

Urban Sprawl: The Invisible Destroyer of the Environment

Megan Gastineau and Dr. Mirya Holman
Florida Atlantic University College of Arts and Letters

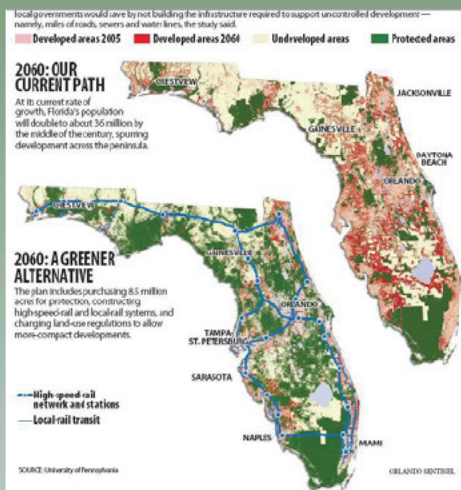
What is urban sprawl?
How does urban sprawl effect the environment?
What is a solution to sprawl?

Introduction

- Urban sprawl is the unrestrained growth of urban areas. Sprawl is exacerbated by:
 - The desire to have more land
 - To get away from the pollution of cities
 - To have a better sense of community.
- Sprawl indirectly leads to other environmental problems such as:
 - Air pollution caused by more car usage
 - Building on land that is not suitable for development, like the soft soil of the Tampa Bay Area which is prone to sink holes
 - Pushing native species from their land
- There are several ways to control urban sprawl, but one way that makes travel more convenient, saves the environment, and would create jobs is **improving public transportation**. Places that have severe sprawl also have very poor public transport. By improving public transport, people have an environmentally friendly alternative to their cars.

Method

- This research was conducted to see the adverse effects of urban sprawl on the environment and the best solutions to the problem. Urban sprawl is not seen as a problem because it hides behind other environmental issues, but by curbing sprawl the other problems will decrease or disappear.



Degree to Which Americans Worry About Environmental Problems, 2011 vs. 2001

% Great deal/Fair amount

	March 2001	March 2011	Change
	%	%	Pct. pts.
Pollution of drinking water	88	77	-11
Pollution of rivers/lakes/reservoirs	87	79	-8
Contamination of soil/water from toxic waste	85	79	-6
Air pollution	82	72	-10
Loss of tropical rain forests	76	63	-13
Species extinction	73	64	-9
Urban sprawl and loss of open space	69	57	-12
Global warming [^]	63	51	-12

[^] 2001 wording: "the greenhouse effect or global warming"

GALLUP

Discussion

- Politicians may oppose improving the transportation system because of the cost and the time it will take to plan it. However, a poll conducted in 2012 found that 59% of Americans feel the public transportation system is outdated and unreliable. In the same poll 68% said they would not mind paying more taxes to make better transportation a reality (Perk, 2012). People also commented in the poll that if public transport were better they would use it more than their cars.
 - Improving the transportation system will help keep urban areas from spreading out more, saving precious land and habitats.
 - Consequently, by less people using their cars air pollution will improve and roads will not be as congested.
 - Planning, designing, and building a new public transportation system will create many jobs. And better public transportation will help preserve the whole environment for the future.
 - Updating public transport would make areas more appealing to tourists and new residents because it would be easier to get around.
 - Public transportation saves money because there is no need to pay for gasoline or car insurance.

References

- Perk, Robert. "New Poll Finds That People Hate Traffic, Love Transit." New Poll Finds That People Hate Traffic, Love Transit. 12 Sept. 2012. Web.
http://switchboard.nrdc.org/blogs/rperks/new_poll_finds_that_people_hate.html