Adopting the right policies and procedures can promote smart growth and sustainability. But how do you know if the policies are working? Communities can ensure better Quality Control by examining barriers to smart development within their policies and procedures, giving government and developers a joint avenue to negotiate sustainable project design, and involving citizens in the success of projects in their own jurisdictions. The following strategies help public officials ensure they are moving in a sustainable direction.

- Evaluate Local Policy
- Create Incentives for Better Development
- Involve the Community in Evaluation

**Evaluate Local Policy**

Over the course of years, the accumulation of rules and regulations governing development can build up like sediment on a stream bed. Water may still flow through the channel, but the stream fails to perform as desired. The development process often breaks down in a similar way. Conducting a Smart Growth Audit can reveal which practices are currently hindering a community from attracting growth that contributes to its economic and environmental health and can pave the way for reform. It is also important to evaluate policies by comparing the costs and benefits of different alternatives. A change in policy direction, such as adopting a new land use ordinance, at the beginning of the policy development process can lead to the adoption of more effective policies to better address needs.

**Create Incentives for Better Development**

Communities can also encourage more sustainable development by offering greater flexibility. Whereas zoning traditionally mandates site design characteristics and amenities, a point-based performance evaluation system focuses on the smart growth criteria a jurisdiction wants the developer to meet. For example, the City of Austin’s Smart Growth Matrix (pictured above) developed a series of design and environmental performance criteria and assigned points to determine how well the project matched community goals. High-scoring projects were offered a menu of incentives, including reduction of development fees. Austin’s Planning Department worked with developments that failed to meet the standards in order to improve, rather than deny, proposed projects.
Policy in Practice: Quality Control

Involve the Community in Evaluation

A project’s quality can be improved through a deliberate program that builds in community evaluation from the beginning. There are a number of different alternatives to incorporate the goals of the public in local projects. Public workshops, visioning sessions, charrettes, surveys, and open discussions are all helpful at evaluating the direction of projects. By getting citizens involved in the early stages of a Comprehensive Plan for example, a jurisdiction accounts for local needs and begins building consensus around the end product. Some of the same mechanisms can be used to gage how the community feels a project is performing at the mid-point of implementation.

Evaluation methods are most effective when participants understand their purpose and the intended result. From the beginning of policy implementation, an informed and involved public can present a unified front and help keep a project on track. Ultimately, the community as the end-user can provide excellent information about their own needs and problems to be solved both before and during the project. By following through at the project’s conclusion, officials can correct any missteps that occurred during implementation and gain valuable insights to improve the success of future projects.

Public workshops, visioning sessions, charrettes, surveys, and open discussions are all helpful at evaluating the direction of a project.

Tools

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<tr>
<th>ACTIONS</th>
<th>POLICIES • TOOLS • TECHNIQUES</th>
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| Make Development Decisions Predictable, Fair and Cost Effective | Conduct a [Smart Growth audit](#) to determine where local policies can be improved
Evaluate the [effectiveness of public participation strategies](#)
Implement [strategic zoning code](#) reforms to promote smarter growth
**Overcome obstacles** to smart growth |
| Encourage Community and Stakeholder Collaboration in Development Decisions | Evaluate the best [public participation methods](#) for your project
Establish a [process to ask the public their opinion](#) about development in their community |

*For a complete list of tools and resources, please see the “Tools & Resources Index” section of the Smart Growth and Sustainability Toolbox.*