

# Recognizing Agenda 21/Sustainable Development



Across America, state and local officials are passing bills and issuing resolutions protecting their citizen's from the property eroding policies of Agenda 21. Because most officials do not recognize Agenda 21 in action, property owners remain just as much at risk as if there were no resolutions.



This document explains:

- I. Q&A: Understanding Agenda 21 and sustainable development
- II. How to Identify Agenda 21 and Sustainable Development in Planning, Legislation and Regulations
- III. Steps to Avoid Agenda 21/Sustainable Development in Your Community

## **A brief history of Agenda 21:**

Agenda 21 (agenda for the 21st century,) was a 1992 United Nation's action plan based on their 1976 "Vancouver Plan of Action."

The Vancouver plan established that private ownership of property was a danger to the planet and economically unfair. It proposed returning most private land to government control.

Following a 5-year study, which included the Vancouver's action recommendations, the UN's Brundtland Commission released a report, which created the term "Sustainable Development."

According to The Brundtland Report, sustainable development required the expansion of government control over private property, all of man's interactions with the environment and the global redistribution of wealth in order to protect the planet and create economic fairness.

The UN introduced these ideas to the world at the 1992 Rio Earth Summit in the form of a global plan of action called Agenda 21. The plan was voluntary and non-binding, *until* a member State approved it and began implementation. At that point, it was binding and no longer voluntary within that State.

The US approved the plan, and signed the implementation of Agenda 21 into law via Executive Order 12852 in 1993. The EO formed the President's Council on Sustainable Development (PCSD) for the sole purpose of bringing Agenda 21 to the U.S.. Under the PCSD, Agenda 21's authors served on the same committees as our federal agency employees and wrote regulations that gradually return private land to the public domain and implement all other items in the Agenda 21 plan of action. An example of their regulations can be found in the Federal Register Vol. 63, No. 163/ Monday, August 24, 1998/ Notices. Look for EPA "Sustainable Challenge Grant Program."

In 1999, the PCSD disbanded having completed its task of embedding the Agenda 21 principles in every federal agency. Today these principles continue to grow through federal regulations and are forced on communities through stipulations attached to grant monies.

*(Note\* If you are not familiar with Agenda 21, please watch the brief video titled, "Agenda 21 for Public Officials." You can find it at [www.sustainablefreedomlab.org/susdev/](http://www.sustainablefreedomlab.org/susdev/))*

## I. Q&A: Understanding Agenda 21 and Sustainable Development



### Why is it hard to recognize Agenda21/sustainable development in my community?

Regulators, planners and policymakers rarely use the words "Agenda 21" in their work. Instead, they use familiar terms like livability, Smart Growth, sustainable communities and healthy cities. (See section III for a full description of terms.)



### How do I know Agenda 21 even exists in the U.S.?

There are plenty of references to implementing Agenda 21 in the Federal Register, UN documents, U.S. progress reports to the United Nations and internal federal agency documents. (See "A brief history of Agenda 21" in box on the previous page.)

### What does Agenda 21 have to do with sustainable development?

The terms are synonymous. The term sustainable development has a specific definition established by the UN's 1987 Brundtland Report and later used in Agenda 21 and, under executive order, adopted by our own federal agencies. It defines sustainable development as "*Development that meets the need of current generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.*" (See: "*Our Common Future*," - Brundtland Report, C. 2 "*Towards Sustainable Development*")

### What is wrong with this definition of sustainable development?

It has two serious flaws.

1. It sacrifices personal property rights and current living standards today in favor of protecting future generations about whose needs the authors know little.
2. Since the agencies and planners do not know the specific needs of future generations, their solution was broad control of all of society's equity, its economy and the environment now. (See: *Brundtland Report's, Chap't. 2 "Towards Sustainable Development"; Statement delivered by Sec. Maurice Strong at UN Agenda 21 Rio de Janeiro June 1992*)

### How do I know the UN's sustainable development is the same one in our community?

Nations, such as the U.S., who agreed to Agenda 21, also agreed to follow the UN's definition of sustainable development and work to assure its implementation. Its principles are found in federal regulations, grant stipulations, most planner-led community planning objectives, community visioning and consensus building sessions; the American Planning Association's Legislative Guidebook, 2nd edition; and is endorsed by major associations such as the Leagues of Municipalities, US Conference of Mayors, National Governor's Association, Regional Councils and more.

The government's "Partnership for Sustainable Communities" adheres to the UN's definition and the EPA, in January 2012, agreed to change their decision making process to incorporate "sustainable development as defined in the [UN's] 1987 Brundtland Commission's Report."

