Livibility--Sprawl

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

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March, 2000

Dear Friend,

Enclosed please find the report, "Moving Beyond Sprawl: The Challenge for Metropolitan Atlanta," prepared by the Brookings Institution Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy, and released on March 15, 2000. The report builds on the remarkable base of locally-conducted research on the Atlanta region.

The Atlanta region is far ahead of most U.S. metropolitan areas in recognizing the challenges associated with rapid growth, and in creating institutions like GRTA that can help the region grow differently. The region and state's leaders acted boldly when they created GRTA, and other metropolitan areas are paying close attention to the region's progress. If the region continues to show leadership, and build on the promise of its early actions, Atlanta can be a national model for reform and change.

Our report concludes that, as regional civic, environmental, political, and corporate leaders begin developing strategies to ease congestion and improve air quality they need to consider the wide range of issues that lead to explosive growth in some areas and very little growth in others. There are multiple, diverse factors that must be addressed if the Atlanta region's economic success is to reach all communities and all residents. Our report offers suggestions for remedying these driving factors.

Our three main findings are: 1) there is a stark divide between the northern, affluent parts of the Atlanta region and poorer, slow-growing southern areas; 2) the challenges of the northern and southern portions of the region are fundamentally connected; and 3) the Atlanta region can move beyond sprawl and embrace a wide range of solutions that address the problems faced by both sides of the region.

I think the recognition that explosive growth in the northern part of the region is inextricably connected to very little growth in the southern part is critical. It means that, to move beyond sprawl, the region has to look beyond the consequences of explosive growth and examine the driving factors behind development and investment. This means developing not only a transportation agenda that addresses land use and invests in public transit, but also a housing agenda that gives low, moderate, and middle-income families housing choices throughout the region, and an economic investment agenda that leverages public and private sector development in southern parts of the city of Atlanta and close-in southern suburbs. The region must have development in the southern portion in order to relieve the extreme pressures of growth in the north.

I hope this report expands the framework for conversations about growth in the Atlanta region.

Sincerely,

Bruce Katz
Director and Senior Fellow

The Atlanta Constitution

/EDNESDAY, MARCH 15, 2000 — TODAY'S PAPER / ONLINE AT AJC.COM

North vs. south: Metro must balance the extremes, report warns

By Dan Chapman
dchapman@ajc.com

White students in crowded north Gwinnett County schools take classes in trailers. Black residents in south Fulton County can't get buses to the new jobs north of I-20.

While seemingly unrelated, the plights of all metro Atlanta residents are entwined in a region sprawling out of control. Like it or not, everybody within the 10-county Atlanta region is affected by — and shares responsibility for — the area's little-managed growth.

But there's a "stark divide" between the northern "haves" and their less-fortunate brethren to the south, a growing schism that threatens the region's economic, social and racial foundation. Only a more equitable, geographically balanced level of growth will keep the Atlanta region from choking on its success.

This dire warning and suggested solution are among findings in a report issued today by the Brookings Institution, a Washington think tank.

"There is enormous frustration with growth patterns," said Bruce Katz, director of Brookings' Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy. "So if we really want to

➤ Please see GROWTH, A14

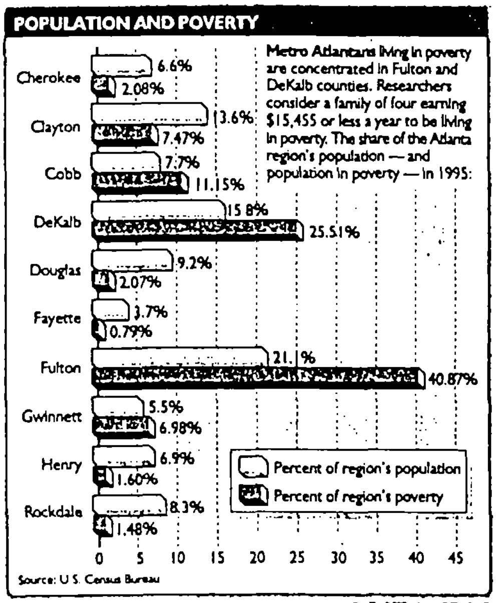
Growth: Gap between north, south wider

➤ Continued from A1

ease congestion and improve the environment, we have to think about more balanced growth. And if we want to ease growth in north Gwinnett or Cherokee County, we might want to enhance growth in south DeKalb or south Fulton counties."

Much of the information in the report, titled "Moving Beyond Sprawl: The Challenge for Metropolitan Atlanta" and funded by the Turner Foundation, isn't new. But it deftly ties together how unplanned growth harms everyone, particularly the less-fortunate living below I-20 in urban and suburban pockets of need.

Indeed, much of Fulton, DeKalb, Fayette and Henry counties prospers, with new homes, distribution centers and golf courses sprouting as quickly as those north of I-20. But the a[illegible]t of poor and poorly educated residents living in communities passed over by growth and development far outnumbers those living in Gwinnett, Cherokee, Cobb and other northern metro counties.



ELIZABETH LANDT / Staff

Yet all contribute to sprawl. Builders, for example, don't typically plop 1,000-home developments into south Atlanta. Instead, they leapfrog to areas with untrammeled, cheaper land and better schools. This leads to more roads. And longer commutes. And worse pollution.

"There's a price all of us are paying for unrestrained growth," said Robert Bullard, director of the Environmental Justice Resource Center at Clark Atlanta University. "And the concentration of growth in the north has created a nightmare for people who live there because of the gridlock and congestion and air pollution and overcrowded schools. It has also exacerbated the social and economic inequities within the region."

Since 1990, more than 650,000 people have moved into the 10-[illegible] region. Seventy percent settled north of I-20.

South Fulton County was tabbed by Brookings as sprawl's stepchild. While south Fulton has its share of recent development successes — the Piedmont Driving Club is building a golf course; 800 homes rise near Cliftondale; GE Appliances and Costco Wholesale Corp. recently announced new distribution centers — it bears a disproportionate share of the region's poverty, crime and substandard housing.

College Park, East Point and Hapeville lost population from 1990 to 1998.

Only about 5 percent of welfare recipients in Fulton and DeKalb counties have access to a car. Yet more than half the Atlanta region's jobs are outside those counties and beyond the reach of public transportation, Brookings reports.

Harry Kim owns a beeper and cell phone shop on Main Street in College Park, which is surrounded by barbershops, wig and weave stores, bail bondsmen and Hartsfield International Airport.

"Five years ago, there was a lot of people coming down the street," Kim said. "Now, I barely see them. People are moving out. Friends come back and say, 'I've found a new job in Doraville or in Marietta.'"

Kim used to have 800 customers a month; he now averages about 350.

"I don't think I'll be here next year," he predicted.

The College Parks of the south Atlanta region must thrive, Katz argues. And everybody, from CEOs in Atlanta to soccer moms in Cobb, has a stake in the town's survival.

The Brookings report recommends a strong role for the Georgia Regional Transit Authority, tougher land use controls across the region, more affordable housing near newly created jobs and creative use by local governments of road and water-sewer dollars to steer development.

"Smart growth," Katz said, must address economic, social and racial inequities, too. And to move beyond sprawl, he added, the region's leaders must offer school, road and housing inducements to encourage southside residential and commercial development.

Wayne Hill says he's on board.

"I greatly wish some of the growth were down there," said Hill, chairman of the Gwinnett County Board of Commissioners and the Atlanta Regional Commission. "Everybody wants to see the whole area balanced."

Harry Kim keeps his fingers crossed that the south side of I-20 will rebound and get its economic due. He lives in Gwinnett, but isn't quite ready to give up and move his business closer to his Suwanee home.

"It's not fair that the southside isn't growing and booming like the northside," he says. "This needs to be changed and made a better place. People here deserve more from life."

ON THE WEB: *The Brookings Institution reports on Atlanta's sprawl:*
➤ www.ajc.com/links/

CHARLOTTE B. TEAGLE / Sta

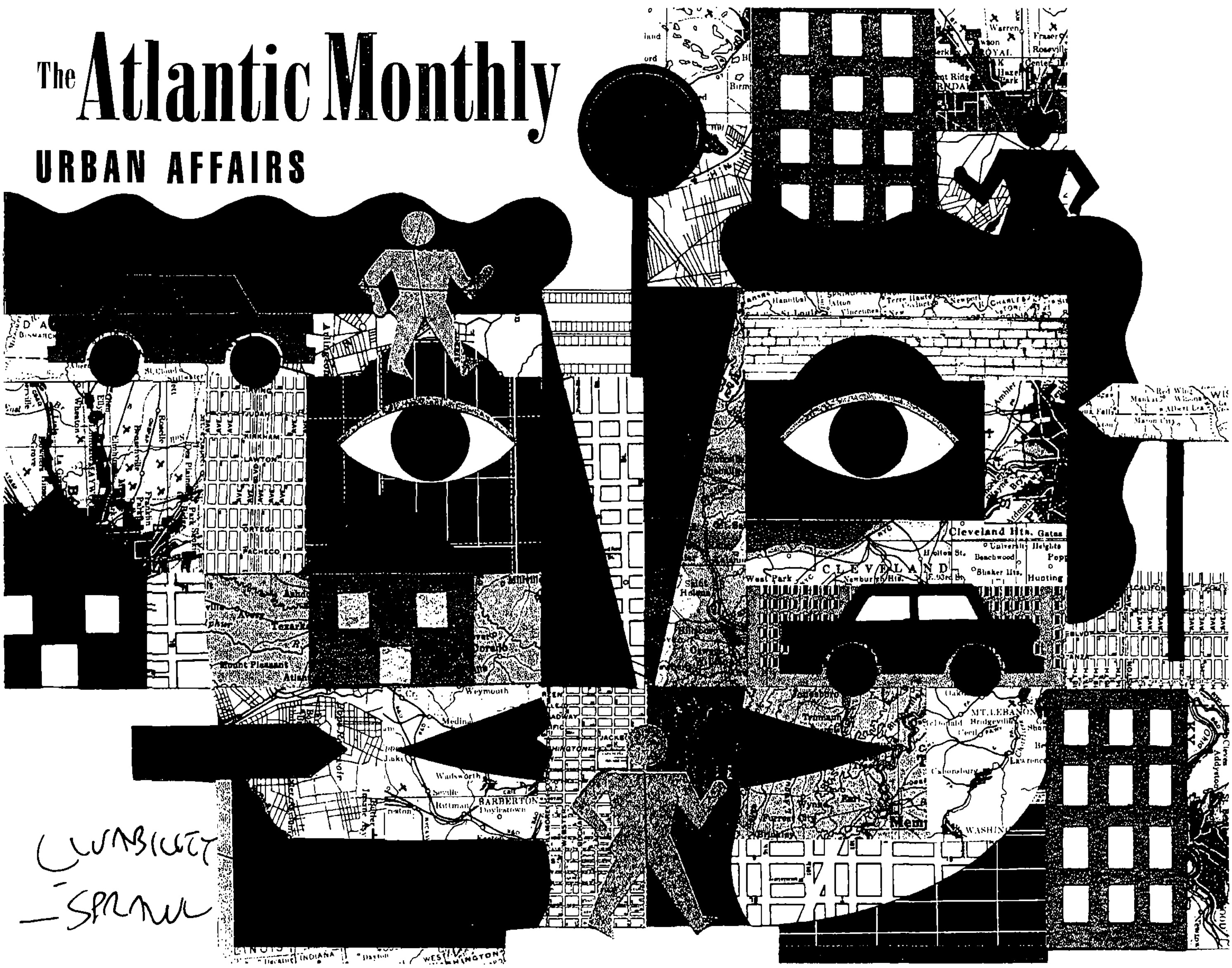
Where have the people gone? Harry Kim says he may have to move his College Park pager business as customer visits continue to drop. The problem, he says, is people are leaving the southside town for better opportunities in the booming north metro area.

MOVING BEYOND SPRAWL

The Challenge for Metropolitan Atlanta

The Brookings Institution Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy

The Atlantic Monthly
URBAN AFFAIRS



[illegible] —SPRAWL

Divided We Sprawl

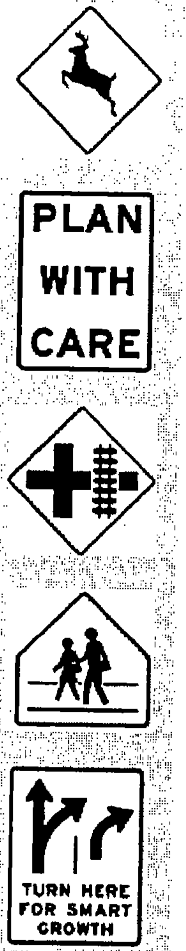
A call for a reinvention of the American city and suburb that would exploit the infrastructure of the one and mitigate the "frantic privacy" of the other

by Bruce Katz and Jennifer Bradley

BY many accounts Baltimore is a comeback city. It has a beautiful piece of calculated nostalgia in the Camden Yards baseball stadium, which draws tens of thousands of visitors throughout the spring and summer. It has a lively waterfront district, the Inner Harbor, with charming shops and hot snacks for sale every hundred yards or so. But although it may function well as a kind of urban theme park (and there are plenty of cities that would love to achieve that distinction), as a city it is struggling. For twenty years Baltimore has hemorrhaged residents: more than 140,000 have left since 1980. Meanwhile, the surrounding suburbs have steadily grown. The population of Howard County, a thirty-minute drive from the city, has doubled since 1980, from 118,600 to 236,000. The people who have stayed in Baltimore are some of the neediest in the area. The city has 13 percent of Maryland's population but 56 percent of its welfare caseload. Only about a quarter of the students who enroll in a public high school in the city graduate in four years.

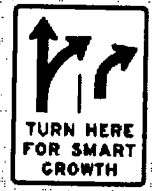
And Baltimore is not unique. The image of America's cities has improved greatly over the past few years, thanks to shiny new downtowns dotted with vast convention centers, luxury hotels, and impressive office towers, but these acres of concrete and faux marble hide a reality that is in many cases grim. St. Louis, Cleveland, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C., lost population throughout the 1990s. These cities are also losing their status as the most powerful economies in their regions. Washington started the 1990s with a respectable 33 percent of the area's jobs. Seven years later it had only 24 percent. The rate of population

Illustration by David McLimans



1999 Sierra Club Sprawl Report

Solving Sprawl



by Carl Pope, Sierra Club Executive Director

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Sprawl

Growth is good. At least that's been the American credo up to now. Blessed with lands that seemed limitless, challenged to "go west" and tame the wilderness, our history, our "manifest destiny," has been to clear the forests, cut roads through rock, pave and plow our country, and create cities. The American mission to conquer and settle the land shaped our character. And we got good at it. Too good.

Now at the start of a new century and a new millennium, Americans no longer reflexively equate progress with development. In fact, because the costs and consequences of poorly planned development have become clear and common, Americans are clamoring for better, smarter ways to grow.

The good news is that suburban sprawl is not inevitable. We are not doomed to a future of traffic congestion, air pollution, overcrowded schools, abandoned city centers, and lost open space and farm land. America does not have to be known as a nation of parking lots, subdivisions and strip malls. There are solutions. Right now, communities and states across the nation are working hard to rein in sprawl and manage growth so that it enhances and does not undercut our quality of life.

In 1998, voters passed over 70 percent of some 240 local ballot initiatives that sought to tame sprawling growth and created over $7.5 billion in new funding to protect open space. Governors and legislatures across the country are launching smart-growth commissions and passing smart-growth legislation.

In This Report

This report is designed to recognize and rank the programs adopted by state governments to manage growth, and to showcase and promote effective smart-growth solutions. We rate each of the 50 states by measuring progress in four categories: open space protection, land use planning, transportation planning and community revitalization. The selection and relevance of our criteria is discussed in greater detail in the introduction to each section.

As part of our report we also include individual case studies of successful states:

- In Maryland, the state has earmarked $140 million for the purchase of open space.
- In Oregon, communities are designing growth on their own terms, encouraging development inside the urban area and protecting the green

space outside their city limits.

- In Rhode Island, the state has made a serious commitment to breaking the strangle hold of the automobile by improving access to alternative forms of transportation.
- And, in Vermont, a team of housing advocates and environmentalists put together a fund that has saved more than 165,000 acres of farm land while offering affordable housing for 10,000 people.

National Trends

In researching and ranking state efforts to manage growth, trends emerged to create a national snapshot:

Open Space Protection:
Twenty-five states have taken steps toward protecting farms and 20 states have agricultural conservation easement programs. These programs compensate property owners for giving up the right to future development. Overall, open-space protection enjoys extremely broad public support. Yet few states have preserved enough land to protect our wild places and keep them in good health.

Land Use Planning:
Only 11 states have passed comprehensive statewide growth-management acts. These laws mandate or encourage comprehensive local planning according to statewide standards and enable the use of tools such as impact fees and urban growth boundaries.

