How can we grow to make a better future for a better Cambridge? (and the region along with it!)

Amy A. Cotter

Metropolitan Area Planning Council, Boston
“We work toward sound municipal management, sustainable land use, protection of natural resources, efficient and affordable transportation, a diverse housing stock, public safety, economic development, an informed public, and equity and opportunity among people of all backgrounds.”
Places for People
Choices for living

Different kinds of houses to suit different families. Housing that focuses on people, not cars.
Options for getting around

Biking: Great for shorter trips around town
Car sharing: Picking up groceries, trips out of town
Public Transit: Farther trips, getting to work
Walking: Getting to work, visiting friends, running errands – most daily activities
Healthy lifestyles and environment
Convenient and vibrant places

Easy connections to schools, groceries, jobs, friends, services, entertainment, parks

Vibrant places where people live, work, shop and play

Opportunity to make a better life for you and your family
Lots nearly twice as big:

1970-1985: 0.3  
1985-2000: 0.6

acres developed / new unit

Fewer Homes on Larger Lots

Acres Developed per New Housing Unit

1970 - 1985

450,000 Units Added

1986 - 2000

282,000 Units Added

Acres

- > 1.5
- 0.75 - 1.5
- 0.25 - 0.75
- < 0.25

Residential Acreage Decline

Housing Unit Decline
If current trends continue....

Lot Sizes
Suburban Homes
2000 - 2030

- 1 acre or more: 70%
- ½ acre: 25%
- ¼ acre: 5%

Natural Open Space Lost
2000 – 2030
152,000 acres

Acres per town:
- <100
- 100 - 1000
- >1000
If current trends continue….

2/3 of suburban growth occurs far from developed areas

50% of new jobs accessible only by car
If current trends continue... 

Traffic Congestion,
2000
(% Capacity)

Traffic Congestion,
2030
(% Capacity)
Water Shortages, 2000
22 Systems Exceed Permit Limits

Water Shortages, 2030
50 Systems Exceed Permit Limits
“Smart Growth”

“At the heart of the American dream is the simple hope that each of us can choose to live in a neighborhood that is beautiful, safe, affordable and easy to get around. Smart growth does just that. Smart growth creates healthy communities with strong local businesses. Smart growth creates neighborhoods with schools and shops nearby and low-cost ways to get around for all our citizens. Smart growth creates jobs that pay well and reinforces the foundations of our economy. Americans want to make their neighborhoods great, and smart growth strategies help make that dream a reality.”
65% of suburban growth near town centers and in developed areas

52% of new suburban housing through reuse of previously built land
50% of residential growth will be in cities

60,000 new two-family homes, lofts, condos, in urban areas
Smart Growth

**Kendall Square Daily Motor Vehicle Traffic**

- **Source:** City of Cambridge
- **Globe Staff

**Transit Potential 2030**

**MetroFuture**

- More
- Less
- Existing Commuter Rail Lines

**Millions Walk and Bike Trips, Daily**

**Current Trends, 2030**

**MetroFuture, 2030**
Water Shortages, 2000
22 Systems Exceed Permit Limits

Water Shortages, 2030
50 Systems Exceed Permit Limits

Smart Growth
Of people with safe places to walk within ten minutes of home, 43% achieve physical activity targets, compared with just 27% of residents in less walkable areas.

People who ride transit daily burn walk over 8 minutes/day more than drivers, burning roughly 8,000 more calories/year.
Opportunity to make a better life

Reduce the combined cost of transportation and housing, which currently makes up more than 50% of the average household budget.

Foot traffic provides the steady stream of potential customers to make small businesses viable.

Jobs near homes and public transit provides more people with more employment opportunities.
Changing Household Size

- Households without children account for 73% of the population, up from 52% in 1960 and 67% in 2000
- 90% of housing growth will be households without children—this is driving growing demand for smaller, lower maintenance homes
Entrepreneurship is rising
Workers are more mobile
Office space shrinking (350-500 sq ft/worker to 150-250 sq ft/worker)
Open, shared spaces
More places to engage in interactive work, even extending outside
• 80 million nationally
• 1980 to early 2000s
• 88% want to be in an urban setting
• Pick a place to live, then look for a job