette.net/section/contactus](http://www.gazette.net/section/contactus)

*Carroll County Times:*  
[www.carrollcountytimes.com/news/opinion/letters-to-the-editor/](http://www.carrollcountytimes.com/news/opinion/letters-to-the-editor/)

*Hagerstown Herald-Mail:*  
[www.heraldmillmedia.com/opinion/letters/](http://www.heraldmillmedia.com/opinion/letters/)

*Cumberland Times:* [www.times-news.com/opinion/](http://www.times-news.com/opinion/)

*Maryland Coast Dispatch:*  
[www.mdcoastdispatch.com/category/opinions/letter-to-the-editor](http://www.mdcoastdispatch.com/category/opinions/letter-to-the-editor)

*Frederick-News Post:*  
[www.fredericknewspost.com/opinion/letter-to-editor/](http://www.fredericknewspost.com/opinion/letter-to-editor/)

*Southern Maryland Newspapers:*  
[www.somdnews.com/section/contactUsSM](http://www.somdnews.com/section/contactUsSM)

# In-Person Community Engagement

---

Your Smart Growth Alliance should be aware that not all members will have access to online or print communication, which means there should be a space for physical communication between organization and community members. Community asset mapping workshops are one such space.

## Community Asset Mapping Workshops

Community asset mapping is a way of understanding the resources and concerns present in the community. Mapping starts with identifying the existing conditions in the community, which would initiate a conversation about Smart Growth troubleshoots. You can either use Geographic Information System (GIS) or Google maps to analyze your community issues. While looking at the map, members can assess the qualitative and quantitative assets to understand the existing conditions. Assets might include buildings, organizations, individuals, or even cultural elements of a community.

For instance, you can have a group activity where you count benches and other pedestrian infrastructures within a 600 foot radius of a designated community. If you are in a highly urban area, members can note if the space is active due to traffic and pedestrians outside.

From this workshop, coalition members can brainstorm and locate

potential Smart Growth improvement sites in the community. Furthermore, members can assess the relationships they have with existing businesses and organizations in the area. These relationships can allow members to connect with businesses and be more informed on local Smart Growth issues. With these connections and potential Smart Growth improvement sites, members can bring issues to their local county council for review.

SGAs can host community asset mapping workshops throughout the year to bring out these problems. Community asset mapping is a vital tool to engage with the public in the decision-making process. It is best to have the community asset mapping workshop in-person to build community engagement efforts in the group. We recommend this workshop be one of the first community engagement activities for your coalition group.



2022 Community Asset Mapping Workshop  
Hagerstown, MD

# Case Studies



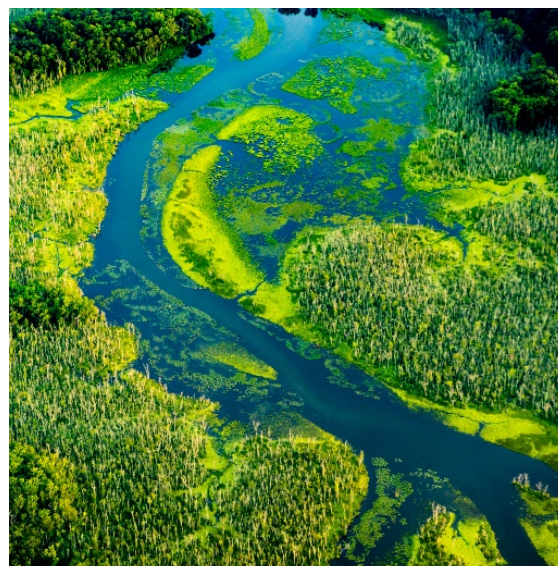
## Charles County

The Smarter Growth Alliance for Charles County (SGACC) is a coalition of over 20 local, regional, and state organizations representing approximately 5,000 supporters in Charles County. As a coalition group, SAGCC used the Smart Growth toolkit to advocate and educate on Smart Growth issues. The SGACC successfully implemented the following toolkit strategies:

- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Statement
- Membership Survey
- SGACC Large Group Meeting
- Steering Committee Group
- Website
- Logo
- Social Media Presence
- Strategic Planning

Using these methods, the SGACC executed tangible strategies to raise the public interest on legislation. For instance, in 2021, SGACC opposed an amendment to the 2016 Comprehensive Plan which opened to development 558 acres of the Watershed Conservation District (WCD).

When the 2016 Comprehensive Plan was developed, it showed that the health of Mattawoman Creek was threatened and at a tipping point. Providing additional protection to the Mattawoman is a legitimate public interest that promotes resource conservation. The 2016 Plan called for the creation of the WCD in part to protect the Mattawoman Stream Valley and Creek. To accomplish this, the Plan made several changes to the Land Use Map, including revising the



Mattawoman Creek, Charles County, MD

previously designated Industrial and Employment-zoned land uses around the Maryland Airport to WCD to further protect water quality and the Mattawoman Creek. The WCD includes special site design regulations that set limits to impervious surface coverage to help protect natural resources in this zone. Limiting impervious surface coverage in the vicinity of the airport is essential to prevent an irreversible decline in the health of Mattawoman Creek.

SGACC developed action alerts to ask the public to speak out against the amendment, which encouraged community members to sign online petitions and submit testimony in opposition. Through this outreach, SGACC has worked with other local organizations to stress that a thriving environment is of economic interest to the county. In other words, Charles County can have both Smart Growth and economic development in their community.