Clearly, the overwhelming majority of states are lagging behind in adopting these powerful and effective tools -- perhaps because political leaders have yet to understand that sensible growth management isn't antithetical to economic prosperity. Indeed, as business leaders are increasingly recognizing, managing growth helps ensure a strong economy.

Those states that have had growth management acts on the books for a decade or more offer a lesson to those states just now passing laws or considering doing so: Enforcement is the key. Oregon is, by and large, enforcing its Act. Florida, by and large, is not. The difference is visible and tangible: Florida continues to sprawl while Oregon is managing its growth.

Community Revitalization:
Twenty-eight states now have brownfields redevelopment programs to clean up abandoned and often polluted industrial sites. These programs are a big step in the right direction as long as, in implementation, environmental and public health standards are not watered down.

Unfortunately, some states have created weak brownfield programs or have eviscerated them before they can be implemented. Michigan, for example, has a brownfields program on the books, but the public health and environmental standards have been gutted since the law's passage.

Transportation:
From 1996 to 1997, 21 states spent over half of their federal transportation dollars on new road construction. New highways are sprawl magnets -- once built, they attract more cars and more development. Better to invest in repairing and maintaining existing roads, and building transportation

alternatives. Unfortunately, from 1993 to 1997, 26 states spent less than $10 per urban resident per year on mass transit construction. Twelve states spent less than $5 per urban resident per year.

Thanks to changes in federal highway spending and state-level leadership in places like Rhode Island, a few states are beginning to provide better transportation choices by investing in bike paths, buses and rail lines. There is a movement among a growing number of states to make the transportation planning process more transparent and participatory -- a move that will ensure that transportation systems are actually designed to suit their users.

Limits and Restrictions

This report does not deal in the ideal. It compares the states with each other, not against an absolute. And a good thing too: In the open space protection category, only two states received at least half of the possible points. In land use planning, only eight states did, and in transportation planning, only 12. Clearly there is still much work to be done to curb sprawling development and manage growth -- even in states where progress is being made.

In addition, this report does not take into account future growth. Though most sprawl can be traced to poor planning and inefficient development, the impact of a growing population should not be ignored. While we work to rein in growth, we must also remain committed to population stabilization.

Finally, this report acknowledges there are no quick fixes that will solve the problems of sprawl and its consequences. Many of the solutions showcased here are new or recently enacted. While they represent progress today, their true effects on our quality of life will not be evident until tomorrow.

Expert Contributors

This report features the work of in-house experts and knowledgeable guests. Richard Moe of The National Trust for Historic Preservation writes on the links between preservation and smart growth. Miriam Axel-Lute of the National Housing Institute discusses how community development corporations can become allies in the fight to control growth. And Milwaukee Mayor John Norquist discusses how tearing down freeways and increasing transportation options can help save a city from traffic. Our thanks to these contributors.

Wrong Way

This report is about the statutes, programs and policies that states have created to deal with sprawl. There is at least one yardstick per category that measures how well such initiatives have been implemented. Unfortunately, a handful of states that aren't keeping their word still rise to the top of the rankings because they made big promises.

Georgia and Florida have had "landmark" growth management acts on the books for a decade or longer. But sprawl is rampant in places like Tampa/St. Petersburg and Atlanta.

Pressure for new highway building in our booming economic times is taking states like Washington and California down that slippery road to more sprawl.

Brownfields programs, which aim at redevelopment of abandoned land in cities and towns, have recently been passed in many states. While these programs are an important tool in the fight to tame sprawl, what happens as they're implemented will tell whether or not they produce a net gain for the environment.

States must keep their promises. Citizens need to remain vigilant and hold decision-makers to their word. Passing laws and initiating programs is meaningless unless they are fully and forcefully implemented.

Slowing sprawl requires deeds, not just words. It's up to all of us to make sure our states don't head the wrong way.

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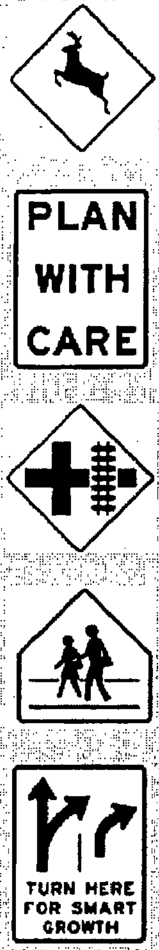

1999 Sierra Club Sprawl Report

Open Space Protection

Americans want to live close to nature. But poorly planned development is gobbling up our beloved parks and open spaces at an alarming rate. A recent report by the American Farmland Trust revealed that every year in the United States 1 million acres of productive farm land and open space get bulldozed by sprawling development.

Sprawl threatens wildlife by chopping up habitat. Some of America's premier ecosystems -- spectacular places like the Chesapeake Bay, the Everglades, the Great Lakes, Puget Sound and the Sonoran desert -- are directly threatened by sprawl. Even animals like grizzly bears and salmon, already pushed to the brink, are losing habitat to encroaching homes and highways.

Sprawl also threatens our wetlands. Each year, we destroy more than 110,000 acres of these natural filters. Because wetlands act as natural flood-absorbing sponges, there are serious consequences for allowing sprawling development in wetlands -- especially in disaster-prone floodplain areas. In the past eight years, floods in the United States killed more than 850 people and caused more than $89 billion in property damage. Much of this damage happened in states and counties where weak zoning laws allowed developers to drain wetlands and build in floodplains.

Sprawl is carving up our farm land, too. Developments are replacing farmers' fields, disrupting small-town agriculture and a way of life. An astounding 70 percent of prime or unique farm land is now in the path of rapid development, according to the American Farmland Trust.

While it may sound like parks and open space in America are going, going, gone, some states are attempting to stop the loss of our natural heritage. In fact, voters in many states are insisting on it. Last November, voters from California to Cape Cod, Democrats and Republicans alike, approved the vast majority of some 240 anti-sprawl ballot initiatives, many of them dealing with land preservation. In New Jersey, even in the state's tax-adverse counties, voters overwhelmingly approved the use of $1 billion in tax revenue to conserve open space and farm land.

In this category, we used three main criteria to determine our rankings:

Our first measure used information from the National Governors Association, land trusts and our own grassroots activists to gauge which states are preventing the loss of open space. The better-performing states are those that have passed initiatives to keep lands held in trust for all. The best states are purchasing parks and open space outright.

Our second yardstick rated states on how well they are keeping their farm lands in farmers' hands. We gave states credit for setting up agricultural districts, where commercial agriculture is encouraged and protected. Sixteen states have employed this tool. Another tactic, agricultural protection zoning, designates areas where farming is the primary land use. Purchasing conservation easements or development rights also can work to stem the loss of farm land and we gave states credit for having these programs on the books. Still other states allow landowners to swap the right to develop one parcel of land for development rights on another. In concert with good land-use planning, this approach can steer development away from prime farmland. Unfortunately, some states have extremely weak implementation of their farmland protection programs. For example, although Michigan has a conservation easement program, it is languishing from neglect and lack of funding. A study by the American Farmland Trust measured the actual amount of prime farmland lost from 1982 to 1992.

Our last criterium measured the states on how well they manage floodplain sprawl. We used data from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to measure the percentage of wetlands destruction permits granted in presidentially declared flood disaster areas. The greater the percentage of permits granted, the poorer job the state is doing to control floodplain sprawl. The better-performing states grant fewer permits for building in these areas. We also collected data from states and learned that the better-performing states had designed their own programs to minimize wetlands loss.

How the States Rated

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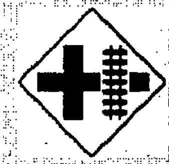

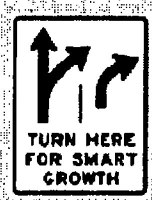

1999 Sierra Club Sprawl Report
Rate Your State

Open Space Protection

1 State Open Space Protection
2 Agricultural Protection Districts
3 Agricultural Protection Zoning
4 Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easements
5 Transfer of Development Rights
6 Percent of Prime Farmland Destroyed 1982-92
7 Floodplain sprawl
8 Field Expert Input

Key
1: very effective
2: moderately effective
3: not effective

Rank	State	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	Maryland	1	1	2	1	2	3	1	3
2	New Jersey	1	1	3	1	2	3	1	3
3	Illinois	2	1	2	3	3	1	3	1
4	Oregon	1	3	1	3	3	2	3	1
5	Colorado	3	3	2	1	2	2	1	3
6	Michigan	2	3	2	1	3	2	1	3
7	Montana	3	3	2	2	2	1	1	3
8	Ohio	2	3	3	A	3	3	2	3
9	Pennsylvania	2	1	2	1	2	3	2	3
10	California	2	1	2	1	2	3	3	3
11	Minnesota	2	1	2	3	2	1	2	3
12	Massachusetts	2	1	3	1	2	3	2	3
13	Wisconsin	3	3	2	2	3	2	2	2
14	Florida	1	3	2	2	2	3	2	3
15	Maine	2	3	3	1	3	2	2	2
16	Vermont	1	3	3	1	2	3	3	2
17	New York	2	1	3	1	2	2	3	3
18	Utah	3	1	2	3	2	3	1	3
19	Rhode Island	2	3	3	1	3	3	3	1
20	Delaware	3	1	3	1	3	3	2	3
21	Kentucky	3	1	3	1	3	3	2	3
22	Kansas	3	3	2	3	3	1	2	3
23	Wyoming	3	3	2	3	3	1	2	3
24	Connecticut	2	3	3	2	3	3	2	2
25	Georgia	2	3	3	3	2	3	2	2

26	Oklahoma	B	1	3	3	3	1	3	3
27	Nevada	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	2
28	North Carolina	2	3	3	3	3	3	2	2
29	Washington	2	3	2	2	2	3	3	3
30	Nebraska	2	3	2	3	3	1	3	3
31	Idaho	3	3	2	3	2	2	2	3
32	Virginia	3	1	2	2	3	3	C	3
33	Iowa	3	1	2	3	3	1	3	3
34	Tennessee	3	1	3	3	3	3	3	2
35	Indiana	3	3	2	3	3	2	2	3
36	Mississippi	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	3
37	Alabama	2	3	3	3	3	2	3	3
38	New Mexico	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	3
39	North Dakota	B	1	2	3	3	1	3	3
40	Hawaii	3	3	1	3	3	D	C	2
41	Arkansas	3	3	3	3	3	1	3	3
42	Arizona	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
43	New Hampshire	3	3	3	1	3	3	3	3
44	Missouri	3	3	3	3	3	1	3	3
45	South Dakota	B	3	2	3	3	1	3	3
46	Texas	B	3	3	3	3	2	3	3
47	Louisiana	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	3
48	South Carolina	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
49	Alaska	3	3	3	3	3	D	3	3
50	West Virginia	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3

Notes:
A Ohio passed a state Purchase of Agricultural Easments Bill, but it is not yet funded.
B National Governors Association report, National Conference of State Legislatures, and Trust for Public Land did not have information on these states.
C Neither Army Corps nor states were able to provide this data.
D Hawaii and Alaska are missing from the American Farmland Trust's information.

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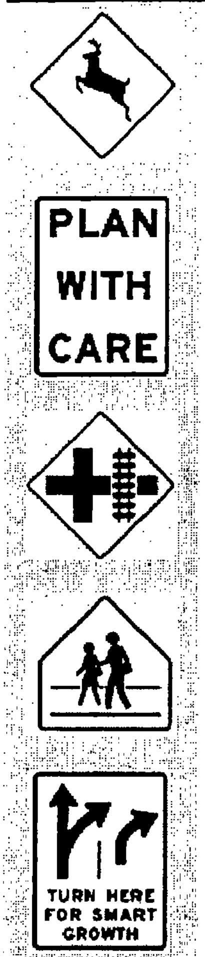

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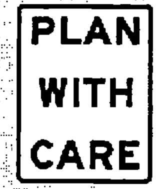
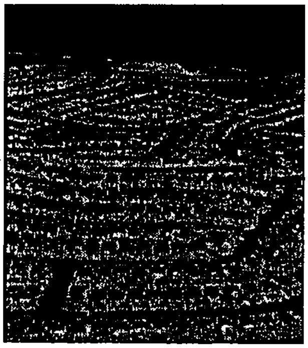
Land Use Planning





Suburban sprawl seems to happen by default in many places. A subdivision pops up, a new road is built, a strip-mall opens. This leads many people to believe that sprawl is inevitable. But this is false -- we can manage sprawl by better planning our future growth.

States and communities can choose to grow on their own terms and at their own pace. And places like these are often more economically successful, environmentally sound and nicer to live in than areas that sprawl without limit.

Some states have discovered a powerful tool to control sprawl: land-use planning. Sound planning can help communities grow efficiently by encouraging development where infrastructure -- like roads, schools and water treatment facilities -- already exists. This type of planning helps keep city centers alive and established communities vital. The best planning efforts also steer development away from wildlife habitat, wetlands and other crucial natural resources.

In our analysis, we often found that the top states have been using these planning tools to deal with growth for decades -- tools that the laggard states haven't even put on the books.

In this category, we used three main measurements based to determine our rankings.

Growth Management Laws

First, using data from the American Planning Association (APA), we determined what kind of land-use act a state had on the books:

States received a lot of credit for having a comprehensive statewide growth-management law that establishes a framework for guiding local efforts to manage new development. Only 11 states have passed such statewide planning legislation.

Those states with growth-management acts covering only part of the state, or with statewide acts covering just certain components of land use planning, received less credit.

Next, using the results of a 1997 APA survey, we identified and gave credit to those states that:

- require local communities to prepare land-use (or comprehensive) plans,
- review those plans for consistency with a set of state goals, and
- play a strong role in plan development.

The best states have established such a framework and plan an ongoing role in helping communities address growth issues. The states that fall down in this category provide little or no statewide standards or resources, resulting in local plans of wide-ranging quality in those communities that have even drafted them.

Unfortunately, some states have remarkably strong growth-management laws on the books, with almost no implementation. While Florida, Georgia and Washington all have had strong acts for over a decade, one look at the Tampa, Atlanta or Puget Sound areas tells you that growth-management laws don't work unless they are implemented. These states need to do more than use the rhetoric of smart growth, and begin implementing the tools they have available to curb sprawl.

Statutory Link to Implementation Tools

In most cases, growth-management plans are only effective when they are coupled with a strong implementation program. To gauge this, we looked at whether states encouraged or required a selection of implementation techniques.

We gave credit to states that had statutory links to one or more of five implementation tools:

- urban growth boundaries
- public participation requirements
- impact fees
- regional coordination requirements
- mandatory implementation

A key question is whether states require communities to establish sprawl growth limits or an urban growth boundary. An urban growth boundary is a line that identifies which areas will become urban or suburban and which areas will remain rural. Usually associated with Oregon, this concept was first pioneered in 1958 by Kentucky. Fayette County, which includes the city of Lexington, adopted this boundary to protect the horse farms on the west, north and east of the city. Top-performing states require such boundaries, allowing growth without creating land-gobbling sprawl.

Next, we asked whether states require communities to actively involve citizens in the planning process. The states making the best effort to manage sprawl offer regular opportunities for public comment and participation. The worst performers lock the public out of the process, keeping decisions away from scrutiny.

We also examined whether or not states have authorized the use of impact fees. This tool allows local governments to charge developers fees to help pay the costs of new roads, schools and utility lines. By requiring developers to pay their own way, rather than forcing existing taxpayers to bear the full cost of sprawl, states can better grow on their own terms.

Another factor in determining our rating was whether or not states foster regional cooperation. The best planning efforts recognize that dirty air and polluted water don't stop at the county line. It is critical that local units of government communicate and cooperate in their planning and growth-management efforts, preferably through formal regional planning agencies. States have an important role to play in building this cooperation, which is why we gave credit to those that do so.

Planning statutes, as with any other statutes, are most effective if implementation is spelled out and mandatory. States received credit based on the quality of their implementation language.

