

## Turning the Corner in Housing & Community Development

# How Great Leadership is Working for “Smart Growth” Housing

**T**ed Carman’s great idea for addressing the housing crisis in Massachusetts came to him one morning in the summer of 2002 while walking to the commuter rail station in Melrose. He’d just moved to Melrose and was enjoying what he calls “a highly civilized way” to get to and from work every day. As a longtime developer of housing, he’d been thinking for years about the crisis of high housing costs in Massachusetts. It was clear to him that the heart of the problem could be summed up in one word: zoning.

Mr. Carman was acutely aware that for good reasons—such as financial concerns and traffic congestion—zoning laws typically prohibited housing in sufficient quantities to make a difference. He asked himself what it would take to break through these constraints. The answer: have the state provide financial incentives to towns and cities that develop dense housing near transportation nodes and town

centers—and give communities the right to develop the design standards to control the appearance of the housing. In this way, the state would stimulate the development of housing in Smart Growth locations by taking advantage of the 120 commuter rail lines that radiate many miles out from downtown Boston.

He approached the *Commonwealth Housing Task Force*, convened by the Boston Foundation, with the idea and the group immediately liked it. With a \$40,000 grant from the Foundation, Mr. Carman and two other members of the Task

“Smart Growth zoning will foster distinctive and attractive communities, preserve open space, reduce urban sprawl and provide for a range of new housing options that will ease the housing crisis we face in the Commonwealth.”

Massachusetts Senator Harriette L. Chandler



“High prices are pushing everyone out of the housing market in this state, including the middle class. ‘Smart Growth’ housing is a solution that helps all of us.”

Ted Carman,  
President of Concord Square Development Co.





“This innovative housing policy, which the Boston Foundation advocated for, seeks to bring partnership and cooperation to housing development in Massachusetts.”

Massachusetts Representative Kevin G. Honan

Force—Barry Bluestone, Director of the Center for Urban and Regional Policy at Northeastern University, and Eleanor White, President of Housing Partners, Inc., wrote a report called “Building on Our Heritage: A Housing Strategy for Smart Growth and Economic Development” in 2003.

But reports don’t become legislation without the support of visionary public policymakers. Meet Massachusetts Senator Harriette L. Chandler and Representative Kevin G. Honan, two lawmakers who are passionate about the need for new housing in the state. Senator Chandler (D-Worcester) is former Co-Chair of the Joint Committee on Housing and currently Co-Chair of the Community Development & Small Business Committee.

“To thrive as a community, we need people to live here and support our businesses. The people of Plymouth see the benefits in developing Cordage Park. They want this to happen.”

Lee Hartmann,  
Director of Planning and Development,  
Town of Plymouth

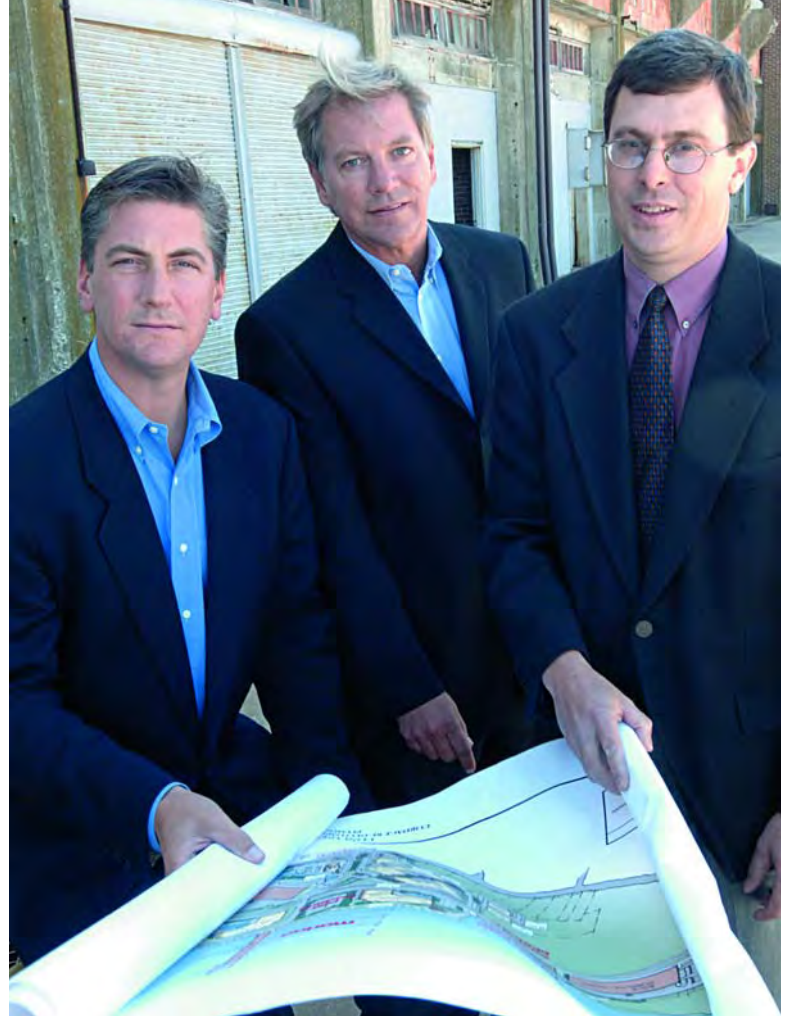


Representative Honan (D-Brighton) is Co-Chair of the Joint Committee on Housing. With their support, the backing of many other legislators and the farsightedness of Senate President Robert Travaglini and Speaker of the House Salvatore DiMasi—the landmark Smart Growth Housing Act (Chapter 40R), was passed in 2004.

While towns and cities across the Commonwealth were interested in the opportunity, there was still a hurdle. The Chapter 40R legislation had not incorporated the Task Force’s recommendation to include funds for educating the children whose families move into new housing. This was a crucial element in making it acceptable for communities to pass Smart Growth Zoning. Moving quickly, the Task Force prepared a second report that outlined a legislative solution. As a result of ongoing leadership in the Senate and House, this report became the “Smart Growth School Reimbursement Act” (Chapter 40S), which was passed in November of 2005.

The next steps had to come from towns and cities themselves. As of this fall, seven communities have stepped up to the plate, approving Smart Growth districts that will be home to some 2,000 units of housing—and sending a total of \$5 million in state funds to their coffers. One town alone, Plymouth, has plans for 675 units.

Lee Hartmann, Director of Planning and Development for Plymouth, and developers Joseph and Louis Jannetty, the owners of Cordage Park LLC on the site of an historic rope factory, worked together with many others in crafting the Smart Growth zoning proposal to the town. At a Town Meeting in May of 2006, the project was approved for appealing condos and rental units on the Atlantic Ocean



“At one time, Cordage Rope Company was the largest provider of rope in the world—so it’s deeply rooted in this community. The train stops here; there are hiking and biking trails; and it’s right on a deep-water channel. It’s going to be a great place to live.”

Joseph Jannetty, co-owner, Cordage Park LLC (left, with Louis Jannetty and Lee Hartmann)

and next to the Old Colony commuter rail line. The project is expected to bring more than \$2 million in Smart Growth payments to the town, in the process creating a model development to inspire many more communities.

Smart Growth legislation alone will not solve the housing crisis in Massachusetts, but it is an important step—and a terrific example of the kind of progress that can be made when philanthropic, public, nonprofit, private and government parties come together in partnership with a common goal to make something happen.