## Frederick County

The Smarter Growth Alliance for Frederick County (SGAFC) is a coalition of local and state organizations representing approximately 16,000 members and supporters in Frederick County. They engage residents and policymakers in support of wise land use that values rural landscapes, protects natural resources, and enhances the unique character of towns and cities to ensure a more resilient and prosperous future. As a coalition group, they used the Smart Growth toolkit to advocate and educate on Smart Growth issues. The SGAFC successfully implemented the following toolkit strategies:

- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Statement
- Membership Survey
- SGAHC Large Group Meeting
- General Plan Webinar Series
- Website
- Social Media Presence

SGAFC has had major success in implementing these Smart Growth initiatives

in their county. This coalition group has many individual leaders in the community that bring up legislative issues and develop action plans to address these bills. For instance, SGAFC co-hosted the Frederick City Forum with the League of Women Voters. This online forum had potential council members and Board of Alderman candidates on the record to discuss sustainability and smarter growth in the county. This event informed the public of the potential candidates and how these candidates would utilize Smart Growth practices in the community.

## Howard County

The Smarter Growth Alliance for Howard County (SGAHC) is an alliance of local and state organizations working together to foster healthy, equitable, and sustainable communities through smarter development and transportation decisions and improved protections for the county's natural, historic and cultural resources.



Frederick, Frederick County, MD



Ellicott City, Howard County, MD

As a coalition group, they used the Smart Growth tool-kit to advocate and educate on Smart Growth issues. The SGAHC successfully implemented the following toolkit strategies:

- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Statement
- Membership Survey
- Policies & Procedures
- SGACC Large Group Meeting
- Steering Committee Group
- Website
- Logo
- Social Media Presence
- Strategic Planning

SGAHC is the youngest local Smart Growth coalition. Although SGAHC was created a few months before the pandemic, they have a network of connections in Howard County. Incorporating the Smart Growth toolkit initiatives helped the SGAHC find effective ways to communicate Smart Growth issues

to the public. For instance, the SGAHC hosted a General Plan Webinar series to go over the upcoming Howard County General Plan. This online forum was posted on the SGAHC Facebook page and had expert speakers discuss historical/environmental preservation, capital planning, and affordable housing issues in the county. For the most part, the public was aware of the General Plan, but did not necessarily not know how each program would affect their communities. With this webinar series, SGAHC was another resource for the public on the General Plan and Smart Growth issues.

# Citations

---

“HUD.gov / U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).” HUD, [www.hud.gov/](http://www.hud.gov/).

Preservation Maryland. “Smart Growth Maryland.” Preservation Maryland, 1 Oct. 2018, [www.preservationmaryland.org/programs/smart-growth-maryland/](http://www.preservationmaryland.org/programs/smart-growth-maryland/).

“Smart Growth America.” – Improving Lives by Improving Communities, [smart-growthamerica.org/](http://smart-growthamerica.org/).

“Tidal Mattawoman.” Mattawoman Watershed Society, [www.mattawomanwatershedsociety.org/photo-album/tidal-mattawoman](http://www.mattawomanwatershedsociety.org/photo-album/tidal-mattawoman).

“What Is Historic Preservation?” National Parks Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, [www.nps.gov/subjects/historicpreservation/what-is-historic-preservation.htm](http://www.nps.gov/subjects/historicpreservation/what-is-historic-preservation.htm).



# Appendix: Sample Outreach Letter

---

## DATE

This letter is being sent to a select group of leaders working on land use, conservation, preservation, and environmental issues in **XXX County** and on a statewide basis in Maryland.

Do you think that your work and **XXX County** would benefit if a broad and diverse range of individuals and organizations that care about sustainable development and protection of historic and natural resources worked together in a more organized and effective manner?

We do!

That's why we are creating a **XXX County**-focused alliance, comprised of both **XXX County**-based organizations and organizations working regionally and statewide, for information sharing, strategizing, and coordinating advocacy efforts.

The Smarter Growth Alliance for Charles County, the Smarter Growth Alliance for Frederick County, the Smarter Growth Alliance for Howard County, and the Anne Arundel Alliance for Livable Communities are established alliances that offer a good model for **XXX County**.

Each alliance includes local, regional and state organizations and individuals. A core group of participants serve on a steering committee that meets on a regular basis. The steering committee identifies issues for the coalition to work on and plans a course of action for each issue. The full coalition is kept engaged and informed via email.

These alliances have made a difference in each county by amplifying the voices of the participating organizations. The alliances frequently submit sign-on letters to elected and appointed officials. Recent letters have supported local legislation to strengthen protections for forests, addressed the shortcomings of an adequate public facilities ordinance, and expressed the need for a science-based management plan for a heavily-polluted river that is a critical source of drinking water. Other letters have expressed support for removal of a destructive and costly road project from a capital budget and raised concerns with sprawl development proposals.

Community outreach and public education have been priorities for each alliance. Social media, email and direct mail, and tabling at events have all been used by the different alliances to connect with residents, improve turnout for key hearings, and increase communication about our issues between citizens and elected officials.

If this sounds to you like something that can be effective in **XXX County**, we hope you'll join us for a kick-off meeting on **DATE TIME LOCATION**.

We know that many of you are already very busy and that the level of engagement will vary based on other commitments. We are confident there is an important role for all individuals and organizations, whether their involvement is substantial or limited, and that we'll all benefit from such an alliance.

We would appreciate you letting us know if you will join us on **MEETING DATE**. Thank you for your consideration and all that you already do for **XXX County**.

Sincerely,