How the States Rated

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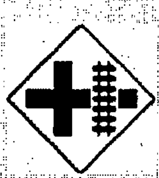

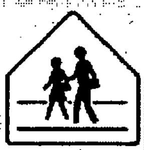

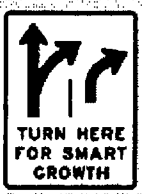

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Rate Your State

Land Use Planning

PLAN WITH CARE

1 State Act
2 State Role
3 Implementation Tools
4 Field Expert Input

Key
1: very effective
2: moderately effective
3: not effective

Rank	State	1	2	3	4
1	Oregon	2	1	1	1
2	Vermont	1	1	2	3
3	Maryland	1	1	2	2
4	Georgia	2	1	2	3
5	Washington	2	1	2	3
6	Tennessee	3	2	2	1
7	Maine	2	1	2	2
8	Hawaii	2	1	3	2
9	California	3	2	1	3
10	Rhode Island	2	1	2	3
11	Florida	2	1	2	3
12	Idaho	3	2	2	3
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14	Minnesota	2	2	2	2
15	Delaware	3	1	2	3
16	Kentucky	3	2	2	3
17	New Jersey	2	3	2	3
18	Nevada	3	2	2	3
19	Massachusetts	3	2	2	3
20	Alaska	3	2	3	3
21	Arizona	3	3	2	3
22	Indiana	3	3	2	3
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32	Arkansas	3	2	3	3
33	Iowa	3	3	3	2
34	Nebraska	3	2	3	3
35	South Carolina	3	2	3	3
36	Montana	3	3	3	3
37	Texas	3	3	3	3
38	New York	3	3	3	3
39	Missouri	3	3	3	3
40	Oklahoma	3	3	3	2
41	South Dakota	3	2	3	3
42	Alabama	3	3	3	3
43	Kansas	3	3	3	3
44	Connecticut	3	2	3	3
45	Utah	3	3	3	3
46	Ohio	3	3	3	3
47	North Carolina	3	3	3	3
48	North Dakota	3	3	3	3
49	Michigan	3	3	3	3
50	Wyoming	3	3	3	3

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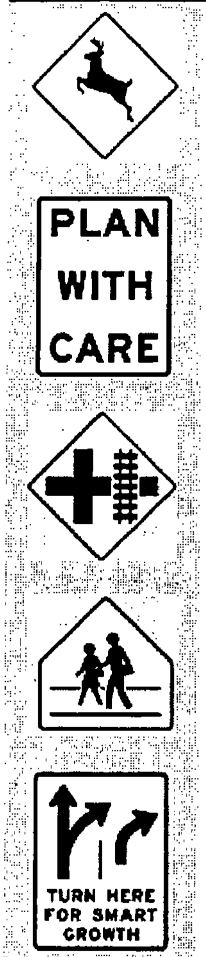

1999 Sierra Club Sprawl Report

Transportation Planning

Getting people from place to place in sprawl-choked communities is costing us dearly. Once the concern of a few big cities, massive traffic jams have become commonplace across the country. The average American driver spends 443 hours every year -- that's 55 eight-hour work days, or 11 weeks of work -- behind the wheel.

And all that driving means more air pollution. Cars and trucks are among the largest sources of smog and cancer-causing pollution in America, spewing out 12 pounds of cancer chemicals annually for every person in America.

States that are doing the best job challenging sprawl are the ones that recognize the connections between sprawl and transportation. Sprawl spreads out everything, making trips longer and driving mandatory. Studies show that residents of sprawling communities drive three to four times as much as those living in better-planned communities.

Adding new lanes and building new roads just makes the problem worse. New highways are the number one cause of sprawl, according to American Farmland Trust. Build them, and the traffic will come. They may give short-term relief, but long term they just encourage more sprawl.

There are three measures we used to determine a state's performance in this category:

Our first yardstick, drawn from data provided by the Federal Transit Administration, measured the amount of money states are spending per person in their urban areas on transportation choices like commuter trains, bus service, light rail and even walking and bike paths. The data, from 1993 to 1997, is an annual average of capital expenditures in urban areas by local, state and federal governments.

Our second measure asked how well states take care of the road systems they already have. We used data from Surface Transportation Policy Project's 1998 report called "Potholes and Politics" for this measure. Sprawl-busting states maintain current roads and existing transportation systems before pouring money into new ones. By contrast, poorly performing states let pressure from developers dictate where to put roads.

Our final measure was an on-the-ground reality check. Time spent behind the wheel is a good indicator of sprawl. Looking at the period from 1992 to 1997, using data from the Federal Highway Administration, we examined the change in the miles that each person drove. In the top states, time spent in cars did not increase as much as in poorly performing states.

How the States Rated

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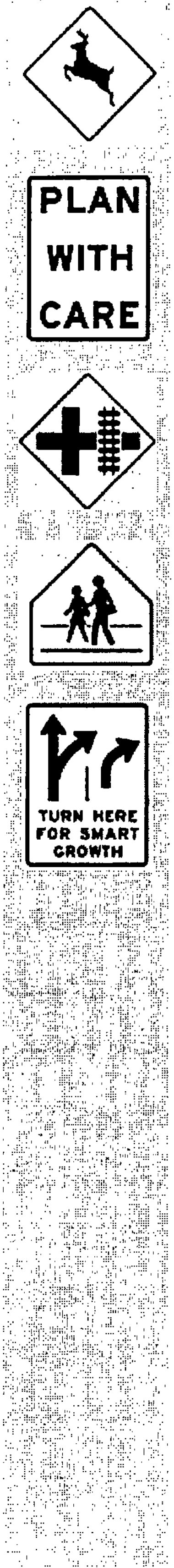
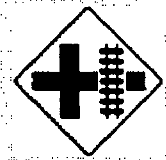


1999 Sierra Club Sprawl Report
Rate Your State

Transportation Planning



1 State, local, and federal spending on public transit from 1993 to 1997.
2 Percent of federal money spent on repairs vs. new highway construction.
3 Reduction in vehicle miles traveled per capita from 1992 to 1997.
4 Field Expert Input

Key
1: very effective
2: moderately effective
3: not effective

Rank	State	1	2	3	4
1	Rhode Island	2	2	1	2
2	New Jersey	1	2	2	3
3	Hawaii	2	2	1	2
4	Washington	2	2	1	3
5	California	2	2	2	3
6	Oregon	1	2	2	2
6	Vermont	3	1	2	3
8	Montana	2	2	2	3
9	Illinois	2	2	3	2
10	New York	2	2	2	3
11	South Dakota	2	1	2	3
12	Maryland	2	3	2	2
13	Pennsylvania	2	2	3	3
14	Michigan	2	2	2	3
15	Idaho	3	2	2	3
16	Kansas	3	1	2	3
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18	Alaska	2	2	2	3
19	Massachusetts	1	3	2	3
20	Maine	3	1	3	2
21	Louisiana	2	2	3	3
22	Ohio	2	2	2	3
23	New Hampshire	3	2	2	3
24	Georgia	2	3	3	2
25	Arizona	2	3	2	3
26	Colorado	2	2	3	3
27	Wisconsin	2	2	3	3

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30	Virginia	2	3	2	3
31	Texas	2	3	3	3
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33	North Dakota	3	1	3	3
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35	Missouri	2	3	3	3
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40	Iowa	3	3	3	2
41	New Mexico	3	3	3	3
42	Nebraska	3	2	3	3
43	Kentucky	2	3	3	3
44	North Carolina	3	3	3	2
45	South Carolina	3	2	3	3
46	Tennessee	2	3	3	3
47	Alabama	3	3	3	3
48	Oklahoma	3	3	3	3
49	Mississippi	3	3	3	3
50	Arkansas	3	3	3	3

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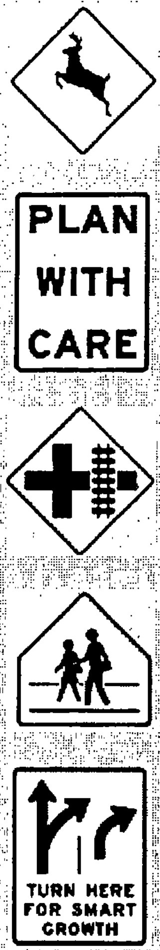

1999 Sierra Club Sprawl Report

Community Revitalization

For a state to successfully manage growth it must work to make city centers and existing communities safe, lively and healthy places to live. Some of the states we studied are taking strides in that direction.

To tame sprawl, states must invest in their downtowns and inner suburbs. Some state decision-makers are starting to understand that this is part of the equation.

Revitalizing older neighborhoods is the perfect antidote to sprawl. In many cases, older neighborhoods were designed for pedestrian safety and have a scale and style that allows people to meet their everyday needs by walking. States that cherish the resources they have also value the historic properties that give their neighborhoods character and often invest in historic preservation.

States that are doing the best job at revitalizing communities are working to keep financial resources in their city centers. They know that sprawling suburbs siphon taxes to build new water and sewer lines, new schools and roads, and expanded police and fire protection. These costs are not fully paid by the taxes of new residents. Instead, sprawl forces existing residents -- some of them cash-strapped seniors or low-income taxpayers -- to pay higher taxes. Savvy state policy-makers know that when families flee to the countryside, it drives up costs and erodes the city's tax base, forcing cities to raise taxes on remaining taxpayers to pay for city services.

The best states work to keep businesses in population centers, rather than promote sprawling new developments that gobble up open space and encourage flight from our cities. This downward spiral eventually destroys existing communities -- shoppers are pulled from once-thriving locally owned stores and restaurants to large regional malls. Soon, unemployment, lowered property values and fewer investment opportunities add up to a city that has lost its livability.

The states that rate low in this category are failing to invest in their existing communities. Most often, they rely on the standard style cookie-cutter suburban development. Residents must depend on cars for all their trips. Traffic congestion is the norm. Sadly, a sense of community is often lacking.

To rate the states on how they're doing on community revitalization, we used four measurements:

Our first indicator measured the health of urban communities in each state. Using data from the National Priorities Project, a non-profit group that analyzes the local and state level impacts of federal spending decisions, we constructed a measure of how much funding is sent from the federal government to the states to help downtown areas.

This funding -- known as Community Development Block Grants -- is triggered by a formula that includes poverty level, housing-stock quality and the rate of flight from communities of 50,000 or more residents. The National Priorities Project aggregates the data to the state level, which makes for easy comparison of states. In this category, the best sprawl-busting states require less federal money to help with the problems, because their urban areas are faring better than those in need of more aid. Community Development Block Grants themselves are a key tool for revitalizing communities.

Our second measure looked at a state's efforts to provide and preserve adequate housing for its citizens. One of the key causes for urban flight has been referred to as the "broken window" phenomenon. Poorly maintained housing also serves as a deterrent for those considering moving into a community. For this reason, community development advocates tout state housing trust funds as a key tool for keeping communities livable. Trust funds have provided hundreds of millions of dollars for the rehabilitation and construction of low income housing. Thanks to a study by the Housing Trust Fund Project of the Center for Community Change, we were able to include this as a measurement. States that have a housing trust fund received credit. States with a guaranteed funding source received more credit.

Our third measure rated states on their efforts to preserve historic places. Data from the National Conference of State Legislatures and the National Trust for Historic Preservation indicate that the best states have passed laws that guarantee funding for community-level preservation programs and offer property owners and others tax incentives if they carry out historic-preservation work. We gave states equal credit for having an established funding source for a historic-preservation program, a state income tax credit for historic-preservation activities, and/or providing property-tax abatement for preserved properties.

Our last measure targeted states' efforts to clean up "brownfields," the abandoned and sometimes polluted urban areas that badly need cleanup and redevelopment. We used data from the Environmental Law Institute, which told us which of the 50 states have established brownfields initiatives. We found that 28 states have formal brownfields programs or informal policies or agreements. Sierra Club experts who work on this issue cautioned us that some state brownfield programs don't provide proper protection from previous pollution.

How the States Rated

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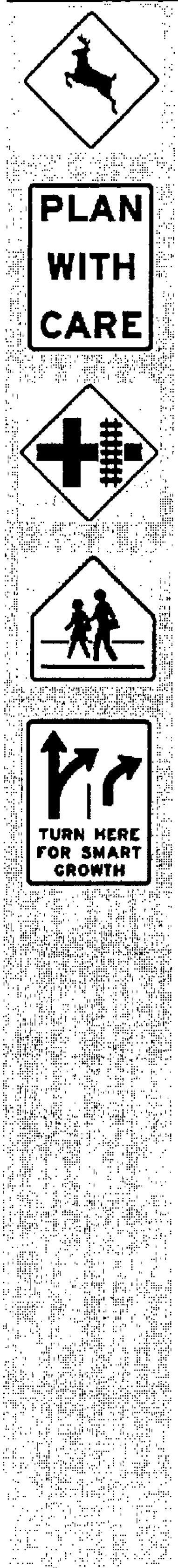

1999 Sierra Club Sprawl Report
Rate Your State

Community Revitalization

1 Health of Urban Communities
2 Housing Trust Fund
3 Historic Preservation
4 Brownfields
5 Field Expert Input

Key
1: very effective
2: moderately effective
3: not effective

Rank	State	1	2	3	4	5
1	Vermont	1	1	2	1	2
2	North Carolina	2	1	1	1	3
3	Maryland	3	1	1	1	2
4	Minnesota	3	1	2	1	1
5	Oregon	2	1	2	1	2
6	Georgia	3	1	2	1	2
6	Indiana	3	1	2	1	2
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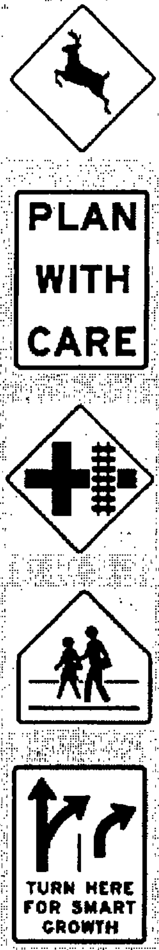

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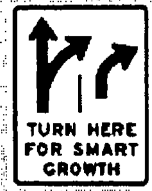

This report is the Sierra Club's second annual report on sprawl. Last year's report was entitled "The Dark Side of the American Dream: The Costs and Consequences of Suburban Sprawl." To read the previous report or for more information on our Challenge to Sprawl Campaign, please visit our website at http://www.sierraclub.org/sprawl. For general inquiries about our sprawl campaign, call the Sierra Club at 415.977.5653 or 202.547.1141. For media inquiries, contact Daniel Silverman, Media Relations Director, at 415.977.5508.

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Though we wish to express our thanks to all who have contributed, this report represents the views of the Sierra Club. All mistakes are, of course, our own.

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SPRAWL

October 18, 1999

Dear Friend,

Enclosed please find a copy of "Ten Steps to a Living Downtown," by Jennifer T. Moulton, Director of Denver's Community Planning and Development Agency. Moulton uses the example of Denver, a city that expects a 165 percent increase in the number of downtown residents over the next decade, to explore what city governments and other downtown interests can do to make downtown a vibrant, attractive place to live.

This paper builds on last year's Brookings-Fannie Mae Foundation study that found that all 24 cities surveyed predicted an increase in downtown residents by 2010. This demand is essential for a successful downtown living strategy, as is a strong economy, a fact that "Ten Steps to a Living Downtown" recognizes. Thus, given that demand does exist, and that in many cities the economy is stronger than it has been in years, what can governments do to maximize the advantages of a likely market and a healthy economy? The paper suggests several answers, from defining downtown as a special, attractive neighborhood, to addressing zoning restrictions, to reconciling commercial, entertainment and residential uses, to grappling with parking.

The tenth and final step, according to Moulton, is the recognition that "Downtown is never 'done.'" While the project of a residential downtown may never be completely finished, this paper gives a good idea of how it can begin. I hope you find it interesting and useful.

Sincerely,

Bruce Katz
Director and Senior Fellow

Center on Urban & Metropolitan Policy
The Brookings Institution

CENTER ON URBAN & METROPOLITAN POLICY
THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

TEN STEPS TO A LIVING DOWNTOWN

Jennifer T. Moulton, FAIA

A Discussion Paper Prepared for
The Brookings Institution
Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy

October 1999

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CENTER ON URBAN AND METROPOLITAN POLICY
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The Brookings Institution Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy would like to thank the Fannie Mae Foundation for its general support of the Center's research and policy work on the future of our cities, regions, and urban neighborhoods. We would also like to thank the Foundation for its particular support for the Center's work on living downtowns. Last year, Brookings and Fannie Mae Foundation issued a joint study on the rise of downtown living in a number of America's cities. To build on that study, Brookings releases this paper on how city leaders and other interested parties can take proactive steps to attract and increase residential life and 24-hour activity in our central business areas.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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ABSTRACT

Many American cities are enjoying a downtown housing boom. While a strong economy and market demand are necessary for a residential downtown to thrive, city governments can facilitate, rather than impede, the working of these forces. Drawing on the example of the city of Denver, this paper describes ten steps that city officials and others interested in creating 24-hour downtowns can take, from defining downtown as a special, attractive neighborhood, to addressing zoning restrictions, to reconciling the many commercial, entertainment and residential uses of downtown, to grappling with parking.

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TEN STEPS TO A LIVING DOWNTOWN

I. INTRODUCTION

"I wouldn't put a penny downtown. It's bad...Face it, why should people come in? They don't want the hassle; they don't want the danger... So what do you do? Exactly what I'm doing: stay out in the country. That's the new downtown."[1]

For decades after the American industrial revolution, the "downtown" of any city was the simple manifestation of a bounded social and commercial structure. Living downtown was efficient, functional, and desirable. Families, the elderly, young couples, rich and poor alike all lived in or near the center to be near where they worked and where the goods and services they needed for living were provided. But with the rise of suburbanization, America's downtowns have evolved into employment and entertainment centers, at best. This paper examines the opportunity that cities currently have to bring residents back to their downtowns and identifies ten steps that can be taken to create successful residential life in America's central business districts.

