COASTAL HAZARDS AND SMART GROWTH

Durability and a Sense of Place

Compact communities with a sense of place are the most enduring coastal communities anywhere. Building a vibrant and walkable (and therefore compact) coastal community is the first and most important step toward building a safe and resilient coastal community.

Our oldest and most beloved coastal cities provide us with some of the best models to follow: the least hazardous location for the best possible situation, and a town form worth defending. These communities have weathered coastal hazards for generations. Where they have failed, it is because they ceased to follow the model.

If we build for people first, respecting the limits of nature, our coastal communities will indeed be enduring

These structures on the Galveston, Texas, "Strand" were all built before the Great Storm of 1900.

The Brownwood Subdivision in Baytown, just east of Houston, was inundated as a result of subsidence, but had neither the durability of construction to withstand the flooding nor the sense of place that would have enabled its citizens to rise to its defense, although some attempts at diking were made.

Smart Growth on the Coast

Smart growth is about vibrant places that use less energy and materials. It is about designing for people and then accommodating cars, a hierarchy ignored by most postwar community planning in the United States until quite recently.

A Charleston or a Savannah could not emerge where separation of uses was mandated. We would find New Orleans completely uninteresting if it were nothing more than a collection of big box stores in a sea of parking lots separated from residential districts.

The 10 Principles of Coastal Smart Growth

1 Mix land uses, including water dependent uses.

2 Take advantage of compact building design that enhances, preserves, and provides access to waterfront resources.

3 Create a range of housing opportunities and choices to meet the needs of both seasonal and permanent residents.

4 Create walkable neighborhoods with physical and visual access to and along the waterfront for public use.

5 Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place that capitalizes on the waterfront's heritage.

6 Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty, and critical environmental areas that characterize and support coastal and waterfront communities.

7 Strengthen and direct development towards existing communities and encourage waterfront revitalization.

8 Provide a variety of land- and water based transportation choices.

9 Make coastal development decisions predictable, fair, and cost-effective through consistent policies and coordinated permitting processes.

10 Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions, ensuring that public interests in and rights of access to the waterfront and coastal waters are upheld.