### I thought sustainable development was a good idea for our community.

Most community members, officials and planners do not realize that sustainable development is nothing more than the widespread implementation of the Brundtland Report's conclusions, promoted through federal agencies under executive orders, and couched in terms of fairness and environmental protection.

The term sustainable development has become so widely used we automatically assume it is a good idea.

### **How does sustainable development get into my community?**

Grants issued in conjunction with government 'sustainability initiatives' contain stipulations or implementation practices that are the primary doorway for Agenda 21/sustainable development to enter your community. These stipulations often require no growth boundaries, income integration through low-income housing demands, reduced vehicle usage, healthy cities, livability principles and other forms of social engineering.

Grants issued by non-profit groups such as the Packard, Pew or Carnegie Foundations frequently promote Agenda 21 through sustainable development practices since they often receive their money from HUD or other federal agencies.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) including ICLEI, the Nature Conservancy, American Farmland Trust and the American Planning Association have close ties to HUD-EPA-DOT sustainability initiatives and promote Agenda 21 through their regional and community work and funding.

It also enters through planners' surveys (with lop-sided questions,) consensus meetings (that only include small portions of residents,) visioning sessions (with preconceived visions,) stakeholder meetings (stacked with questionable 'stakeholders',) local zoning, Federal regulations, restrictive clauses in conservation easements and the careless trading of development rights.

Federal agency acts including the Clean Water Act, Clean Air Act and Endangered Species Act have so expanded, that individual's rights are losing way to unfounded and often exaggerated endangerment findings. The solutions to their findings invariably require fines, taxes, property rights' infringements or the outright transfer of private lands to the government.

Preservation programs, National Parks, Historic Places and Byways, Heritage Sites and Legacy Forest programs have gone beyond prudent land protection and are now gobbling up American property in alignment with Agenda 21 principles.

### **How can this happen in America?**

Governments and agencies confiscate land by claiming it is for, "justice, the people and the environment." The friendly terminology disarms opposition. In fact, Agenda 21/sustainable development implements a misguided program harmful to all three.

## II. How to Identify Agenda 21 and Sustainable Development in Planning, Legislation and Regulations



*Following is a partial list of terms used in planning proposals, federal regulations or state and local legislation that can lead to the implementation of Agenda 21 and eventual loss of individual property rights. Do not be surprised if you have seen these before. As you will learn from studying Agenda 21/sustainable development, its policies are now embedded in virtually every federal agency and planning organization in the nation.*



### **\*Important notes:**

1. To many of us, the terms on the next page sound innocent. Yet, most refer to the government's overarching policies to protect the planet by converting private property into public lands, forcing economic integration through forced low-income housing and redistributing personal wealth through schemes such as "tax base sharing." Other terms are friendly-sounding marketing jargon and not at all representative of the actual outcomes. Words like 'sustainable,' 'smart growth' and 'social justice' could mean virtually anything. Unfortunately, nearly all lead to public policy that is detrimental to property ownership.
2. Often the planners or even public officials promoting plans that implement Agenda 21 are not aware of the connection between their proposal and the UN's action plan.
3. When planning for your community, it is important that your program:
  - Is completely managed and controlled at the local level, not by planners, regional councils, non-governmental organizations, non-profit foundations, trusts, federal and state agencies or any other top-down entity.
  - Assures that community members have a full understanding of how their plan will affect their property rights now and in the long term.
  - Involves a majority of community members in decision-making, not just a small sampling.
  - Enables residents to opt out or in to programs as a means of protecting their individual property rights.
  - **Avoids grant money.**

## Agenda 21/Sustainable Development Terms

Sustainable communities' strategies  
Smart communities  
Livability principles  
Equitable housing  
Economic integration  
Healthy cities  
Complete streets  
Walkable communities  
Environmental justice  
Social equity  
Health fairness  
Conservation easements  
Buffer zones  
Food miles travelled (FMT)  
Urbanism  
Regional councils  
Advisory capacity  
Urban forests  
Congestion mitigation  
Global sustainable development  
Mixed use  
Smart growth  
Visioning  
Runoff  
Open spaces  
Endangered species  
Comprehensive planning  
...and many more