The Beginning of the End

The years after World War II brought wholesale change to the organization of American cities. Demand for housing exploded in the late 1940s, thanks to a burgeoning middle class armed with plenty of low-interest mortgages. Newly built highways connecting American cities provided access to cheap acreage. And the automobile was inexpensive to buy and to operate. The result? Choice. Homebuilders chose cheap land, and perfected the production of tract housing in the "country;" homebuyers happily followed, choosing more land at lower cost, safe neighborhoods, and a better return on investment than city housing options offered. The development patterns initiated then have prevailed.

By 1970, downtown housing had largely disappeared.[2] The exodus of the population to the suburbs had an inexorable ripple effect: department stores followed the people, taking many smaller specialty shops with them to the new suburban shopping malls. Public transportation ridership slipped dramatically because the shoppers were gone. Downtowns were left as centers of employment only – Central Business Districts ("CBDs") had little else to offer. And by the 1980s, even the employers, and of course their workers, were fleeing to the lower rents and

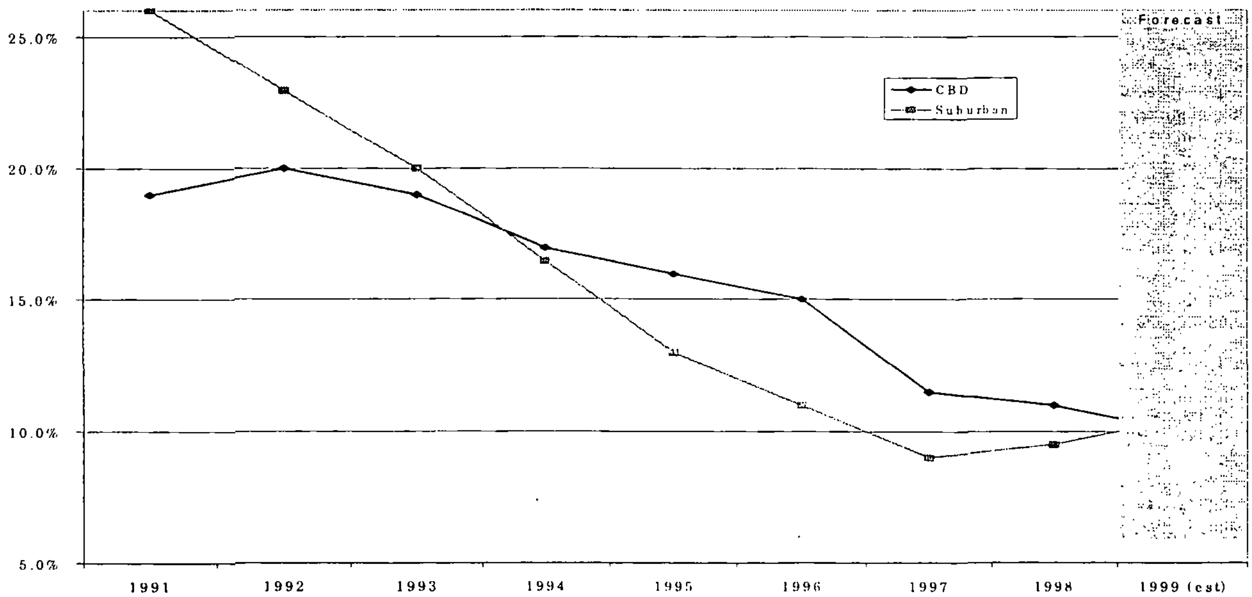
[1] Edward G. DeBartolo, one of the century's largest retail developers, as said to Martha Weinman Lear, "Master Builder Sites Shopping Mall," *New York Times Magazine*, August 12, 1973, pp.82, 84.

[2] "Downtown housing" herein refers to rental or for sale housing developed by the private sector, where the price of the units is determined by what the market will bear, rather than controlled by public policy.

abundant free parking of neatly planned suburban office parks nearer their homes. Real estate developers and investors declared downtowns dead.

The country's moderate economic recession of 1990-91 was accompanied by a devastating real estate depression. By 1994, average rates of office vacancy in America's CBDs topped those of suburban markets for the first time ever, as indicated in Figure A. Retail outlets had abandoned the cores of all but the largest of U.S. cities, and just about the only downtown residents were those who were unwanted as neighbors anywhere else was the low water mark for U.S. downtowns during the 20th century.

Figure A: U.S. CBD vs. Suburban Office Vacancy Rates



Source: ONCOR International, Liberty Greenfield Real Estate Advisors

The New Beginning

But downtown was not dead. Ironically, the most damning pieces of evidence of CBD dysfunction – empty buildings, vacant land, depressed real estate prices and ever sprawling suburbs – have become the essential ingredients of downtown's resurgence.

By the end of 1999, average CBD office vacancy rates will have fallen to match those in the best suburban submarkets. "Retail entertainment" centers exist or will open in 15 downtowns across the country. And, most importantly, Americans are moving back into the center cities in significant numbers. New York City predicts an 80 percent increase in downtown residents by 2010. Houston's center city population will quadruple by then.

Cleveland expects to add 14,000 new units of housing within its downtown in the coming decade. Denver has seen a 40 percent increase in CBD living units in the past eight years, and expects this figure to double again in the next ten.[3] The downtown areas of Memphis, Miami, Pittsburgh and Dallas, to name a few, have terrific residential momentum.

Why this dramatic turnaround? In its work, The Brookings Institution Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy and The Fannie Mae Foundation have identified two overarching factors behind the recent increase in downtown housing: demographics, and a strong economy.[4]

1. *Demographics.* According to Census estimates, the number of households without children is expected to swell to 72 percent by 2010 (up from 66.4 percent in 1990), and this is precisely the type of household that is driving the interest in downtown living.[5] People in their late 20s to 30s are marrying later and postponing families. By 2010, only 20.1 percent of U.S. households will be married couples with kids, down from 25.5 percent in 1995.

Also important to downtown housing absorption in many cities has been the steady increase in the over-50 baby boom cohort of "empty nesters" as shown in Figure B. There are approximately 76 million baby boomers, and most of them no longer have children at home. Many are seeking to simplify, or enhance, their live-and-work routine, and some are seeking maintenance-free living close to the health care facilities often found in center cities.

2. *Strong Economy.* A strong economy also boosts housing markets, but the precise downtown effect is less obvious. The employment growth, low interest rates and stock market wealth that have produced America's eight-year economic rising tide have also lifted home building and buying throughout most metro areas, not just downtown. So why is the economy of the '90s resulting in downtown housing when the strong economy of, say, the '70s did not? Part of the explanation is that the economic charge of this decade is longer and more robust than previous cycles, with unprecedented consumer confidence and spending. At these levels of income growth, a higher rate of household formation is possible. With more money, one needs fewer roommates, and proportionately more dwelling units are required as population expands. The numbers bear this out: between 1980 and 1990, the American population increased by 9.8 percent while the number of housing units increased by 15.7 percent.[6] Further, net worth has soared, particularly among the aging baby boomers. Their purchase of newly available units has

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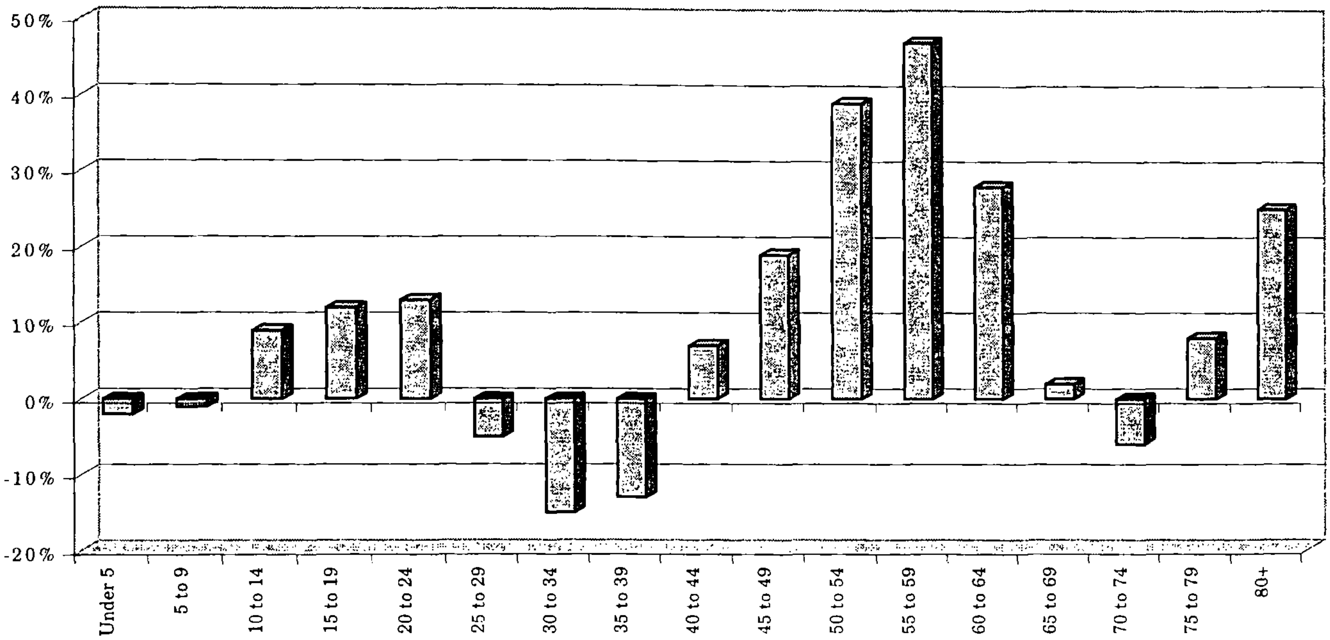
[3] Brookings Institution Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy and The Fannie Mae Foundation, "A Rise in Downtown Living," Winter, 1999.

[4] "A Rise in Downtown Living."

[5] Brookings Institution and Fannie Mae Foundation, *Who Lives Downtown*, Fall 1999.

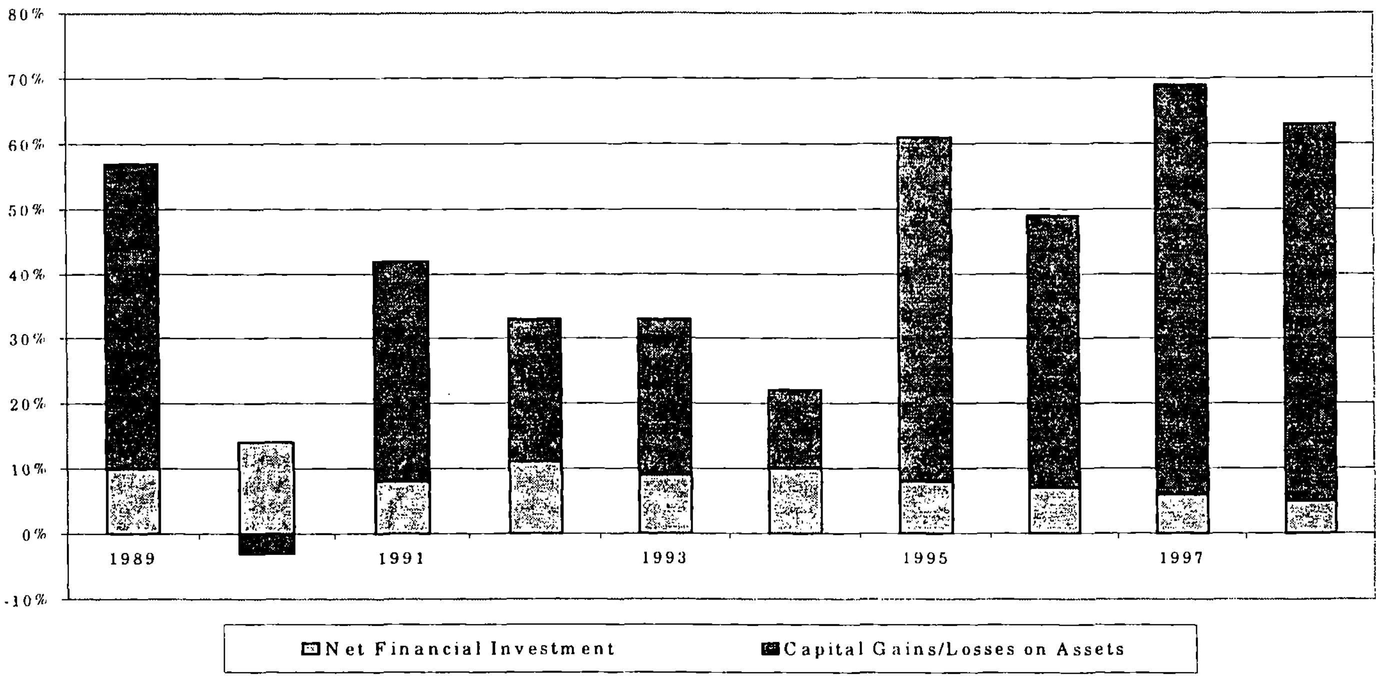
[6] 1990 U.S. Census data.

Figure B: U.S. Population Percent Change by Age, 1995-2005



Source: US Census

Figure C: Changes in Household Net Worth
Percentage of Disposable Personal Income



been a key driving force in downtown residential sales volume and value increases, as shown in Figure C. And this time around, people with money to spend on housing are weighing the travel time and maintenance requirements of the suburban choices with a more skeptical eye.

To get the most from demographics and a strong economy, local public policy can exploit, concentrate and guide economic and demographic trends that favor a move back into the city. Public policy cannot by itself create demand for housing anywhere, especially downtown. However, in conjunction with private business initiatives, local government can help accelerate potential into action by educating, providing incentives and removing regulatory obstacles. Specifically, public policy can be used to create two threshold preconditions in a downtown that will catalyze the housing market.

1. **The physical environment must be of a character and quality that people will want to live there.** Downtown must be perceived as a comfortable, safe place (easier written than done). Downtown areas with boundaries and human scale, clusters of housing that are obviously distinct from businesses, and dwelling units that support convenience and comfort can become neighborhoods in their own right. Neighborhoods must provide places to play, direct access to food shopping and services, and neighbors. Downtown neighborhoods must be clean (maybe with less meticulous grooming than their suburban counterparts), and must above all be safe from threats and crime. A successful downtown neighborhood will draw many more people for more reasons than the country estate. And with more residents, visitors, and overall bustling of people, a successful downtown will be brimming with vitality, activity, interest, and, most of all, security. Nothing is more intimidating than empty downtown streets, particularly at night.

2. **Downtown residences must offer an investment motive for home ownership.** Every housing purchase, suburban or urban, is motivated not just by the need for shelter, but also by investment considerations. For downtown housing to take root, people must be willing to purchase, not just rent.[7] For this to happen, they will have to have confidence that they will eventually sell for a higher price than they paid to buy. In the '70s, investors found lower costs and better chances of real estate value increases in the suburbs. Inner-city investments carried greater risks and the threat of declining values. Today's property investment outlook offers at least a more balanced proposition, at best a reversal of circumstances. Newly built and redeveloped housing downtown offers investment returns equal to or greater than those in the suburbs. Indeed, in the last year, housing values in the cores of Chicago and Detroit have risen faster than those in their suburbs.[8]

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[7] In Denver, downtown housing has changed in character dramatically since 1990. Nine years ago, more than 86 percent of all downtown housing was for rent. Today, more than 70 percent of downtown residences have been purchased and most are owner-occupied.

[8] Carlos Tejada "For Many City Dwellers, Home Values Have Finally Headed Up," *Wall Street Journal*, August 12, 1999, pp. B1, B4.

Like the suburbs, downtowns must meet at least these two conditions – a safe, quality environment and investor confidence – before they can effectively compete for residents. These two preconditions should be an organizing agenda for the proactive role that city governments can play.[9]

[9] City (or municipal) government must lead housing development by using local public policy. However, state and federal government play a role in bringing resources and regulating housing development.

II. Ten Steps To Downtown Housing: A City Government Agenda

Each of the "Ten Steps to Downtown Housing" described below outline ways that local public policy might strengthen the two threshold conditions – a strong quality of life and market conditions – that are necessary to attract residents to American central business areas. Even though one step may be aimed at neighborhood building, and another at creating economic value, all steps contribute to both goals. The ten steps are not sequential steps, but are intended to be addressed concurrently. The steps are mostly common sense; the trick is to muster the political and financial support for these ideas in an organized, timely and, hopefully simultaneous manner.

This paper relies on Denver's experience to illustrate the steps to creating a viable residential downtown. Denver, hit very hard by the economic and real estate setbacks of the previous decade, was one of the first cities in the nation to recover in 1990. A combination of luck and determined action has produced successes in Denver's downtown housing market. Since 1990, over 1,400 new units of housing have been produced, with another 1,300 under construction today. As an attractive sunbelt city, Denver has benefited from great gains in population during this decade, particularly among those with disposable incomes, higher incomes, and greater leisure time in retirement. Fortuitous timing, a stock of low-cost buildings to be redeveloped, and certain public policy decisions helped Denver take full advantage of strong socioeconomic trends. Denver is not the only model of downtown renaissance, but it does offer a useful case study. While no two cities are located at the same point on economic and demographic curves, and while each offers unique assets and liabilities, some element of each of these steps is applicable to all cities.

