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Much has been discussed recently in Mobile and Baldwin counties on the topic of smart growth and its potential impacts to the local quality of life. However, there are several different ways to apply smart growth, particularly when it comes to community design.

NOAA's Coastal Services Center along with the Georgia Coastal Management Program recently debuted a website that compares some of these different options. The site, entitled "Alternatives for Coastal Development: One Site, Three Scenarios" (<http://www.csc.noaa.gov/alternatives/>) showcases three designs of a neighborhood for one coastal area, a conventional design, a conservationist design, and a New Urbanist design. Environmental, economic, and social indicators are compared between the three, and 3-D maps and fly-thrus are available detailing each design.

Although primarily a research study to compare the environmental, economic, and social indicators, the site offers an excellent comparison of the three leading types of neighborhood design and the factors that define them.

To learn even more about smart growth, visit "New Suburb: Sprawl vs. 'Smart Growth'", a website and visual tour by National Geographic ([http://www.nationalgeographic.com/earthpulse/sprawl/index\\_flash.html](http://www.nationalgeographic.com/earthpulse/sprawl/index_flash.html)). This site offers a visual walk through of a "Smart Growth" neighborhood, contrasting its elements to a traditional "sprawl" neighborhood.

By integrating elements of smart growth into the design of our coastal communities, we can improve our quality of life in coastal Alabama.