

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION

A national nonprofit, membership organization
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Note for reporters: During the event, please check in at the conference registration desk in the Grand Ballroom foyer of the Westin Charlotte Hotel (601 S. College St.) to obtain a media credential.

New Developments in Financing Smart Growth Highlight National Conference Coming to the Nation's "Banking Capital"

Good ideas all too often require solid financing. With today's economic difficulties making success hard in cities across the nation, developers and communities alike are finding that smart growth innovations are providing effective avenues to make their projects work.

Many of the nation's experts and leaders with successes addressing the economic challenges of creating more livable, sustainable communities will converge on Charlotte next week, at the nation's premier smart growth conference. Close to 1,400 participants from across the country will attend the 10th annual New Partners for Smart Growth conference, to be held February 3-5 in Charlotte. [agenda at NewPartners.org]

The conference will kick off Thursday evening (Feb. 3, 7:15 p.m.) with a plenary on "Financing Smart Growth: From Public to Private Investments in Sustainable Communities," exploring our country's current fiscal and real estate development conditions, and how the market for smart growth may fare as financial realities change in the coming years.

U.S. EPA Deputy Administrator Bob Perciasepe will share his perspective on the coordinated federal investments in community projects made by the EPA, the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Department of Transportation this past year as part of the federal Partnership for Sustainable Communities. Henry Cisneros, former HUD Secretary and current Executive Chairman of CityView, will talk about the important role that the private sector can play in supporting more sustainable communities, even in a time of constrained resources and challenging market conditions.

They will be followed by a distinguished panel of experts from the real estate, development and financial sectors who will share their perspectives on the role of financial investment and dedicated public- and private-sector leadership in making smart growth a success. The panelists include Christopher Leinberger, Metropolitan Land Strategist and Developer at the Brookings Institution; Rose Companies Principal Daniel Hernandez; and Brian Leary, President/CEO of the Atlanta BeltLine.

The "Wise Financing for Smarter Growth in Today's Cash-Strapped World" session on Thursday morning will highlight alternative infrastructure financing tools, such as special districts, tax increment financing, synthetic TIFs and other public-private partnerships, that have been used in completed projects. Federal programs, such as New Market Tax Credits, that can be used in conjunction with state and local tools will also be discussed. Featured speakers include Debbie Bassert, Assistant Vice President of the National Association of Home Builders, and Robert Hagemann, Senior City Attorney with the City of Charlotte.

In the Thursday afternoon session on "Banking on Equitable Development," community leaders and trailblazers in the financial industry will illustrate some of the winning strategies they have employed, as well as their approach to finding the correct balance between economic imperatives and social responsibility.

During the conference's annual update on the state of smart growth funding, speakers from foundations such as the Ford Foundation, the Annie E. Casey Foundation and the Foundation for the Mid South will extend the discussion about "Bringing Equity into Smart Growth Funding."

The conference will also explore smart growth's business value as an "Investment Opportunity for Financiers" in a Thursday session for lenders and investors. The session will look at issues such as the current and future economic condition, home-building trends, changing demographics and preferences, and cost comparisons of smart growth and conventional development, investment trends and finance strategies.

"Investing in smart growth is a good business strategy, moving beyond the corporate 'triple bottom line' mantra," said Christopher Leinberger, Metropolitan Land Strategist and Developer at the Brookings Institution. "There are many business reasons why investing in smart growth should be pursued."

At the Friday implementation workshop on “Growing Smart: Successful Public Private Partnerships,” experts will focus on Public Private Partnerships (PPPs), a mechanism that provides a unique way for developers, government and the community to work together to create innovative and sustainable urban infill developments. This session will feature case studies of successful PPPs that achieve “triple bottom line” results that meet community goals, reduce our environmental footprint and achieve financial returns. The case studies, drawn from across the U.S., illustrate how to structure, negotiate and implement effective PPPs.

The Saturday morning implementation workshop on “Innovative Strategies in Infrastructure Financing” will cover four of the most cutting-edge finance strategies for creating infrastructure investment mechanisms necessary to spur development.

The Redfields to Greenfields effort is a method to create a revolving parks fund to remove banks’ toxic assets while providing valuable new park land where there was once vacant commercial property, thereby generating more capital for local investment. Another new method involves creating a public facility fund for building schools, libraries and other institutions. Dan Kildee, Treasurer of Genesee County (Flint, MI), will discuss land banking strategies for right-sizing shrinking cities can also stimulate economic development. Finally, the session will look at investment analysis that compares the performance of public infrastructure investments and their financial returns from projects in walkable and lower-density environments.

About the conference: The New Partners for Smart Growth conference, hosted at the Westin Charlotte Hotel by the Local Government Commission, a national nonprofit, membership organization based in California, spans three days and covers cutting-edge smart growth issues, the latest research, implementation tools and strategies, successful case studies and new policies. The conference will feature 400 speakers, 100 sessions and 11 tours of local model projects. For more information about the conference sponsors, agenda, speakers and tours: www.newpartners.org

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