1. Housing Must Be Downtown's Political and Business Priority

Key downtown interests – business owners, government, residents – should all agree on housing as a priority. Ambiguous or conflicting agendas will at best dilute efforts, at worst doom them to failure. The city's goal of investment-quality downtown residential neighborhoods, and the logical ripple effect of downtown reinvestment, must be clearly articulated to the general population. Otherwise, criticism for directing so many resources downtown at the expense of the rest of the city will inevitably arise.[10]

[10] Some criticism will arise anyway: various interests will try to redirect some of the downtown momentum to their own parochial priorities. Any loosening of the focus can greatly reduce chances of success. Still, an announced strategy to expand the priorities beyong the center core should be developed. In Denver, after three years of concentrating in the downtown core, attention expanded to include the surrounding neighborhoods. Now, emphasis has expanded to include several neighborhoods that have not benefited from the strong economy. The ripples are moving out from the center.

Before 1990, Denver's curiosity about downtown housing led to a few small experiments that met with limited success because the economy was too weak to support more extensive development. Denver's newly-elected mayor, Wellington Webb, convened the 1991 Downtown Summit to underscore his vision for downtown, and involved all the relevant constituencies – business interests, arts supporters and residents. The mayor personally led the discussion to focus on housing as a key strategy for revitalizing downtown. The resulting Downtown Action Agenda established agreed-upon priorities and became the cornerstone for all ensuing activities.

The power of leadership is hard to measure. But having the downtown stakeholders and city government agree on the priorities allowed everyone to focus on implementation. There was no second-guessing of priorities, and no diversion of efforts to peripheral issues. Maintaining this focus took excellent communication amongst the parties. Mayor Webb, upon re-election in 1995, held a second Downtown Summit to affirm his commitment to the work underway and that still to be done.

2. Downtown Must Be Legible

A "legible" downtown is one with delineated and distinguishable boundaries. Neighborhoods are created in many ways – ethnic or religious concentrations, similarity of architecture, landmark buildings or landforms. Comprehensive plans, common streetscape furniture or good signage can give a neighborhood definition and cohesion.

Until Lower Downtown ("LoDo") was declared an historic district in 1988, downtown Denver had no clear subareas or neighborhoods.[11] To distinguish LoDo as a special district, the city's government undertook a streetscape improvement program for street lighting, benches, manhole covers, parking lot edges, and signage. These details, along with specific physical edges, helped to delineate the boundaries and character of LoDo. During this past year, 17th Street, the city's financial spine, received a new streetscape designed, again, to be unique and separate from other downtown districts. These improvements have provided physical markers to facilitate neighborhood subdivisions within the broader CBD. The "Golden Triangle" neighborhood, at downtown's southern edge, is growing up from surface parking lots topped with new mid-rise condominium structures. Its identity as a neighborhood comes from the two cultural institutions within its boundaries – the Art Museum and Central Library. Also underway is the development of another historic district in the mid-downtown Denver area where a dozen old brick or concrete buildings have been converted from office to residential use. The architecture of the redeveloped buildings creates a scale, a street presence and character

[11] LoDo was the original commercial center of Denver in the previous century. Over time, LoDo evolved from an on-premise commercial area to a warehouse district, distributing goods throughout the region. By the 1970s, these warehouses were either empty or nearly so, with a portion of the arts and architecture community living in tandem with the homeless. LoDo was first identified as an historic resource and a potential residential neighborhood in the 1986 Downtown Denver Area Plan.

that, when in residential use, has become a "neighborhood," different than LoDo's or the Golden Triangle.

It is important not to underestimate the significance of an area's nickname. In Denver, "LoDo" carries as much positive local identification as "TriBeCa," "SOMA," "Bricktown," or "the Flats." Colloquial catch phrases that have been coined to describe blocks or areas should be celebrated, institutionalized into formal planning documents, even promoted as marketing tools. If an obvious area for downtown redevelopment lacks boundaries and cohesion, invent a name to add legibility.

3. Downtown Must Be Accessible

Deterioration still plagues many of America's downtowns, the result of years of deferred maintenance and no new investment. For the downtown economic environment to grow and prosper, its physical infrastructure needs to be in good shape. The better the access points – such as entrances and exits – into downtown, the higher the quality of the streetscape, the more effective and efficient the water/sewer services, the more attractive to prospective residents. City government acts as the "property manager," making repairs and beautifying the common areas in order to maintain downtown's investment value.

In 1989, Denver voters approved a $240 million general obligation bond issue to improve roads and bridges leading into downtown and to make flood plain improvements to allow for more developable land along the South Platte River, at downtown's edge. Two new major parkway links were built to connect downtown to the interstate highway, greatly improving commuter and visitor access. At the same time, these new arterials effectively changed the compass point of downtown Denver's "front door," introducing little known parts of downtown to the commuters. Other intersection improvements were made to ease automobile access in and out of downtown from all directions.

Intra-downtown accessibility is also critical. In the early 1980s, Denver converted its main shopping street – 16th Street – to a transit mall. Free shuttle buses run continuously along its one-mile length, linking regional commuter bus terminals at either end. All of downtown Denver became more "walkable," greatly reducing the need for automobile use within the core. The 16th Street Mall has become the defining urban design feature downtown, a landmark for residents and visitors alike to orient their movement in the core.

4. Downtown Must Have New and Improved Regional Amenities

Downtowns need people – a lot of people – in order to be efficient economic machines and to have lively, vital streets. If regional amenities are located within or close to downtown, legions of newcomers in the form of sports fans or arts patrons will be exposed to the diversity of downtown's entertainment and shopping choices. The more familiar and comfortable the area becomes, the less threatening it seems. This promotes a sense of habitability.

Like any attraction, cultural and sports venues need sprucing up to attract not only new patrons but their existing supporters as well. Bond issues in 1989 and 1990 (for libraries) provided significant funding for improvements to the city's park system and its flagship cultural amenities, including those located downtown. A new theatre for travelling Broadway shows was added to the Denver Performing Arts Complex in 1992. In 1995, the Central Library opened its newly renovated and expanded facility on the southern edge of downtown.

Since 1991, Denver has added numerous amenities next to downtown: a baseball park, an amusement park, an aquarium, and a new hockey/basketball arena. Construction has just commenced on a new football stadium. A new downtown convention center was opened in 1991. Its size will be doubled, as will the size of the art museum, pending favorable votes this fall. When Coors Field opened for baseball adjacent to LoDo in 1994, it offered a strategic opportunity for all of Denver's downtown. While the baseball team management wanted revenues from as many on-site parking spaces as possible, only 5,000 spaces were built in conjunction with the stadium. The 30,000+ parking spaces already existing in downtown within a mile of the stadium provided the bulk of the parking. Forced to seek out these spaces, fans walked throughout the CBD to and from the games.

All of these publicly funded institutions have helped persuade privately financed art galleries and new restaurants (over 30) to open downtown since 1994. Many people from the suburbs who come downtown for a baseball game return to go out to dinner or go to the theatre; frequent patrons of these establishments begin to dream about living near them.

Residents of suburbia boast of parks and open space; downtown dwellers also want something more than pavement in their neighborhoods. The South Platte River, which runs along downtown Denver's edge, is being restored as an urban amenity by adding over 200 acres of parks along its edge to link downtown to the water. This greenspace is not merely an attractive front door to downtown's residential neighborhoods, it provides activity and recreational amenities on a par with any in the metro area.

5. Downtown Must Be Clean and Safe

Downtowns have a reputation for being dirty, deteriorated and unsafe. Many suburbanites never go into the center city, assuming the negative stereotype is correct. For downtown to become a neighborhood in which to live, it must feel safe and be clean. The density of a downtown neighborhood, particularly with public amenities nearby, means that downtown housing backers must pay more attention to safety and cleanliness than their suburban counterparts.

In 1992, the Downtown Denver Partnership, a membership-based business organization, organized a successful effort to create a downtown business improvement district (BID) to maintain and promote its activities. The BID is funded by property taxes drawn from a prescribed area of downtown. Among other responsibilities, the BID is tasked with the removal of graffiti and trash and daily sidewalk washing. In 1995, a new police district was formed whose prime focus is downtown and the immediately adjacent neighborhoods. The BID funds paid for police patrols downtown, including the horseback and bicycle patrols. An expanded and visible police presence adds to the perception (and reality) of safety downtown. Since the formation of Police District 6, crime has dropped by 20 percent downtown and in the surrounding neighborhoods. This statistic has become an important advertising message for downtown boosters.

Finally, several times a year, large festivals are held in and next to downtown – three in the summer months and once at Christmas. Thousands of people are drawn downtown to the events. They see that downtown is clean and safe, they let go of their images of a dank and uninhabited place, and they come back....increasingly to stay.

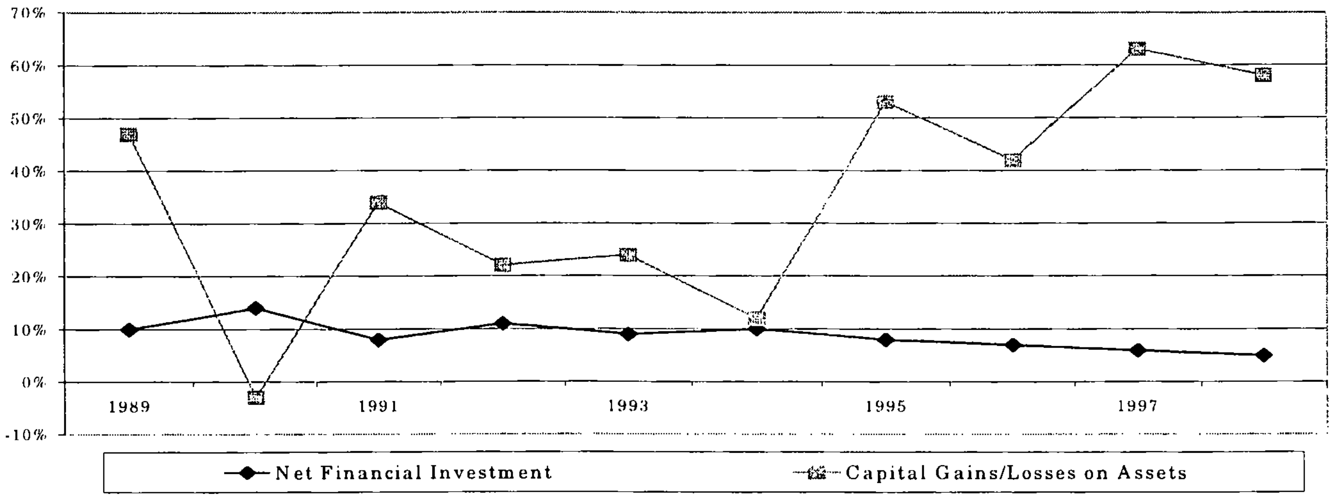
6. Downtown Must Preserve and Reuse Old Buildings

Most downtowns in American cities have a stock of old buildings, once used for manufacturing, storage or small offices, and now largely vacant. Old buildings are generally obsolete for today's office. In the last 20 years these buildings have been replaced by large Class A office towers, which can meet the functional demands of the financial, legal and other business services that populate CBDs. The obsolescence of old Class C buildings forced vacancy up and market value down. These very buildings, however, have created the skeleton for affordable residential development in center cities. Of a smaller scale than Class A towers, groups of these buildings stand as a residential neighborhood in waiting. Some of these buildings have elaborate decorative construction, and their preserved historic character distinguishes downtown from suburban residential development.

The 1987-1992 economic real estate recession in downtown Denver left over 40 structures vacant downtown and in LoDo. In the early '90s, LoDo had not yet fully emerged as a real estate development opportunity, and owners who had proclaimed the death of downtown were hunkering down to wait for the next office cycle. Buildings in the lower and mid-downtown area were threatened with demolition as owners sought reduced property taxes and parking income in the interim. In 1991, Denver changed its landmark preservation ordinance to extend the previous 90-day delay on demolition of a landmarked building to 12 months and even then to allow a demolition permit only after a building permit for a new structure had been granted. These changes, together with the elimination of surface parking as a use by right, halted the practice of demolishing vacant or under-performing buildings in favor of surface parking lots.[12] Within two years the downtown renaissance was recognized and owners sold or rehabilitated these buildings for downtown housing.

The following graph illustrates the importance of market forces in downtown Denver's residential rebirth. Class C office buildings, the oldest and least functional of the stock, by 1994 saw 40 percent vacancies, while Class A offices continued to fill in Denver's CBD. The values of these Class C properties were less than $20 per square foot on average in 1990 – a price at which redevelopment makes economic sense. Many of these buildings were purchased at these low values, then recreated as lofts, apartments, and hotels from 1995 to 1998; Class C building vacancies began to fall, and today they are only modestly higher than Class A (See Figure D). If these reusable, Class C buildings had been razed, the redevelopment stage of the downtown residential cycle would have been stalled until new construction was viable.[13]

Figure D:
Changes in Household Net Worth
Percentage of Disposable Personal Income



[12] Urban design elitists believe that regulations should limit required parking downtown to force the use of public transit. Noble purposes, but these, too, can only be achieved gradually. Much of the market for downtown housing demands secure, attached automobile parking – to summarily legislate against this demand is to eliminate the functional and investment attributes that these residents seek.

[13] In 1999, the very few vacant Class C structures remaining in downtown Denver's residential neighborhoods command relatively high values of $50-$70 per square foot now that redevelopment has taken hold. While a success metric in its own right, these prices have escalated faster than residential rents or values which now limits further rehab to commercial (hotel or, more often, restaurant) uses. In cities later to this cycle, building owners are leaping to high building values just as downtown residential markets show initial promise (partly driven by the Denver model). As a result, residential rehab potential for many of these structures is lost to a future new economic/real estate cycle. The "redevelopment stage" offers lower cost units than new construction can, which is why rehab is so important to a nascent downtown residential market.

7. Downtown Regulations Must be Streamlined and Support Residential Growth

In the mid-1950s, the vision for American life presumed separation of uses, segregation of housing by price and type, and transportation primarily by automobile. Policies of municipal government evolved to perpetuate and protect that lifestyle. Much of the zoning and building regulation on the books of American cities today actually discourages or even blocks the economic and demographic forces that support downtown residential revivals. Support for residential uses must be evident in a city's land use regulations, especially where little market housing exists. Specific code provisions, as well as the attitudes of the regulators themselves, should be reviewed and adjusted to promote housing in the urban center.

Denver's downtown zoning district was established in 1956 and emphasized commercial uses. The base density was very high – 10:1 floor area ratio – and the use of additional bonuses could take the ratio to 17:1.[14] The density bonuses were available only for office building amenities like atria and plazas. In 1994, zoning modifications eliminated office building bonuses and introduced new bonuses to encourage housing development. Today, only by including housing in a development can the maximum density allowed be achieved downtown.

With the overzoning established in 1956, Denver has since turned to the development of controls on "how" as well as "how much" to manage gradual growth. Among the favored tools to manage such growth are design guidelines and standards and height limiting overlay districts. But changes to zoning are difficult to achieve. Owners and developers see allowed density as the basis of the value in their property, and downzoning equates to a decrease in a site's potential property value. Their strong opposition in 1991 prevented Denver from taking in retrospect what could have been the even more residential-friendly step of reducing the overall density allowed in new construction to more closely match what had been built.

Zoning should not restrict growth. The success of downtown residential development relies upon new construction, taller structures, higher density. But real estate development is not always gradual, and at some point a much larger building than the current neighbors expect is proposed, and residents feel that their home values are threatened.[15] Correctly done, zoning can invite new construction but still provide a gradualism to guard against the disruption of scale, light and views that a tall tower in the midst of lowrise buildings can suddenly create.

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[14] "Floor area ratio" calculates density allowed on a piece of land, and relates the number of square feet of building space allowed on one square foot of land.

[15] After five years of converting old three to four story brick warehouse buildings in LoDo, the first new housing construction project was proposed in 1994. A one half block on the edge of LoDo was initially designed as a midrise tower, grossly out of scale and character with the neighborhood. The LoDo neighborhood organizations rose up in opposition. Because design review was required and the design criteria called for projects to be of "compatible scale and character" to their neighbors, the project was stalled. Ultimately, the project was redesigned at a moderately lower scale than originally conceived, but the process effectively demonstrated flaws in Denver's land use regulations in LoDo.

Social engineering through public policy can accomplish this goal, but only over time. Denver's downtown housing successes would have been severely slowed if zoning blocked the core ingredients of demand.

