

Urbanization Quick Facts

The term "urban sprawl" describes the expansion of cities into rural areas. This phenomenon has occurred around the world and has had economic, health, and environmental consequences.

Causes of urban sprawl

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| <p>Transportation</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased use of/reliance on automobiles • Improved/expanded roads • Low gas prices promote driving • Telecommuting(work from home, making use of the Internet, email, and the telephone) has made it possible to work remotely |
| <p>Economic</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing wealth/affluence(\$\$) providing choice • Higher taxes in inner city • High land/property costs in city <u>vs.</u> less expensive land prices outside the city (cannot earn both) • Tax deductions for home mortgages interest • Jobs move out and employees follow • Home buying subsidies/reduced interest rates e.g., GI Bill • Lack of/poor city-regional planning: (urban centers plan in isolation; lack of cohesive plan for growth) • Lower cost of living in suburbs |
| <p>Quality of Life</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desire for property/yard/lower density • Better quality suburban schools • Urban blight**/declining infrastructure(the basic physical and organizational structures and facilities e.g., buildings, roads, and power supplies, needed for the operation of a society or enterprise) in inner cities • High crime rates in inner cities • Seek natural environments, aesthetics, cleaner air, less noise pollution, etc. <p><i>** Urban blight/economic blight of a city is the visible and physical decline of a property, neighborhood or city due to a combination of economic downturns, residents and businesses leaving the area, and the cost of maintaining the quality of older structures.</i></p> |

Human Health effects associated with urban sprawl:

- Asthma, bronchitis, emphysema, airway inflammation, irritation of mucus membranes, respiratory irritation, lung irritation, aggravated heart disease from increased air pollution
- Obesity, impaired immune response, diabetes, hypertension, high blood pressure from less exercise due to auto travel time and/or a commuter diet
- Depression, anxiety, suppressed immune response from social isolation due to spread out housing
- Personal injuries associated with automobile crashes due to increased driving
- Hearing loss, high blood pressure, impaired immune response from noise pollution
- Survival rate/recovery rate hindered due to delays in emergency medical services response and fire department response times due to spread out housing
- Reduction in disease spread in lower density area

Smart growth focuses on ways to encourage sustainable urban development.

Steps a municipality could take to encourage smart growth in order to limit urban sprawl.

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| Transportation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subsidize mass transit to encourage less automobile use • Build bike paths to encourage less automobile use • Establish moratoria (A moratorium... is the suspension of a particular activity) on highway & new road construction • Develop master plans which direct new residents/jobs to busy hubs |
| Zoning/Design | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modify zoning ordinances to encourage multi-use/mixed land uses, create minimum development densities; promote compact communities; a range of housing opportunities; vertical development • Establish development barriers surrounding cities and towns (Urban Growth Boundaries) • Preserve and protect farms/agricultural lands by designating these areas as agricultural land • reserves or conservation easements (easements-the right to cross or use the real property of another for a specific purpose) • Create a range of housing opportunities & choices (Urban Village Strategy): dense, multi-family- and single-family housing near shops, cafes, & public transit • Foster communities that provide a sense of place: promote appreciation of unique environments, community involvement, and social context of cities • Promote gentrification (means "making something suitable for a higher class of people," usually the middle class the upper class already have their mansions). • Promote reclamation of brownfields (Brownfield is a term used in urban planning to describe land previously used for industrial purposes or some commercial uses. Such land may have been contaminated with hazardous waste or pollution or is feared to be so.) |
| Tax Incentives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create tax incentives/reduced taxes for living in city |
| Increased Amenities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance the quality of living/increase amenities in cities (e.g., schools, parks, pools, recreation to encourage people to remain in cities); • efforts to reduce pollution/improve air quality |
| Other | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry out public education campaign |

Highway systems and urban sprawl often threaten wildlife populations. **Methods to reduce harmful effects on wildlife populations from highways and urban sprawl.**

- Create wildlife corridors/tunnels between green areas
- Create wildlife crossing zones/tunnels/overpasses, etc.
- Plan highways around existing migratory routes and prime habitats
- Avoid fragmentation of habitat by housing developments
- Set aside land for/increase size of refuges; increase green space and buffer zones along highways
- Construct highway fencing, especially along migratory routes
- Promote planting of native plants to provide habitat
- Enforce anti-littering laws along highways; reduce highway speed limits; "wildlife caution signs"
- Encourage carpooling (fewer cars, fewer wildlife collisions)

Urban sprawl often results in the loss of productive agricultural land near cities. Practical ways to increase food production within urban areas include

- Gardens/victory gardens; roof-top gardens; vertical farming, hydroponics, greenhouses
- Edible gardens in public/open spaces
- Green roofs can include edible plants ("green roof" by itself should not earn a point)
- Zoning to allow the raising of bees, chickens, micro-livestock
- Provide incentives for: use of greenway/area gardens, vacant lots for community agriculture; land under power lines, in floodplains;
- Brownfield reclamation and conversion to gardens