Historic preservation  
Smart meters  
More transportation choices  
Economic competitiveness  
EJ 2014  
Leverage federal investments  
Road diets  
Environmentally sustainable  
Social justice  
Economic fairness  
Grant monies  
Trading of development rights  
Vehicle miles travelled (VMT)  
No growth zones  
Resilience initiatives  
Steering groups  
Heritage area  
Tax base sharing  
Urban blight  
Urban sustainability  
Urban sprawl  
Consensus  
Historic byways  
Ephemeral streams  
Habitats  
Urban growth boundaries  
Regional planning

### III. Steps to Avoid Agenda 21/Sustainable Development in Your Community



*Citizens and public officials can stop sustainable development by working together. Agenda 21 is non-political. We too must forget party lines. Here are some steps you can take.*



#### **"If there is a clock in the deal, walk away."**

Planner's survey results, comments and studies often fail to hold up under close inspection. Therefore, plan promoters frequently market a crisis as the need for immediate action, before real scrutiny can take place. Anything from "water pollution," "overcrowding," and "highway congestion," to "fragmented natural habitats," "endangered species" and even "climate change" become convenient alarms requiring instant action. Often, there is little verifiable evidence for the extreme claims.

In New York State, Governor Cuomo, under his Cleaner Greener NY initiative, is attempting to regionalize over 1,000,000 inhabitants of eight counties with a promise of much needed "green jobs." Whether these jobs will materialize is doubtful. Closer study reveals the job predictions were made by the same group that forecast the non-existent "shovel ready jobs" under the original stimulus program. Under the NY plan, local officials are at risk of losing their authority to a regional consortium and community members their representation. In spite of the high stakes, the Governor is attempting to roll up the entire process that would normally take years, in a matter of a few months. His excuse for the speed is, "We need to act now." Actually, there is little reason to "act now" other than that the more the plan is studied, the more the inconsistencies, lost local authority and doubtful outcomes become apparent.

- Look up "Agenda 21, sustainable development, property rights" and do your own research. Go to [www.sustainablefreedomlab.org](http://www.sustainablefreedomlab.org) for tools and information.
- Review and recognize plans that may harm individual rights, then join with other community members and officials to reject planners who seek to regionalize, urbanize or protect in ways that infringe on individual property rights.
- Do your own community planning and keep planners' input to a minimum.
- Avoid grant money. There is no such thing as 'something for nothing.' It is better to raise your own money in your own community.
- If accepting a grant, read, study and understand all of the implications of taking monies from governments, trusts or non-profit organizations. If you see the words, 'livable' or 'sustainable,' or any of the previously listed terms, refuse the money.
- Think twice before accepting money from non-profit foundations. Groups such as the Packard and Carnegie Foundations receive their money from HUD and other federal agencies, therefore binding you to the same stipulations as if you had accepted the grant directly from the government.
- HUD's micro-grants are small \$7000 to \$10,000 grants, often issued through non-governmental organizations (NGO's.) They are the 'foot in the door' to create regions and local dependence on

even larger grants that do contain Agenda 21 based social engineering and lifestyle stipulations.

- Public officials and citizens need to work together to understand conservation easements. The losses they create are often delayed and not readily evident. Thoroughly read all documents relating to conservations easements and hire a personal attorney before entering into any agreement that trades off development rights to your property. Once you lose development rights, you have essentially lost control of your property, no matter what the trust or the government proclaims. (For more information see: The Hazards of Conservation Easements at <http://sustainablefreedomlab.org/files/files/The%20Hazards%20of%20Conservation%20Easements%20Rev.1.4.pdf>)
- Avoid contact with federal programs such as HUD's eCon Planning or the HUD-DOT-EPA Partnership for Sustainable Communities.
- Recognize that Agenda 21/sustainable development is not political. Liberals and conservatives have lost property values and local officials of both parties have lost much of their authority. (Examples are officials in NJ under the Highlands Act and in Westchester County, NY under HUD's minority relocation program).
- Do not accept any planners into your community who refuse to sign and abide by the Planners' Resolution to Protect Property Rights. (Found on the Sustainable Freedom Lab website.)
- Avoid engaging in so-called regional programs that bind several communities into a larger region for planning purposes. Regions are often formed from old Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO's) whose work originally involved transportation. Today, these MPOs have expanded into all forms of planning and zoning including tax base sharing, sustainable initiatives and no-growth boundaries. While they sound innocent on the surface, in practice they diminish local rule, redirect local tax dollars and force top down planning. (Examples of regionalism are Cleaner, Greener New York, Together New Jersey and the Tennessee 16 County Plan.)
- Inform your neighbors and have them participate in community planning and all political activities.

**For more information go to: [www.sustainablefreedomlab.org](http://www.sustainablefreedomlab.org)**