Building and fire codes can also impede housing development downtown. For existing structures built to codes no longer in use, a specific tool – Chapter 31 to the Denver Building Code – was developed over 20 years ago to give designers, builders and regulators a method for seeking and granting variances (or waivers) to current building and fire codes, potential roadblocks to housing redevelopment. Chapter 31 eliminated many hurdles to the reuse of existing buildings downtown. Every city needs a Chapter 31 to balance the often unintended and harsh effects on housing redevelopment wrought by standard codes.[16]

8. City Resources Should Be Devoted to Housing

Any city has a number of sources of public funding for housing: its own tax funds, state and federal funds.[17] Leadership, good information for the private sector, and financial resources must be leveraged in order to boost the production of downtown housing. Without the concerted effort and concentration of public funds the private housing market would have moved more slowly into downtown Denver.

As a first step after the 1991 Downtown Summit, the City and the Downtown Denver Partnership jointly established the Downtown Housing Office ("DHO") to gather and distribute accurate information on properties, market conditions and available public financing tools to developers interested in housing. DHO's first priority was to aggressively seek potential developers for empty buildings. The Denver Urban Renewal Authority, a city agency authorized by state statute to provide redevelopment projects with tax increment financing, focused its resources on mixed-use projects with housing components. The community priority was clear to the private sector and, spurred by low acquisition costs for empty buildings, private developers began to respond with projects.

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[16] As valuable a tool Chapter 31 was for the redevelopment of old buildings, the regulators within the building and fire departments were always uncomfortable with the flexibility it afforded. Depending on the management of the various city departments, the tool was either in or out of favor. In 1994, Chapter 31 was written as Chapter 61, ostensibly to return it to its previous efficacy and to give it insulation from department biases. In fact, its efficacy has still not been restored – a condition that should be rectified.

[17] Cities have developed special funds for housing, and some have linkage programs where commercial developers either must build housing in connection with commercial development or pay into a fund in lieu, and usually have the ability to use tax increment financing. State funds may include a housing trust fund. Federal funding for housing can come from the Community Development Block Grant, HOME funds and other programs administered by the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Federally authorized, locally administered private activity bonds (issued by municipalities, these bonds provide low interest construction money to projects) have been a very useful too. In addition, low-income housing tax credits and historic preservation tax credits have been utilized frequently in Denver. Of great use would be property tax abatement for housing projects meeting specific city criteria. Abatement is not allowed under the Colorado constitution but has been used in other states. Denver will waive building-related fees for certain affordable housing projects.

To further lure developers, the Mayor directed city agencies to focus existing financial programs on downtown housing. Early on in the development of the LoDo neighborhood, the city created the Lower Downtown Revolving Loan Fund by matching $1 million of its funds with a $1 million loan from the National Trust for Historic Preservation. This fund provided modest but much needed financial assistance for façade improvements in the LoDo historic district. Another source of funding is the State Historic Fund, unique to Colorado. When the state constitution was amended to allow gaming in three historic mining towns, a provision directed a percentage of the taxes received from gambling to this newly created fund. In ten years, the fund has distributed over $60 million in the form of up to $100,000 grants per project for historically designated structures. Since LoDo showed the viability of downtown housing, over 40 old buildings downtown have been converted to residential use with assistance from a combination of local, state and/or federal funds.

9. The Edge of Downtown Should Be Surrounded By Viable Neighborhoods

The downtown of most U.S. cities has become isolated from the rest of the community, ringed by surface parking lots and empty, boarded up buildings – an intimidating moat that makes getting to downtown an unappealing trip. Worse, this "moat" exists in neighborhoods that are the city's oldest, with interesting residential architecture and vacant land on which to build. Like the empty buildings downtown, these next-to-downtown neighborhoods are substantive assets to a city's downtown housing and revitalization strategies.

Downtown Denver is surrounded by eight distinct neighborhoods, all offering housing redevelopment opportunities, and all within easy walking distance of downtown. Warehouse conversions for loft housing in LoDo, new construction of mid-rise condominiums in the Golden Triangle and at least 2,000 new townhouse and apartment units in the former railyards west of downtown known as the "Central Platte Valley" have created or will create three new residential communities on downtown's edge. These are the "easy" neighborhoods, with redevelopable existing buildings or raw ground ripe for housing.

The other, more challenging five neighborhoods are existing low-rise residential communities, which have been shredded over time by downtown's gradual economic collapse. Infill and building renovations are the strategies here. An abandoned hospital occupying eleven acres was the dominating source of blight for five years in one neighborhood. The hospital is gone and 1,000 units of middle- and upper-income rental units are now under construction.

The two most difficult neighborhoods surrounding LoDo have concentrations of 100 percent publicly subsidized housing for the poorest segment of the community. In one neighborhood, the public housing was demolished in 1993 and replaced with half the number of new units, but even these new units were concentrated low-income housing. This demolition six years ago appears to not have stimulated any private sector investment in the surrounding area, because of the persistent problems with lack of neighborhood quality and investment security. The presence of concentrated public housing (no matter how small or great the number of residents) discourages private sector investment, leaving the neighborhood dominated by the poorest segment of society – socially stigmatized and economically segregated.

In the second of these two neighborhoods, the city has received a $26 million federal grant to demolish 286 units of public housing, and construct 550 new mixed-income units on site. About one third of these new rental and for-sale housing units will be made available to public housing tenants, another third will be for moderate-income tenants (those earning less than 60 percent of the area median family income), and the remaining third will be rented or sold at the market rate. This particular neighborhood boasted a healthy low- and middle-income population of 25,000 in 1950; today, only 8,000 remain, of which 4,000 are very low income. By diluting the concentration of public housing with the infusion of a greater number of market units, the considerable assets of this neighborhood – very close proximity to the CBD, a solid existing housing stock of exceptional architectural quality – should become attractive to further private sector investment in market housing.

10. Downtown Is Never "Done"

Can a city like Denver extrapolate its downtown residential successes of this decade for another 10 years? Not necessarily. Economic cycles wane, and real estate market dynamics shift – this is inevitable and uncontrollable. A city must not believe that its downtown revitalization momentum is inexhaustible when housing finally arrives. As quickly as the downtown housing phenomenon arose in Denver, so did challenges to the character and quality of life. Some of those remaining challenges are described below.

Managing Conflicting Uses. Regional amenities, good for the whole of downtown, can create serious problems for the host neighborhood if care is not taken to site them appropriately and to mitigate the negative effects. Coors Field has a plethora of sports bars and sports paraphernalia shops located in the blocks around it. When unleashed on the neighborhood at 2:00 am, the occasionally noisy bar patrons become a disturbing nuisance to the sleeping residents. The LoDo neighborhood organizations and the business owners came together to develop policies and procedures to quickly resolve conflicts as they arise.

Denver's zoning code allows for much greater densities and heights in and around downtown than what has been built to date. The disconnect between what is allowed and what has been constructed raises the most difficult questions about how this city will grow and how disruptive to existing neighborhoods that growth will be. Over the past seven years, 11 new design review districts and 16 new historic districts, including the CBD and adjoining neighborhoods, have been created to manage the quality of the growth that occurs. In the past three years, the city developed an entirely new set of zoning use classifications around the desire to mix work, retail, and living uses. But zoning language, however skillfully crafted, still cannot ensure peace. The conflict is unavoidable.

Keeping Downtown Affordable. Prices of downtown real estate have skyrocketed, rewarding investors but limiting affordability for new residents. Empty buildings to be redeveloped have disappeared, but for a few very expensive survivors. This has set the stage for higher density, new construction projects at a neighborhood-unfriendly scale. Public policy must determine how to bend some inevitable real estate economic forces to keep the downtown neighborhoods from being overwhelmed, and, potentially, suffocated.

The gentrification of downtown neighborhoods, while a benchmark of success to many, creates a gap. Several of these neighborhoods still have populations typical of pre-redevelopment: low-income families likely to be driven out as property values rise and redevelopment occurs. A key characteristic of a healthy downtown is the presence of a full range of housing opportunities for people of all incomes. Denver hopes to develop creative tax and financing tools to mitigate this problem, but public policy that attempts to regulate economic market forces does so at its peril.

Exercising Patience with Retail. For downtown to go from a trendy area for housing to a genuine neighborhood, retail that serves residential uses must exist. New urban dwellers in Denver expect to walk to a neighborhood food market. While some convenience retail has emerged – video stores, pharmacy, a wine shop, and dry cleaners – the grocery store and other shopping goods retail continues to elude downtown Denver. Until the population downtown hits numbers that retail considers sufficient, or until a new iteration of retail is invented that caters to a smaller shopping segment, downtown neighborhood shopping progress will be limited.

Keeping Up Green Space. Downtown dwellers are urbanites, but open space is still an ingredient of neighborhoods. With an increased residential population comes an increased need for park space. The South Platte River parkland is not enough. Additional small, urban parks will be needed in the ring neighborhoods over the next 10-20 years to further soften the landscape and give quiet, calm places to the downtown community. But this is increasingly difficult as vacant land grows scarcer and more expensive.

Making Downtown Home for Families. As the demographics have shown, children are not part of the equation in downtown living today. Families continue to choose homes in non-downtown neighborhoods. For downtowns to reach their full potential as vibrant, enriching places, families must be present to contribute to its life. For families to choose downtown as home, however, the open space must be of a quantity and design to provide adequate play and recreation facilities. And one additional use must be added to the mix – schools. PS1 is a charter K-12 school in Denver located in the Golden Triangle neighborhood on downtown's southern edge.[18] This school has not, by itself, caused families to locate downtown. But the school's use of downtown as a laboratory for learning, and use of downtown's amenities (the Central Library and Art Museum, particularly) to enhance its resources, is teaching a new generation of children about the unique value of downtown.

Finally, the past forty years have shown how quickly downtowns can be abandoned. Maintaining a healthy downtown takes leadership, commitment and hard work. Public policy must encourage, manipulate and, where possible, direct the development not just of housing, but of sound, distinct residential neighborhoods from which owners can expect appreciation in their housing investment...just like the suburbs, and for an increasing number of Americans, better than the suburbs.

[18] A "charter" school, by Colorado's constitution, is independent from the management of the public school system within which it sits, but is funded with the public tax dollars. The public school system must approve the creation of a charter school.

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September 1, 1999

MEMORANDUM TO ERIC LIU

FROM: Anna Richter

RE: **Urban Sprawl**

Thanks — please look into p. 2, and put this memo + the original Econ. articles in a file: LIVABILITY-Sprawl

Urban Sprawl is a concern that is developing nation wide, however there is not one nationwide solution to effectively control this growth. The Economist Newspaper Ltd. Published a six part series that explored the projected implications of urban sprawl and highlighted several cities specifically that are experiencing rapid growth in their metropolitan area. Although metropolitan growth does follow a similar pattern, each case has a unique aspect because of demographics or geography, which explains why this problem is so difficult to combat. The Economist series evaluated the characteristics of urban sprawl in the cities of Phoenix, Arizona; Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota; Issaquah, Washington; Sacramento, California; Chicago, Illinois; and Washington, D.C. Below is an outline of the various cause and effect factors for the six cities highlighted in the Economist.

Phoenix, Arizona: This city is among the fastest growing in America setting a nationwide record, and since 1990, the population has increased by 21 percent. The initial growth was triggered by the influx of high-tech companies such as Motorola, Intel and Honeywell, which established headquarters in Phoenix because of limited government regulations on businesses. The migration of businesses also meant the migration of jobs and thus people. The natural response of increased residential and commercial development is now "cutting into the Sonoran Desert at the rate of an acre an hour" (The Economist, 07/17/99).

Another factor that fed this growth is the landscape because of the lack of natural barriers and checks. The state has been able to sustain such growth though massive irrigation projects and dams, and although Arizona Governor Jane Hull has established a commission to set up regulations for the future, the people of Phoenix are not concerned by the future effects of this rapid growth.

Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minnesota: The people of these two cities are fleeing outward to the suburban areas at a pace estimated to cover 64 acres per day, which is partially due to the consumer demand for large houses on large lots.

This growth has caused the urban areas to decline and a "reverse commute" has become a norm for many. Jobs and schools have deserted the downtown areas, and now commuters travel from the city to the more affluent suburbs for work and school. Between 1970 and 1990, 162 schools have closed in the central city and "inner suburban ring", while 78 schools have opened in the outer suburban area.

This sprawl has generated concern among numerous organizations, such as The Metropolitan Council, which is one of the largest regional-government bodies in the nation and chaired by Ted Mondale. It monitors transportation, sewage, residential and commercial development, and two years ago more than $650 million of state money was placed under the

Council's supervision, which gives it the power to withhold money for new developments if they do not comply with planning regulations. Planning regulations are a common dispute because many require a balance of housing development for low, middle and higher income families, but more often than not, the larger, more profitable homes are built first and the others are neglected entirely.

Governor Ventura has also taken measures and endorsed a "light-rail" commuter system, as well as the ten principles for development outlined by Minnesota's Smart Growth Network, – find in here. which include encouraging new developments in areas where road and sewage access is already established and promotes revitalizing existing communities instead of abandoning them and building new ones.

Issaquah, Washington: Traffic, air pollution and elevated house prices are the problems that urban sprawl has brought to Issaquah. Sub-divisions and shopping centers are spreading rapidly and the high-tech industry has replaced farms, paper mills and lumberyards. The jobs created by the high-tech industry are referred to as "green collar" jobs; no smoke stacks are necessary. However, the irony falls because these professionals are the same people who are driving SUV's and demand the large houses, which contribute to the increase of pollution and construction.

High rise housing is growing in Seattle and Bellevue, which many project will limit urban sprawl, and would also make the light-rail transportation system more efficient, because the rail line does not reach areas such as Issaquah. Another factor in the congestion of people is due to the landscape of steep hills and lakes, unlike Phoenix, and serve as natural regulators of ground level expansion.

Sacramento, CA: Sacramento has experienced a population growth of 43 percent since 1980, and the metropolitan area has grown almost 14 percent in the last eight years. This growth is somewhat of an overflow from the urban sprawl that has San Francisco, Los Angeles and San Diego "...starting to bust at the seams", and California is expected to be the most populated state in the U.S. by 2020.

The development in the valley area has been dominated by large houses on large plots of land and has been called by many "dysfunctional sprawl?". The water supply is at risk, and The Economist series attributes it to the number of swimming pools and cars to wash, which is a contrast to LA and the Bay area where consumption is limited and over consumption results in a surcharge. The air quality is decreasing as people need to drive greater distances to and from work. Another factor that exacerbates this problem is the lack of a fair-housing law in California, which results in a disproportionate number of upper income level housing developments compared to lower/middle income ones.

Chicago, Illinois: Contrary to the previous outlines of population growth, Chicago has had an expansion of growth in its downtown community and not in the suburbs. Houston, Texas and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania are also experiencing similar city-population growth. The Economist Series attributes this kind of growth to people getting married and having children later, the attraction of less house/yard maintenance for couples who no longer have children in the house, and a large factor in this trend is that overall crime in cities, which initially triggered the move outward, has declined. The job market has also influenced this central-city growth, and many professionals find that closer proximity to the office results in greater profit. Additionally, cities attract more cultural diversity.

One significant concern for families is the quality of public schools in the city, which often have fewer resources and less funding than public schools in the suburban districts. The mayor of Chicago, Richard Daley, and the mayor of Detroit, Dennis Archer, have gained control over the city schools and have implemented reforms that have made middle-class residence more inclined to remain in the city. (Chicago is also a city that has eliminated Social Promotion policies and has in place implemented more after school academic assistance for students who need more additional instruction).

Washington, DC: In July 1999, the Brookings Institute reported that Washington has a growth problem that does not follow the typical pattern for metropolitan growth. The study entitled "A Region Divided" reported that the poverty is not as concentrated and that the local governments are more unified than other cities suffering from the effects of urban sprawl, which provides a greater opportunity for the damage to be repaired. However, the divisions are severe along racial and economic lines and the employment and opportunity disparities are significant. Washington is split between east and west lines (more affluent communities generally live on the west side of I-95 in the suburbs and 16th St in the city). The last article of the Economist series challenges that sprawl does not cause the division, but it does change the nature of it; there is a link, but the cause and effect is an ongoing and complex debate.

Although the report does not offer any specific recommendations, the data suggests that the division is reversible. For example, the report concludes that one problem is that school jurisdictions cause people to move, and as people move out of the city, the place of relocation becomes over-populated, and the schools in the suburbs thus become crowded and traffic also worsens. Essentially the report provides evidence that racial and economic disparities are the root of the division and expansion, and have plausible solutions, but without proactive measures from community and government leaders, the division will only become more extreme.

The Washington Post

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WEDNESDAY, JULY 28, 1999

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GOREN
Staff Writer

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Brookings Links Urban Probler s Suburban Spraw

By D'VERA COHN
Washington Post Staff Writer

The Washington area's most vexing problems—social distress in closer-in communities and over-active growth in outer suburbs—are closely linked and can only be solved by a regional attack on both at once, according to a Brookings Institution report being released today.

