

It Pays to Play the Game of Smart Growth

Dr. Chris Hawkins

Key Findings

Recently, there has been a great deal of interest on the importance of smart growth policies at the municipal government level. Smart growth is a planning and land use policy objective that generally focuses on where development should occur and how best to protect natural resources. What explains the adoption of smart growth policy by local government? This study focuses on a cooperative intergovernmental program (Commonwealth Capital Score in the State of Massachusetts) that seeks to enhance local government abilities to work towards achieving

Probit Results — Heckman Selection Model		
Selection Equation (CCS Application)	Coefficient	Std. Error
Governing Institution		
Mayor-council	.659*	.388
Local Growth Controversy	.493**	.226
Resource Dependency		
Constrained community	.648**	.300
Override community	.620**	.247
Fiscal capacity	-.010*	.005
Population white	-.038*	.020
Population (log)	.299***	.091

state goals on sustainability. This paper argues that resource dependency influences local decisions in pursuing a smart growth agenda provided state incentives for policy choice. The findings suggest that fiscal capacity and the characteris-

tics of local governing institutions are significant predictors in the decision to take part in the CCS planning intergovernmental program. The above table reports the significant variables of the probit model.

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For more information or to request the author contact you for consultation:

Center for Public and Nonprofit Management
 cpnm@ucf.edu
 407-823-2604

Recommendations for Practice

1. Local governments should work to build relations with interest groups to support smart growth efforts, but caution should be taken in assuming pro-growth interests have an anti-environment agenda.

2. To achieve smart growth, local officials should consider the individual functional areas that are key elements of a comprehensive smart growth agenda in order to identify allies in local planning efforts.

3. One avenue for future research is exploring the role of regional institutions on policy decisions. Do regional planning processes that encourage engagement with slow-growth and pro-growth interests help to build a growth regime?

