Reversing Urban Sprawl: A Reclaimability Index Approach for Reviving Downtown Brownfields

A key step to promoting smart growth principles is the reclamation of dilapidated and contaminated urban sites, also known as brownfields. Brownfield redevelopment aids in using existing infrastructure instead of developing green fields, and promotes the creation of walkable neighborhoods that were the paradigm of growth prior to the prevalence of urban sprawl in cities across America. The conversion of brownfields into local business centers would also favor public transportation and revival of local markets. However, brownfield reclamation meets significant obstacles, depending on the local legal, economic and social conditions. The intervention of state and city authorities with financial and policy-based aid is crucial to overcoming those obstacles. However, allocation of (limited) funds should take into consideration smart growth principles to maximize the related benefits. To support the decision making process, the proposed research will analyze the current conditions in the State of Connecticut, understand the obstacles for the successful brownfield reclamation and develop a spatially-based tool that can be used by public planners to prioritize brownfield redevelopment options based on a consideration of overall social benefits relative to costs, including the promotion of smart growth.

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