Data on poverty, racial segregation, employment patterns, housing prices and traffic congestion show a growing split between the region's "haves" and "have-nots" that harms both, the report says.

"The Washington region is divided by race, income, jobs and opportunity," the report concludes. "The problems of hyper growth on the one hand and social distress on the other are intertwined."

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"The greater Washington has robust growth in the we

BY CRAIG HERNDON—THE WASHINGTON POST

bbles, right, and Dusty, which survived an attack by a 12-foot snake.

Attack

12-Footer Wrapped Around Dog

This was not a normal occurrence in Montgomery County.

Pesti, 49, a speech and language therapist

Brookings Links Urban Problems, Suburban Sprawl

By D'VERA COHN
Washington Post Staff Writer

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"The Washington region is divided by race, income, jobs and opportunity," the report concludes. "The problems of hyper growth on the one hand and social distress on the other are intertwined."

But the report also says the region's growth problems differ from the typical metropolitan pattern, and may be easier to repair. Unlike many cities, it says, the District "has traction in the new economy." Also, the region's poverty is less concentrated, and local governments are less fragmented.

Other areas are split between a struggling city and wealthier suburbs. But Washington is divided along east-west lines. Better-off communities generally lie west of Interstate 95 in the suburbs and 16th Street in the city, although there are exceptions such as outer-Beltway Prince George's County. (The report defines the region's eastern boundary as Prince George's County and the western one as Loudoun County.)

The report is an effort by Brookings, known for studying national problems, to become a broker in some of the region's most contentious issues. The report does not make specific recommendations but urges more regional coordination and cooperation in land-use and other decisions.

The think tank's report, "A Region Divided," will be released today at a forum that will include responses from government, business and religious leaders.

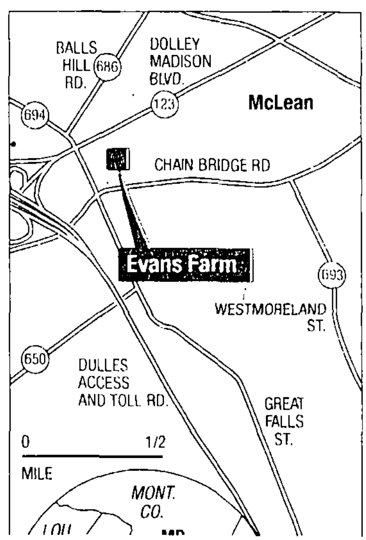
"The greater Washington area has robust growth in the western half and not enough growth in large portions of the eastern half," the report concludes.

"The result is an uneven set of

See GROWTH, *B4, Col. 1*

Gilmore Faults Transit Agency

On Air, Governor Hears Complaints, Promises Audit



Study Links Urban Problems, Suburban Sprawl

GROWTH, *From B1*

opportunities for families and businesses in the region. But the fast-growing areas are not clear winners from this pattern of growth and development. . . . Explosive growth comes with a price."

The report cites:

■ A growing number of poor children in inner suburbs, especially in Prince George's, but also in portions of Alexandria and Arlington, Fairfax and Montgomery counties.

■ The region's stark segregation, with 70 percent of African Americans living in the District and Prince George's.

■ A loss of jobs per capita in eastern communities, where people are looking for work, compared with a gain in jobs per capita in western communities, where there is a labor shortage.

■ The down side of growth—worsening traffic jams, thousands of children attending classes in trailers, stagnant prices for some existing homes because so many new ones are on the market.

One set of problems affects the other, Brookings concludes. Poor schools in one jurisdiction lead families to leave, causing crowded schools where they relocate. When the region's lack of affordable housing means people cannot live near work, that worsens traffic problems.

In their new communities, families swap social problems for "fiscal stress" because governments must spend millions to build roads and schools. Even older affluent neighborhoods, such as Bethesda and North Arlington, become crowded with pass-through traffic and face pressure to develop more land.

"A portion [of the region] feels there is too much pressure, and a portion feels it is left behind," said Bruce Katz, head of the Brookings Institution's Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy. "There is much common ground."

The report's message is that prosperous communities should care about poorer ones—not from a "love thy brother" point of view, but because of hard-headed self-interest. Environmental groups make a similar argument, trying to convince people that cutting air pollution from cars by using Metro is in their self-interest because it also will reduce traffic jams.

The Brookings report argues that Washington is better equipped than many places to solve its problems.

Social decline is less severe here, according to Brookings. Less than 4 percent of the population lives in severely poor neighborhoods—a lower number than in Detroit, Cleveland, Baltimore and even Seattle. The District still is a strong employment center—unlike many big cities—and has desirable residential neighborhoods.

And the timing is right, Katz said. The city's new mayor, Anthony A. Williams, is trusted by suburban officials. Maryland state officials are pushing "smart growth" to channel development more efficiently into areas that can accommodate it. And some fast-growth Virginia suburbs are trying to limit sprawl development.

However, any attempt to write regional growth policies faces major obstacles. Although Brookings contends that local government is less fragmented here than elsewhere—for example, Chicago, where dozens of local agencies have land-use powers—it is often difficult to win agreement among District, Maryland and Virginia officials.

Proposals to channel growth face opposition from the building industry, whose leaders say most people want new homes on big lots in new communities.

But if nothing is done, the Brookings report claims, the split will only get worse. Poverty and crime will seep outward in the suburbs, and the region will be less economically competitive.

"I come away from this report feeling we can bridge the divide," Katz said in an interview. "The question is: Are we going to think regionally?"

Uneven Regional Growth

A new Brookings Institution report concludes that the region is sharply divided, socially and economically, between its eastern and western halves. The report calls for better balance that will bring more growth to the east, where it is needed, and less to the west, where it is causing problems. Among the evidence of the regional divide, according to the report:

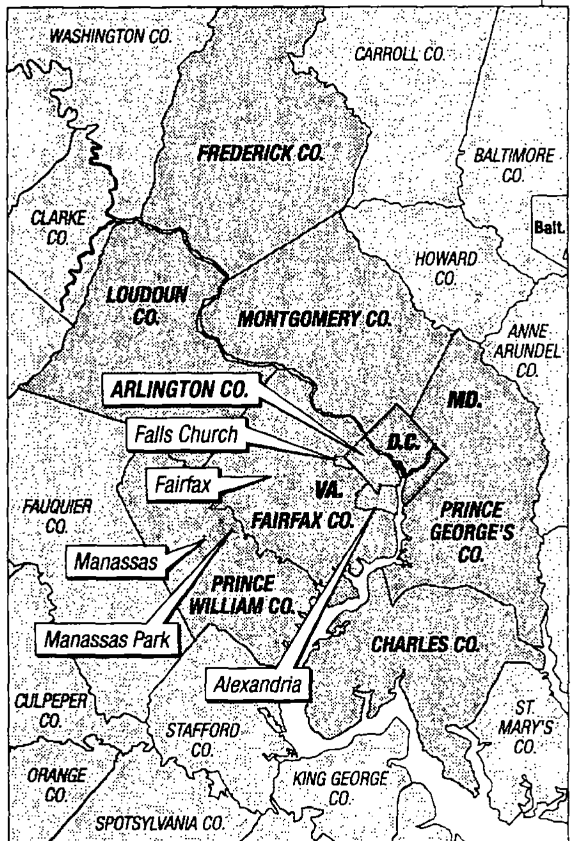
■ Most nonwhite residents live in only two communities, the District and Prince George's County.

■ More than half the region's low-income students live in the District and Prince George's County, but there also is a "widening pattern of distress" in other close-in suburbs.

■ There is a mismatch between new jobs and residents, with a labor shortage in western communities and a job shortage in eastern communities.

■ Western communities are drawing prosperous new residents but suffer from traffic jams, classroom trailers and stagnant prices for some existing housing.

SOURCE: Brookings Institution



THE WASHINGTON POST

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Six Principals in District Rated As Weak, Likely to Lose Jobs

PHOTOCOPY PRESERVATION

District Principals Under Review

Under D.C. School Superintendent Arlene Ackerman's revised evalu... principals were rated "unsatisfactory" and probably will leave their...

even more desperate than usual to regain the White House. So party managers have marshalled all the effort usually spread between many candidates behind just one.

But there is more to the influence of money than just the presidential vote. A huge amount of "soft money" is also being solicited for congressional contests, and it is increasing astronomically the cost of those races which matter. There are relatively few of these. Last time, in 1998, a quarter of the House seats were not even contested; campaigning was concentrated in relatively few places. This time, even though control of the House is up for grabs—the Republicans have only a six-seat majority—nearly all the soft money is likely to be spent in 30 or 40 seats, increasing the cost per race exponentially. This is a vicious cycle: cost is the main reason why so few seats are contested.

The rise in donations may breathe new life into proposals for campaign-finance reform sponsored by Mr McCain and his Senate colleague, Russ Feingold, which are due for debate in October. But compared with the fund-raising hurricane of the Bush campaign, such reforms, even if passed, are unlikely to have much effect.

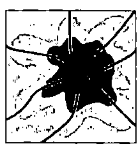
Though many lament the pernicious influence of money in American politics, it is worth remembering that at least part of the reason for the increase in donations is straightforward. There has been a dramatic fall in the real cost of the maximum campaign contribution. Set at $1,000 in 1974, it is now worth one-third of its value then. And there are some indications that new donors may be coming into politics as the entry price falls. Traditionally, the wealthiest 5% or so of the population, predominantly men, have dominated political financing. Mr Bush is certainly appealing to such donors; but nearly 80,000 people gave money to his campaign, and at least as many gave money to Mr Gore. These are many more donors than in the past. It is possible that new groups are among the contributors, though it is hard to be sure since no one asks them. The Republican Party says that 70,000 of the 460,000 donors to its institutional coffers gave it money for the first time this year. Such changes are a reminder that money has long oiled the machine of American elections for both good and ill.

Urban sprawl

Wired in the woods

ISSAQUAH, WASHINGTON

When it comes to unbridled urban growth, the new economy can be the chief culprit. The third in our series comes from the Pacific north-west



EACH October, the Seattle suburb of Issaquah holds a Salmon Days festival. Revellers wear fish-shaped hats, eat fish tacos, and tour a fish hatchery right in the middle of downtown Issaquah (pronounced Iss-uh-kwah) and adjacent to Issaquah Creek, a productive salmon-spawning stream. It may not be long, however, before Salmon Days becomes more than a yearly event. That is because the salmon that swim up Issaquah Creek now enjoy federal protection, courtesy of an Endangered Species Act listing for regional salmon species that was announced in the spring.

The listing has caused chaos on a wide scale. In this wildly growing part of the country, new roads, housing developments and shopping malls are already being held up while local officials try to work out whether their proposals are salmon-friendly enough. Ava Frisinger, the mayor of Issaquah, hopes that the city will escape being ruled by federal salmon mullahs. If it does, that will be about the only urban and suburban ill her little town will avoid.

Issaquah is at the epicentre of enormous changes that are shaking the Seattle metropolitan area. These include traffic congestion that is among the worst in the nation, air pollution, soaring housing prices, crowded schools and a growing sense that local government is almost helpless to solve these problems. Issaquah itself, a town of not quite 10,000 people, has another 40,000 people living chock-a-block at its boundaries. It sits astride Interstate 90, a six-lane highway, and at the confluence of several deep valleys that funnel cars from more remote suburban areas through a street grid laid out in the 1920s.

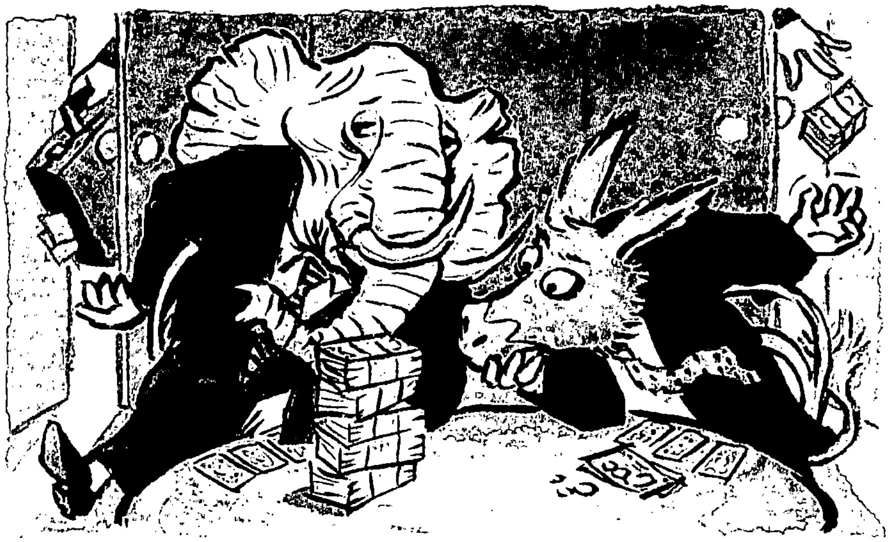
The town's small airport, which was once favoured by skydivers and glider pilots, is now a bustling retail mall with a Costco (one of those giant warehouses where loo rolls can be bought two dozen at a time), a giant Eagle hardware store, a Barnes & Noble and Italian restaurants. Newcomers to the area, eager to have their own piece of the wooded hills that surround Issaquah, have overwhelmed the land round the city with subdivisions jammed with $500,000 homes. Mount Ranier, the highest peak in the state, is often obscured by exhaust fumes.

The culprit—if a booming economy deserves the word—is an exploding high-tech industry powered by Microsoft, and dozens of spin-off companies founded by Microsoft alumni hoping to imitate their alma mater. Remove the high-tech boom, and the area is at best holding steady. Throughout the Pacific north-west, says Alan Durning, director of a Seattle-based environmental group that watches regional economic trends, the past 20 years have seen 500 lumber and paper mills shut, 8,000 fishing boats taken out of the water and 15,000 farms and ranches shut down. Employment at Boeing is roughly the same as it was in the late 1970s. Yet during that time the region has added an astonishing 3m jobs, a 56% increase.

These new "green-collar" jobs (Mr Durning's phrase) should be every economic planner's dream. The Microsoft campus, for instance, sprouts no smokestacks, has no pipelines dumping toxic waste into streams, and sucks up only as much energy as fluorescent light bulbs and PCs consume. The people who hold these jobs are almost universally green-minded, habitual recyclers of Coke cans and newspapers, eager to see forests and streams preserved so that they can hike, ski, kayak and mountain-bike.

Blame Bill Gates

Unfortunately, those same people also demand five-bedroom houses, cars (the favoured kind in Issaquah is the two-ton-plus, four-wheel-drive Ford Expedition) and plenty of places to shop. It is an irony, laments Paul Sommers, an economic-policy analyst with the University of Washington, that the same people drawn to a region because of its physical beauty, clean air and abundant water are perhaps



The costliest race in the world

WASHINGTON, DC

No presidential candidate has ever raised as much as George W. Bush by this stage. But the Democrats mean to catch up

SHOWING robust good sense, voters are not taking much notice of America's presidential election yet. Nearly two-thirds of them say they are paying little or no attention, according to the Pew Research Centre, a polling organisation. So having failed to capture voters' attention for something that is still 16 months away, politicians are competing for the next best thing: dollars now.

Famously, in the first six months of this year, George W. Bush, the governor of Texas, raised $37m for his campaign—nearly three times as much as anyone has raised before. Norman Ornstein, a political scientist at the American Enterprise Institute, thinks he could end up with $70m by the time the campaign is over. This puts other fund-raising efforts into the shade, but by any other standard, the front-runners are still rolling in cash: Al Gore, the vice-president, raised $17m in the first six months; Bill Bradley, the former New Jersey senator, took in $12m.

Compared with the $85m salary cost of running the New York Yankees baseball team, these are modest sums. But compared with previous elections, they are unprecedented. At the same stage of the 1996 election, the leading Republican contender had $17m while Bill Clinton had $9.5m. And donations to individuals are only a part of the picture: the Republican National Committee has raised $30m so far this year. More important still is so-called "soft money"—contributions towards indirect campaigns (advertisements supporting positions on particular issues, for example). These circumvent the fund-raising limits that apply to direct campaigns. Alarmed by Mr Bush's millions, the Democratic Party says it wants to raise $200m in soft money this year and next. Already, at this early stage, the 2000 election is proving the most expensive in American history—which is saying a lot.

Despite rumours to the contrary, money doesn't win American elections. Last time, the Republican candidate, Bob Dole, outspent Mr Clinton and lost. Still, it helps. And cash is already sharpening the contours of the race. Among Democrats, "Dollar" Bill Bradley's impressive fund-raising—he is a favourite on Wall Street—has shown him to be a credible challenger to Mr Gore. The vice-president's campaign is in trouble: he has already spent almost half the $17m he has raised. In contrast, George Bush has spent less than one-fifth of his stash. His stunning performance has paradoxically helped the next two richest Republicans: Steve Forbes, a publishing magnate who can finance his own campaign, and Senator John McCain, a hater of big-money campaigns, who continues to raise respectable sums partly because of his seniority in the Senate.

