

**Ex-Governor Glendening: “Stem Sprawl and Spur Growth in Urban Centers”
Tells Over 300 Attending Wick Neighbors, Inc. Annual Meeting May 3, 2005**

Parris Glendening used his power as Maryland governor to stem suburban sprawl and spur growth in deteriorating urban areas statewide. But local grassroots efforts such as Wick Neighbors, Inc. ultimately have the best long-term chance at achieving such redevelopment.

That's what the former two-term governor and president of the Smart Growth Leadership Institute told more than 300 people at the 2005 annual meeting and dinner of Wick Neighbors, Inc.

Glendening talked about how sprawl has become defacto government policy and how Smart Growth policies can reverse that trend.

Smart Growth is about redirecting economic energy into existing neighborhoods and meeting the desires of residents, Glendening said.

Residents embrace Smart Growth approaches when they come to understand that the result is thinning traffic, easing tax burdens and an enjoyable quality of life in existing neighborhoods.

"There is a political energy behind this in communities," Glendening said. "You, in fact, have the power to make Smart Growth happen, one step at a time, in the place you call home."

Exercising that power is important to the future, Glendening said. Taxes keep going up to pay for new water and sewer pipes, roads and schools to subsidize suburbs further and further from central cities, he said.

"These sprawling patterns that we have come to accept in our country are not working for us. They are hurting our economy, wasting billions of our tax dollars and they're unraveling the very fabric of our communities," he said. "That's why it is important for us to focus on causing change and causing it now."

Sprawl started with the interstate highway system and government mortgage guarantees after World War II, which used tax dollars to open the suburbs, he said. For decades, minority urban areas were redlined against receiving such mortgages, Glendening said. That meant investment went to the suburbs instead of core cities, Eventually, sprawl became state and national policy, he said.

The issue isn't unique to Youngstown, Glendening said. The population in Buffalo, New York, is the same as in 1940. Today, however, the region occupies four times the space. The city of New Orleans has seen a 2 percent population increase over a decade but the city rapidly is being deserted for development further out.

"The challenges you face in Youngstown are the same issues that so many cities and towns and inner ring suburbs across the nation are dealing with as they grow, as things change and as the economy changes," Glendening said.

Dealing effectively with sprawl doesn't mean stalling growth, he said. Instead, communities can redirect investment to their urban areas with incentives.

Maryland lets local governments develop their towns how they want. The state, however, no longer provides money to pay for growth in suburbs. That's up to private developers. Instead, state incentives are offered only to redevelop existing urban areas.

"Smart Growth is not about stopping growth or slowing it down. Rather, Smart Growth is an effort to channel growth into our existing communities," he said.

Local governments do need to invest in their own urban areas, such as locating public building there, he said. If local government won't invest in a town, nobody else will, Glendening said. Local government also needs to maintain neighborhoods to at least a basic level by keeping up with topics such as code enforcement, he said.

"Blight breeds blight. Reinvestment breeds reinvestment," he said.

People will respond to investment in existing urban areas when mixed-use neighborhoods are offered, such as the Wick District-Smoky Hollow Redevelopment Plan, Glendening said. Urban areas offer amenities that can't be found in suburban areas, from proximity to arts and entertainment to tight-knit neighborhoods, he said.

People resist the notion of both sprawl and dense residential developments, so design is paramount, he said. When people are asked how they want their neighborhood to look and the plan is well designed, however, the result tends to feature a dense mix of residential, retail and commercial, he said.

"The design overcomes the density issue," he said.