

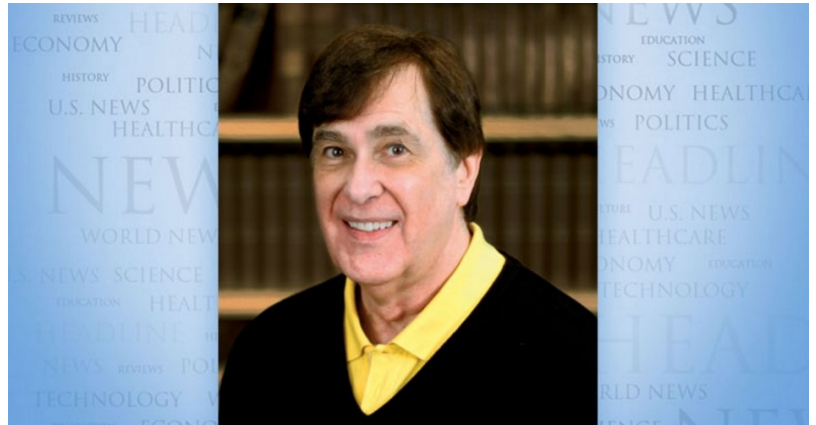


Written by [Tom DeWeese](#) on January 6, 2015

Private Property Rights and Socialism Do Not Mix

An Urgent Message to the National Association of Realtors

The National Association of Realtors (NAR) is the mainstream organization to which nearly every real estate agent in the nation belongs as a means to keep up with the latest ideas and trends in the property-selling industry. NAR's members are the professionals that all of us look to for the best approach to buy and sell our homes. One of NAR's mottos is "protecting the American dream of home ownership." And they claim to protect property rights.



Would it then surprise you that NAR is a major promoter of a plan that actually results in the destruction of private property rights? NAR documents show the Association is working to advocate the policy of Smart Growth for local community development.

Urban planners promote Smart Growth policies because they adhere to the dogma that urban sprawl (development projects) is a danger to the environment, increasing pollution and housing costs, creating more driving time and shopping stress. In addition, say planners, such "urban sprawl" uses up more natural resources and reduces open space.

In response, Smart Growth advocates promote policies to encourage individuals to live in denser population communities that take up smaller tracts of land per housing unit. Such communities also advocate that residents rely more on walking, biking, or public transportation than on cars. Smart Growth plans call for mixing retail and other commercial facilities with residential units. The point is to eliminate the need to commute to jobs or shopping. All will be right there in one neighborhood. Most recently, Smart Growth policies are pushing to include mixed income housing to encourage diversity in every neighborhood.

To promote its Smart Growth policy, NAR paints a delightful, positive picture of a Smart Growth future in its documents: "Our members don't just sell homes, they sell neighborhoods." By promoting Smart Growth, NAR says it's working to "create a range of housing opportunities and choices." "Providing quality housing for people of all income levels is an integral component in any smart growth neighborhood. Housing diversity in terms of type and cost provides a healthy, diverse community. By using Smart Growth approaches to create a wider range of housing choices, municipalities can reduce the environmental costs of auto-dependent development, use their infrastructure resources more efficiently, ensure better balance of jobs, and housing, and generate a strong foundation of support for neighborhood transit, commercial centers and other services." So says NAR Smart Growth promotional materials.

Rail trails, walkable communities, complete streets, to help build "strong communities" are all part of the grand NAR vision for America's glorious future. It's the vision of utopia — a beautiful, well-controlled community of high rises where shopping and jobs are within biking or walking distance or a quick ride on a quaint trolley. Wind turbines turn lazily in the background to supply all energy needs.



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There are no dirty smokestacks, no cars, no parking problems, no grid lock, no sprawl. According to the vision, everyone is living in complete harmony.

Through surveys that have been created to deliver a pre-determined outcome, planners and NAR tell us that 84 percent of residents believe their communities are getting worse and so are “demanding” such planning be done to improve things. Under that excuse, NAR is just working hard “through the smart growth strategies to help create the neighborhoods consumers are demanding.” And to make it all happen, they are passing out NAR Smart Growth Action Grants to realtor groups all over the nation.

Where do such ideas originate and who is NAR working with to create such a policy? Well, to begin with, NAR is a member of the Smart Growth Network. It is joined by such organizations as the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), National Resources Defense Council, American Farmland Trust, Rails to Trails Conservancy, and even the State of Maryland, among others. Now there’s a crew from which any promoter of private property rights should run as fast as possible.

