

BOSTON SMART GROWTH CONFERENCE

NOVEMBER 20TH, 2013



“ For the last 3,000 cities were built as walkable places, today we call that smart growth whereas before it was normal growth;

“ We need leadership willing to deal with problems, cities can't do it;

“ Most preliminary efforts for improvement are defensive in nature;

“ Market rate housing, for the first time in 100 years, has entered our core urban areas and Downtowns and are now the leading forms of growth in our cities;

“ Urban land is rebounding much faster than suburban land, and this is a permanent trend;

“ Most Downtowns have thoughtfully laid out grids and infrastructure that accommodate large populations walking and mixing with all forms of transportation;



“ Anywhere from 30 – 40% of our urban land masses are streets – or public spaces;

“ Retail in the US in a radical transformation and is cannabilizing itself. We have a higher amount of retail and commercial square footage per capita than anywhere in the world. The internet has permanently altered shopping trends and many retail stores are evolving into showrooms;

“ Large office buildings are becoming obsolete and difficult to finance. Most new companies don't need large amounts of space due to technology;

“ The internet, cell phone, ipads, twitter, facebook, smart phones have fundamentally altered how much we cram into a day. Time is more precious and communications are far more vast. Our days have become much more full;

“ People go to Downtown and commercial districts for their social value, not economic value. We are in a battle for social value.



" Americans are becoming more urban, more European and more cognizant of the value of public spaces;

" American cities, no matter where, are tremendously burdened by legacy costs. Obligations for pensions, longer lives and the inability to deal with affordable health care will greatly compete for the general benefits funded by local budgets;

" All levels of government, for the first time since the 1930s, are insolvent.

" People will pay for something if they believe it will bring them value or a positive experience;

" Names are key and they drive people emotionally to a place;



The key elements to respond to this situation are:

- a. You need a motivated group of businesses, residents and property owners to determine that they can and must do something to improve their social environment and place;
- b. Need to determine that the City or state will not, and cannot solve you community level problems;
- c. Need to create a sustainable funding mechanism that is independent of the City budget and controlled at the community or stakeholder level;



The key elements to respond to this situation are continued:

d. Need to have good solid legislation to allow for the creation of this independent funding mechanism:

1. Funding mechanism makes a clear distinction between special vs. general benefits;
2. The mechanism should be easy to set up and easy to take apart;
3. The mechanism should have a long term, determined by the stakeholders;



4. The management of the financing mechanism should be through a public benefit district management corporation that is transparent by its very nature.

5. The district management corporation (DMC) should be entrepreneurial and use the base assessments as the foundation , but not the whole operations – girl scout cookie analogy;

6. The DMC should have a strong staff/strong board relationship;

7. Don't be driven by strategic plans, but be flexible and take advantage of new opportunities



Tasks of the new DMC:

- “ Be prepared to deal with all issues that arise that affect the community;
- “ Key to everything is the maintenance of order at the local level;
- “ Public space development and maintenance is what makes a place a smart growth place, parks are good, but public spaces should be everywhere;
- “ If you want to attract families to your district, you must work on improving the local schools and work on things like play grounds and dog parks;



Tasks of the new DMC continued:

- “ Parking and transportation management can't be ignored;
- “ Branding of the community is key and is what drives people to an area;
- “ Events should be few and far between and stress the brand you are trying to create;
- “ Main concern is curb to property line;
- “ Streets as public spaces should be seen are growth areas;
- “ Use sidewalks as story boards that tell what happened in the area;



Understand that these DMCs funded by independent, sustainably funded district, that are entrepreneurial and transparent in their operations - is the way we will run cities in the future – period

