Sprawl: A Compact History

Rocky Mountain Land Use Institute
Denver 8 March 07
Robert Bruegmann
University of Illinois at Chicago
Paris, Southwest Suburbs, late 1950s

Toronto, 1972
The Sprawl Litany

1. Economically inefficient
2. Socially inequitable
3. Environmentally degrading
4. Aesthetically Ugly
Sprawl and Traffic

Kansas City

Tokyo
Three Parts

1. A History of Sprawl
2. A History of Complaints about sprawl
3. A History of Remedies for Sprawl
I. History of Sprawl
Accepted Wisdom

Sprawl is:
1. Recent
2. American
3. Caused by Automobile
No Accepted Definition

My Proposed Minimum Definition For History

Lower Density
No Masterplan

The evils of density:
Impasse des Bourdonnais, Paris in 19th century
Ancient Suburban Sprawl:
Herculaneum
Classical exurbia:
Hadrian’s Villa at Tivoli
Outside Rome
Sprawl in the 18th century: Map of London, 1749
Low-density suburban London in the 18th century:
Leicester Square, view c. 1750
Exurban London: Dulwich Village
Nineteenth Century Suburban Sprawl  London, Camberwell
19th century Urban Sprawl - Paris: Boulevard St. Michel
The Interwar Years
Working Class Suburbia in the 1920s: Bungalows in Berwyn, outside Chicago
The Interwar Years: London Built Up Area 1914 and 1939 from 1944 Plan of London
Since World War II

Hoffman Estates outside Chicago, Illinois

Floreat west of Perth
Changes in Density for selected Urbanized Areas, drawn by Dennis McClendon from information in Wendell Cox, demographia.com
The McMansion in Exurbia: Luray, Virginia

Napa Valley outside St. Helena, CA north Of San Francisco
Urban, Exurban and Rural Land
1960-2000

Urban, Exurban and Rural Land from Theobald, Geographical Review
Pittsburgh Point

Central City
Melbourne, Brunswick Street, Fitzroy

New York City, South Bronx
Post War Europe

Home of the average Parisian: Senart

Social Housing in Bobigny in suburban Paris
Private Automobile Ownership in the United States and Europe
redrawn from Gerondeau, Transit in Europe
Modes of Transit in Europe redrawn from Gerondeau, Transit in Europe
The single-family house: Dresden Bannewitz

The single-family house: southeast periphery Of Melbourne
The single-family house for a New Russian family Outside Moscow

The single-family house in Beijing Ad in English language magazine
Boston or Bangkok?

Affluence and Space: Redrawn From Marcial Echenique, Cities for the New Millennium
II. History of Complaints about Sprawl
1. First Generation of Complaints about Sprawl

Thomas Sharp, *Town and Country-Side*, 1932
2. Second Generation of Complaints

Blast against sprawl: William H Whyte, Editor, The Exploding Metropolis 1958
3. The Third Generation of Complaints
Environmental Issues

Millennial Northern Hemisphere (NH) temperature reconstruction (blue – tree rings, corals, ice cores, historical records) and instrumental data (red) from AD 1000 to 1999. A smoother version (black), and two standard error limits (grey) are shown. Source: IPCC Third Assessment Report
III. Remedies for Sprawl
The Great Planning Model

Ebenezer Howard's Garden Cities: 1898
The Great British anti-sprawl Crusade: Patrick Abercrombie, Greater London Plan, 1944
Redrawn by Dennis McClendon
American poster child for anti-sprawl.
Portland, Oregon 2040 Concept Plan
Sprawl successfully stopped: Soviet St. Petersburg
The price of anti-sprawl: Nantucket Island, Massachusetts
Housing Affordability - some highly affordable and very Unaffordable large urban areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Least affordable</th>
<th>Most affordable</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 LA-Orange Co. CA</td>
<td>4 Indianapolis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 San Diego, CA</td>
<td>9 Winnipeg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Honolulu, HI</td>
<td>15 Pittsburgh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 San Francisco</td>
<td>21 Dallas-Fort Worth</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 Ventura Co., CA</td>
<td>31 Atlanta</td>
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<td>6 Stockton, CA</td>
<td>31 Columbus OH</td>
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<tr>
<td>7 Sydney, NSW</td>
<td>31 Houston</td>
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<tr>
<td>8 San Jose, CA</td>
<td>31 Ottawa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 London</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
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Ratio of median income to median house price, data for 3rd quarter 2006
From Wendell Cox, demographia.com, 3rd annual int’l affordability survey
Backlash Against Anti-Sprawl

Randal O'Toole
USA, 2006

James Heartfield
Britain, 2006

Alan Moran
Australia, 2006
Conclusions

Sprawl is:
1. Bad Diagnostic Tool
2. Distracts us from real urban problems
3. Obscures our urban vision