Just for the record, the National Resources Defense Council (NRDC), founded in 1970, was created by a grant from the Ford Foundation to be an environmental law firm. Their favorite tactic is to aggressively sue American industry and state governments to force compliance with radical environmental regulations, costing thousands of jobs and millions of dollars in lost revenues. The American Farmland Trust’s method of “preserving” family farms is acquisition and control of development rights, essentially controlling the farms and how they operate. Rails to Trails Conservancy is infamous for taking property that was leased to now defunct rail roads and turning the right of ways into bike and hiking paths. The only problem is, those pathways are in many cases still owned by the property owners who leased them to the railroads. Basically the trails are pure theft from the property owners. Of course the State of Maryland has proven to be one of the worst oppressors of property rights in the nation as its Governor O’Mally has worked to lock away thousands of acres of land for “environmental protection.” And the EPA — well, it’s the leader of the pack. Pretty strange bed fellows to NAR, which claims to be working for property owners.

But, there is more. Throughout the NAR literature on smart growth, it continually quotes the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development, better known as the Brundtland Commission. It was named after its chairman, Gro Harlem Brundtland, former vice president of the Socialist International. The Commission’s official report was called “Our Common Future.” That report coined the term “Sustainable Development.”

The Brundtland Commission was preceded by a series of UN conferences that led to the findings and suggested policies for development of human society outlined in “Our Common Future.” One such meeting, Habitat I, held in 1976 in Vancouver, declared in its official report, “Land cannot be treated as an ordinary asset, controlled by individuals and subject to the pressures and inefficiencies of the market. Private land ownership is also a principle instrument of accumulation and concentration of wealth, therefore contributes to social injustice.”

Wait a minute! Isn’t that the very definition of sales of real estate? Aren’t home buyers individuals seeking to earn wealth from the equity that will be gained by the purchase of the property? Isn’t that the very pitch every single realtor in the nation uses to encourage us to buy a home? Why, then, would NAR bother to hang around with, and promote policies created by, such people?

Two major documents to come out of the UN after the Brundtland Commission were Agenda 21 and the UN Biodiversity Assessment. That Assessment listed what was considered to be “not sustainable” in our



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brave new world that was being created for us. This included, “ski runs, grazing of livestock, plowing of soil, building of fences, industry, single family homes, paved and tarred roads, logging activities, dams and reservoirs, power line construction, and economic systems that fail to set proper value on the environment.” They of course meant capitalism. Again, how do realtors justify promoting policies that oppose single-family homes and a free market through which to sell them?

OK. So there is the background of such policy. A pretty unsavory bunch for realtors who rely on the sale of private property to be associated with. But what about the policies themselves — all of that wonderful utopia they have planned for us? It sounds wonderful. That can’t be bad, can it?

The fact is, Smart Growth policies simply don’t work. Irrefutable evidence now shows that urban planning actually creates the very problems smart growth is supposed to fix. The most notable result of implementation of smart growth policies is the destruction of American civil liberties and freedom of choice in our lives and the elimination of private property rights. In fact, in 2012, the American Planning Association actually did a study of Smart Growth policies and concluded that they don’t work. But there is money in those policies — grant money. And so the drive for Smart Growth goes on, nearly unabated.

The drumbeat can be heard in nearly every community in the nation through vast new “visioning plans” of various names and titles — usually followed by the number 2050. That’s by design, because most are being implemented by the same planners nationwide, fueled by the same grant programs, and aided by the same NGO private groups.

Smart Growth planners promote their schemes by insisting that Americans live the wrong way. And they use land use regulations to impose on others what they insist is the right way to live.

Listen to the sales pitch. In Omaha, Nebraska, the goal of its plan called Heartland 2050, according to its promoters, is to develop a strategic “vision” for the region’s development over the next 30 years to assure “proper growth.”

This massive plan will lay the ground rules for transportation, housing, jobs, property/land use, education, and even healthcare.

What does all of that mean? It means they intend to put a line around the communities involved and declare little or no growth outside that line. That means the focus for future housing will be for high density neighborhoods living in high-rise housing.

It means the use of private cars will be discouraged in favor of public transportation. How is that done? Several ways. Higher taxes on cars and on gasoline — and there is now a plan inside the Obama administration to tax the miles you drive.

Heartland 2050 includes the program called the “Complete Street.” That is an edict that cars must share the road with bicycles. It calls for “Traffic Calming,” which means large speed bumps placed in the center of residential streets that make it very unpleasant to drive over.

