Growing Green: Waterfront Development

Development pressures in waterfront communities often threaten the natural resources that originally attracted people to the community. Community leaders can utilize several Smart Growth and sustainable development strategies when considering options for waterfront development, including those listed below.

- Mix Land Use
- Take Advantage of Compact Design
- Foster Distinctive, Attractive Communities

> Through Smart Growth, natural resources should be protected through open space design and conservation.

Mix Land Use

Mixing land use is a common theme for waterfront developments; maritime industries often share space with recreational boaters and fishermen. Diversifying the uses of waterfront areas to include office, retail, and residential space can attract wide variety of people. Vacant waterfront sites can be reclaimed and opened for contemporary uses. It's even possible to build green infrastructure by integrating trees and vegetation into the street network and the city's water and energy management.

Back Bay Biloxi, MS. Photo by Walter Parenteau, FLICKR.

Harrison County, Mississippi understands the dual function of its beach as both a tourist attraction and as protection from natural disasters. It maintains an attractive and resilient coastline through the Sand Beach Master Plan. This same type of planning can be applied to new development districts or redevelopment of coastal areas in order to create enticing waterfronts. Harbors are an excellent opportunity to integrate recreational and commercial uses. In Pass Christian, Mississippi, for example, recreational boaters share space with shrimpers and oystermen who can dock and sell their catch in the harbor. Gulfport, Mississippi is home to an industrial port, a recreational harbor, and a beachfront park with long-range plans to incorporate commercial development.

Take Advantage of Compact Design

Through Smart Growth development, natural resources should be protected through open space design and conservation. Strategic planning of waterfront development will clearly outline the boundaries of development space and conservation space. Because of the limited amount of waterfront, compact design is recommended. Protection of the waterfront viewshed will be important in sustaining the attractiveness of the community to future generations. NOAA provides a tool to illustrate how new development might alter the viewshed of a waterbody. This technology can be used to visualize

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Providing a walkable, mixed-use, compactly-designed waterfront development will attract residents and foster a strong sense of place.

An attractive waterfront community. Photo by Gappa.

Foster Distinctive, Attractive Communities

The integrity of the development district can be protected through the use of codes and ordinances. EPA provides examples of codes supporting Smart Growth development which can be applied to waterfront developments, as well. Because of the natural beauty of waterfront settings, it is imperative to make developments and surrounding areas pedestrian-friendly. There should be ample opportunities for people to see and access the water. A waterfront that maximizes views becomes more desirable and valuable. Landscaping the pedestrian connections can enhance the unique qualities of a place. Providing a walkable, mixed-use, compactly-designed waterfront development will attract residents and foster a strong sense of place.

Tools

ACTIONS	POLICIES • TOOLS • TECHNIQUES
Mix Land Uses	Include a wide variety of amenities along the waterfront A Waterfront Vision Plan serves as a framework for future redevelopment Create great waterfront areas
Take Advantage of Compact Design	New development may alter the viewshed of a waterbody Develop a framework for channeling development and configuring urban public open space
Foster Distinct and Attractive Communities	The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration provides tools and resources for Coastal and Waterfront Smart Growth Take advantage of the benefits of waterfront design Codes that support Smart Growth foster attractive communities
Protect the Waterfront	Prepare a Watershed Plan to restore and protect waterfront property Form an organization to plan, coordinate and implement revitalization strategies, like the Waterfront Development Corporation in Kentucky Incorporate Flood Control into management plans

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