In San Francisco new residential apartment buildings have no parking lots. Again, that’s part of the design to reduce the residents’ ability to drive their cars and instead use bikes and public transportation, including light rail trains, for trips around town.

So, how will all of these new planning schemes affect you? Are you going to be happy? Will life in your community improve?

Well, the best evidence to help predict the future is to look where all of this has already been tried.



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Portland, Oregon, was announced as the poster child for Smart Growth policy. There it was fully implemented.

You can take an airplane over Portland and actually see the smart growth line around the city. On one side is vast, dense development. On the other side is nothing but open land.

Each of these plans focus on “density” of the population. What do you think will happen when you stop any kind of urban growth and instead demand that all development takes place in a certain contained area? Populations grow and so does the density of the population.

In Portland, the planners kept upping the density requirements for housing. To increase urban densities, the planners turned dozens of neighborhoods of single-family homes into apartments and condos.

If you owned a vacant lot, you could not build a single-family house on it — you would have to build a row house or apartment. In some cases, the restrictions were so strict that if your house burned down, you could not rebuild a single family home on the property.

Eventually, Portland planners decided that row houses and low-rise apartments were not enough. They changed the rules to enforce the building of high-rise apartment buildings. Pack and Stack, we call them.

Then they gave tax breaks, below-market land sales, and other subsidies to developers who built the high-rises. That meant that traditional neighborhoods were invaded by high-rise developments.

The center of the plan was the light rail train system. The desirable homes (according to the planners) were those built along the rail line. This would assure ridership, they claimed.

Whoops. Independent studies reveal that the people living in them don’t ride public transit any more significantly than residents in single-family neighborhoods.

In Atlanta, Georgia, the push was on to build a light rail transportation system. One resident studied the plan, took the official estimated construction cost and overlaid that with the number of predicted riders of the system and found that he could buy every single rider their own limo and even throw in a driver.

The result of Portland’s grand plan is that increased density destroyed the entire livable atmosphere of the community. Congestion is worse, housing and consumer costs are higher, and urban services, including fire, police, and schools, have declined as the city took money from these programs to subsidize high-density developers.

The planners of Omaha’s Heartland 2050 are excited that it is receiving grants for the federal department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). HUD was one of the major participants in the UN Habitat Meetings and in the implementation of Agenda 21.

Moreover, just this year, Obama announced that through a HUD program, neighborhoods would now be tested for diversity and if there aren’t enough minorities or low income residents living in them, they will force the input of more of them in such neighborhoods. What do you think the grants from HUD will require your local planners to do with that money?

Smart Growth, sustainable development, Agenda 21 policies have been spread throughout the nation by the strings attached to HUD and EPA and other federal grants. It’s the Kool-Aid that spreads the poison.

If all of the Smart Growth plans are fully implemented, as advocated by the APA and supported by NAR,



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density in American cities will be as much as three times higher than those currently in New York City. People seek to escape cities because they are expensive, inefficient, crime-ridden, drug-infested, overtaxed, overregulated cesspools. Living space is cramped, overpriced, and undersized. Some studies have shown that people forced to live in such an atmosphere are less healthy and more dependent on government.

Why would an organization like the National Association of Realtors jump on the bandwagon to support such an anti-people, anti-private property policy? How can such a policy be defended by an organization that says it advocates private property ownership and healthy communities?

If one could install a video camera at the door of every new home built in a suburban neighborhood to record the moment a family walked into their newly purchased home, they would record happy faces. Here a family has the room to expand and grow, on their own terms. Here there is a safe place for their children to play. Isn't that the very image the nation's realtors promote?

Of course, Smart Growth urban planners would be quick to say such development encourages strip malls and costs communities more tax dollars. The fact is, those new commercial establishments not only provide goods and services for those new neighborhoods, they also provide jobs and generate tax revenues. That's how economies are built.

Smart Growth is pure socialism and it has never worked anywhere it has ever been tried. It destroys the economy. It devastates the poor. Building costs skyrocket. Housing shortages rise and freedom of choice falls. Government makes every decision for every life choice for every person. Is that really what America's realtors advocate?

NAR claims it speaks for all realtors. If so, then it's past time for America's realtors to stop turning a blind eye to the policies being promoted by their national association. Because, in time, as more Smart Growth policies are forced into place, there will be less and less private property for realtors to sell.

Realtors — for your own survival — it's time to start working to restore the very policy that created American wealth: private property ownership. It's time to say no to the socialism of the National Association of Realtors.



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