Mr Bush has reduced the rest to also-rans and has given unexpected prominence to one of the only real events of this year, a straw poll of Republican Party members in Iowa on August 14th. In terms of electoral formality, this vote is meaningless: no delegate will be picked as a result. But because money and opinion polls are the only yardsticks at the moment, several candidates whose fund-raising is failing, such as Lamar Alexander, a former Tennessee governor, and Dan Quayle, a former vice-president, could drop out if they do poorly in Iowa. Two other Republican hopefuls have already given up.

Money is having this winnowing effect because it increases a candidate's options. Mr Bush's war-chest will enable him to buy television time from coast to coast. He will be able to react to setbacks, blanketing a state with advertisements if need be. Others will not have that option. And by forgoing "matching funds" (by which candidates accept limits on total spending in exchange for federal money), Mr Bush hopes to gain a big advantage over his Democratic rivals at a vital stage in the campaign next year.

By the end of the primary season in March, Mr Gore and Mr Bradley may have spent most of their money in a bruising contest. Having accepted matching funds, they will also face spending limits. Mr Bush—assuming he has a cheap coronation rather than an expensive battle—would then be able to outspend his rival hugely as the race begins in earnest. That is what Mr Clinton did in 1996, damaging Mr Dole fatally.

Regardless of the particular outcome of the race, though, there is a broader question. Will the increase in the cost of the campaign affect the American electoral system permanently? Will Mr Bush's $37m prove, like the four-minute mile, to be a benchmark that every contender will have to surpass? Many say no, that this is a special case. The "front-loading" of the electoral calendar—which puts the important primary contests much earlier than usual—means that it is essential to get your money early. There will no longer be time, as there once was, to use success in the first primaries to boost contributions for later ones. Hence there is a shift in the timing of donations, as much as an increase in the total. Party leaders, aware of the pernicious effects of altering the calendar, are said to be already considering shifting a few primaries back for the race in 2004.

Moreover, some people argue that Mr Bush represents a special case because, after eight years of Bill Clinton, Republicans are

Woodstock, 1999 (with apologies to Bob Dylan)

Come gather round people
Wherever you roam
And admit that it's fun
To set fires far from home
And to squirt Evian
Till you're drenched to the bone.
If your shirt to you is worth keepin',
It needs the right label
Or you're not worth knowin'
For the times they are a-changin'.

Come brokers and bankers
Please heed the call
The eight-year recovery
Can't help us all.
If we need more cash
There's a hole in the wall;
If your money to you is worth savin'
Better rescue your ATMS out of this brawl,
For the times they are a-changin'.

Come mothers and fathers
Throughout the land
And don't criticise
What you can't understand.
Your sons and your daughters
Are beyond your command,
Your old road is rapidly agein'
Better drop *Mother Jones* and get on AOL
For the times they are a-changin'.

Come writers and critics
Who criticise with your pen
And wish you were 19
All over again,
In the glorious sixties
Stoned out of your brain,
Before you turned grey and Republican;
It's for youth to run riot
And for age to condemn
For the times they are (not much) a-changin'.

now doing more to destroy those things than 100 years of logging and heavy industry.

Issaquah is struggling to blunt the effects of these changes, with mixed results. For the time being it has slowed development until road construction within city limits can catch up with traffic growth. But that accomplishes little when hundreds of homes and new businesses pop up almost overnight outside Issaquah's jurisdiction. And local topography is no help. Steep hills and lakes cover much of the region, leaving few new pathways for a road grid that has not changed much for 50 years. Seattle itself has embarked on a costly light-rail project, but that will have next to no impact on Issaquah, miles beyond the nearest station. And since the high-tech economy, being independent of traditional city centres and communications, is apt to pop up anywhere, transport planning is virtually useless.

Solutions will be slow to come, if they come at all. One hopeful sign is the explosion of high-rise housing in Seattle and Bellevue, a closer-in suburban city that 20 years ago was much like Issaquah today. Such high-density housing—something Americans at last seem willing to buy—will do a great deal to reduce the push for more suburban sprawl, while making public transport more efficient. But if even a handful of the current batch of would-be Microsoft clones finds success, growth may multiply. Already enough office space for 50,000 workers is planned for a suburban area stretching from Issaquah to Redmond, some ten miles to the north, in an area that is impossible to serve with public transport.

Mayor Frisinger of Issaquah still believes that local government can cope with growth and yet preserve her city's small-town feel. But even she admits that the trends are not in her favour, and not just in the matter of development. Increasingly, she notes, residents pass around ideas and opinions via the Internet. In a meeting-happy city such as Issaquah—where a dispute over what colour to paint a barn went on for months—this means that the community's leaders must contend with a growing cacophony of voices. "It could be chaos," she says. "People change their minds so quickly, and decisions made three years ago are met with a reaction of, 'Well, this is now'."

As high-tech companies grow, even more voters are apt to be wired. Democracy at the speed of light, and traffic at the speed of a snail, should be an interesting mix. ■

Gambling

The trouble is, it makes money

NEW ORLEANS

JUST after midnight on July 1st, Louisiana's policemen shut down a third of the state's video-poker machines—about 5,000 of them—to comply with the people's wish, as expressed in a referendum. For the first time in years, an entrenched form of gambling had been abolished. The anti-gaming lobby, however, should not read too much into this victory. If they are looking for an easy way to roll back legalised gambling across the country, they will not find it in Louisiana.

Ever since the state's legislators legalised the game in 1991, video poker has been a boon to owners of bars, restaurants and lorry pull-ins—as well as to the tax man. But it has also been reviled as a consumer of money that could be better spent elsewhere, and has been given the brutal name of "video crack" because of its supposedly mesmerising effect on players. The game has had its full share of sensational headlines in the past eight years. There was the bribery scandal that landed a state senator in jail; the man accused of "spree killing", in which he robbed his victims to support his gambling addiction; even the toddler who died in a hot van while his baby-sitter played video poker in a bar. After this flood of bad publicity, the legislature put the issue to the voters in 1996, and 33 of Louisiana's 64 parishes voted to pull the plug on the machines.

Even so, it took more than two and a half years for the bans to take effect, because the legislators wanted to give video-poker operators time to adjust to the change. As that grace period drew towards its close, the operators appealed to the courts, and almost won the argument. Judge Janice Clark ruled in May that video-poker operators had not been able to run an effective campaign against the proposed ban because until 17 days before voting day a now-defunct state law forbade them to pool their money. She therefore set aside the referendum result in the parishes that had rejected video poker. However, higher courts overturned her decision, on the ground that the video-poker industry could have sued to stop the vote before it happened, but did not do so. The federal Supreme Court will not decide until October whether to hear an appeal.

As July 1st loomed, another group of video-poker operators, including two brothers who owned a bar in Baton Rouge, made a gallant 11th-hour attempt to turn back the tide. None of them had gone into the video-poker business until after the referendum, they explained, so they had not had a chance to challenge the ban before the vote. But why would anyone go into the video-poker business in places where it was about to be banned? Arthur Short, a video-poker machine distributor, says he "thought it would be obvious" that the referendum results would be ruled illegal. Full marks for chutzpah; but the judge ruled against them. Off the machines went, to the delight of gambling's foes.

Some video-poker operators have said they will lay off workers; others are cutting working hours. Although Mr Short did most of his business in St Tammany Parish, a conservative suburb of New Orleans that voted against video poker, he reckons that his company will survive—and that video poker will be back.

At least one veteran of the anti-gambling campaign agrees with him. C.B. Forgotston does not think that Louisiana's politicians have much principle when it comes to gambling. Like Mr Short, he believes that, in parishes which banned video poker, local officials will try to get it made legal again because they miss the tax money it used to provide. In Donaldsonville, a pro-gambling enclave in an anti-gambling parish, some local politicians have already filed a suit designed to keep video-poker machines working within their municipal limits.

Others have a simpler solution. To judge from East Baton Rouge, the largest parish to ban video poker, many players of the game are simply finding somewhere else to play it. East Baton Rouge has two riverboat casinos, which technically lie outside the parish and therefore can continue to operate. According to the state police, revenues on those boats rose 48% in the first ten days of July.

Rudy gets his own back

LITTLE ROCK

FOR 12 years, Hillary Clinton called the Arkansas governor's mansion home. On July 27th, Rudolph Giuliani, the mayor of New York, stood on the mansion's portico with the present governor of the state, Mike Huckabee, and the lieutenant-governor, Winthrop Rockefeller, and poked fun at her.

It seemed a fair cop. Mrs Clinton has been pondering a New York Senate campaign for months, presumably taking on Mr Giuliani (though he too has been coy). But the First Lady has never lived or worked in New York. Mr Giuliani can go one better than that, though; before Mrs Clinton got up his nose on his home turf, he had never even visited Arkansas.

Hi, y'all!

Earlier this year, however, he joked about running for the Senate from there. Republican leaders in Arkansas jumped at the chance. They could entertain the mayor and throw some money his way against a woman who, in their eyes, is not only a liberal but a carpetbagger in Arkansas too (arriving there, after all, as a hippy Yankee who would not even take her husband's name). It seemed to worry neither Mr Huckabee nor Mr Rockefeller that Mr Giuliani has leftish views on issues such as homosexual rights and abortion. His anti-Hillary glower was irresistible.

So, on a sweltering summer day, Mr Giuliani flew into Little Rock to attend a $500-per-person luncheon with 60 people at the Capital Hotel. The New York state flag was flying from the balcony; back home, the Arkansas flag was flying (to general astonishment) from New York's City Hall. Mr Giuliani and Mr Huckabee, who had never met before, fell on each other like long-lost friends. Both emphasised how good Republicans were as leaders, battling crime and big government. Mr Giuliani pointed out that being mayor of New York was much like being governor of Arkansas, apparently forgetting that the whole population of Arkansas (2.5m) is not much bigger than Brooklyn's (2.3m).

But the real bonding factor—whether admitted or not—was Mrs Clinton. Like her, Mr Giuliani put on a local cap and promised to "listen" to anything the people of Arkansas might care to tell him. They were too baffled to think of much, but the mayor enjoyed sitting in the shade of magnolias and drinking lemonade.

He left Little Rock with slightly more than $30,000, not a big haul for a famous politician; and Mr Huckabee was left with slightly more name recognition in New York, should he ever follow up his aspirations to higher office.

Weapons testing

Unfriendly fire

AFTER five decades of land, sea and air attacks, the small Caribbean island of Vieques still resists the world's greatest navy. The island, eight miles off Puerto Rico, has been bombed by American F-18 fighters, shelled by warships and invaded by hordes of US marines. Yet the 9,000 or so residents believe they may repel their foes. What chance have they?

The attacks, of course, are friendly ones: most of Vieques is a live firing-range used by the navy so that the marines may practise invading beaches. To make these manoeuvres more warlike, and to toughen the recruits, the navy fires live shells and drops bombs there. Roughly every other day the island is blasted with the sort of force rarely employed (for real) in other parts of the world.

And for good reason, says Peter Pace, commander of the marine forces in the navy's Atlantic fleet. He is responsible for training 92,000 marines and sailors, and so needs a good training ground. Vieques, he says, is a wonderful one. There are no commercial-shipping or air routes to disturb, no rare fauna to exterminate, no large populations nearby, and yet 22,000 acres (8,900 hectares), as well as deep waters are available to him.

But for decades Vieques's citizens have objected to the inconvenience, pollution and danger which the navy brings. The *Vieques Times* reckons that the naval headquarters at Roosevelt Roads "robs" 4m gallons of water each day from the local supply, while civilians go short. Then there is the noise of bombs and shells, and dangers from unexploded ordnance. "Bombing", says the *Times*'s editor, Charlie Connelly, "just is not good for the garden." Nor, for that matter, for the sea: he claims fishermen have been dive-bombed and their nets destroyed. In recent years, he says, marker bombs and dummy mines have landed near civilians.

The navy also admits, despite an earlier denial, that it has tested napalm on the site. "The use of napalm in 1992 was allowed on range in a routine exercise. Twenty-four canisters of napalm were used and landed in the live impact range," said a spokesman, Robert Nelson, on July 26th. "We did not deny it," he added. "We said we did not use it [any more]." Another spokesman suggested it had been used several times before 1992, and is routinely tested on the mainland.

More worrying for the local people was an accident on February 19th this year when the US Marine Corps fired 263 rounds of ura-

The Contract with America it ain't.

Moreover, unlike in the past, enthusiasm for tax cuts seems more marked among congressional Republicans than either the general public or even the party's presidential front-runner. If big tax cuts are to happen, the man most likely to sign them into law is not Bill Clinton but a future President George W. Bush. But, though he blandly says he favours lower taxes, the Texas governor's voice has been conspicuous by its softness in this tax debate. Reaganism it ain't either.

As for public opinion, that seems to be shaken by the tax proposals, not stirred. Asked to give their preference between cutting taxes and "saving Social Security", 75% of Americans chose the latter. Only if voters are asked to choose between tax cuts and new spending programmes once Social Security is guaranteed does a majority support cuts.

So why is the congressional leadership so enthusiastic about them? The answer is that after a miserable six months in which the Republicans have found themselves on the wrong side of more or less every public debate—gun control, restrictions on health-care companies, Kosovo—tax cutting is something almost all of them can rally round, albeit for different reasons.

Some moderates think the proposed tax cut too large: they want to hand back only about $500 billion. As senior a figure as Pete Domenici, the chairman of the Senate's budget committee, wants to avoid a confrontation with the president, arguing that half a tax slice is better than no bread. But most moderates have voted for the larger cut, as a negotiating step. Fiscal hawks think even the smaller figure too high. One of them, Mark Sanford of South Carolina, says, "This probably isn't the right moment for big tax cuts. But a lot of folks on the right flank are saying, 'Where's my Republican Party?' This is one way of saying 'Hey, we're still here.' " The hawks reckon Mr Clinton will veto the cuts.

And that, calculate the party's leaders, could help. Assume Mr Clinton carries out his oft-repeated threat to strike down the cuts, as seems likely. Republicans can then portray themselves as friends of the hard-working taxpayer, and Democrats as greedy big spenders. It would produce fiscal gridlock; but, as economic policy, that might be no bad thing. Alan Greenspan, the Federal Reserve's chairman, recently told Congress to "allow the surpluses to run for a while." He saw no cause yet for urgent decisions. And now Larry Summers, the Treasury secretary, says he will start using the surplus to start repaying the national debt.

As pure politics, it might not be bad, either. It would not have the grand appeal of Mr Reagan in 1980 or Mr Gingrich in 1994. It might even be a bit of a farce, making a grand gesture and reckoning it will be struck down. But farces have their uses. After all, the audience is assumed to leave in a good mood.

The heat

Summer's toll

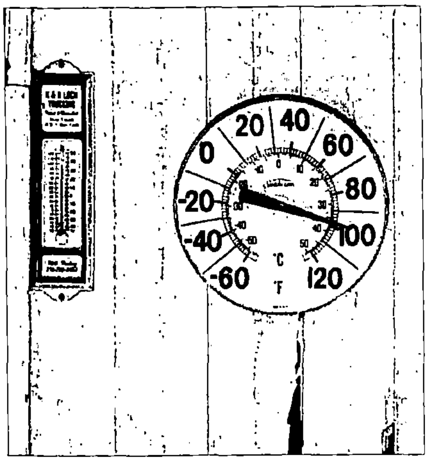
CHICAGO

YOUR correspondent was among the 300,000 people who took to Chicago's beaches last weekend in an attempt to find relief from some of the hottest weather the mid-west has suffered in the 20th century. Before the heat wave finally broke around Chicago, the temperature had hit 104 degrees Fahrenheit, or 40 Celsius to the decimal-minded. The heat index, taking in both heat and humidity, had reached a horrible 119.

More than 250 heat-related deaths have been reported in 21 states in the mid-west and the east of the country since July 19th. The Chicago area is hardest-hit: 100 people are known to have died of heat-related causes, and the medical examiner's office is still trying to find out whether that is really all.

Things could have been worse. In 1995, a heat-wave killed more than 700 people in the Chicago area alone. This time, the city was ready. The police went from door to door checking on the elderly and the lonely. Radio announcements advised people without their own means of relief from the heat to go to local libraries and fire stations, which had been converted into "cooling stations". In Washington, DC, the Clinton administration belatedly doled out another $55m to help the poor pay their electricity bills and buy air-conditioners and fans.

The heat that has been searing the eastern half of the country may at last be letting up, but much of the east coast remains as dry as a bone. The rainfall in areas from Boston down to Miami is 50-80% below normal. The agriculture secretary, Dan Glickman, has declared West Virginia and parts of Virginia, Maryland, Ohio and Pennsylvania to be federal disaster areas, which makes farmers who have suffered large crop losses from drought eligible for federal aid. The Agriculture Department rolls its eyes when asked to guess the total size of the loss.



Kills humans, ruins the crops

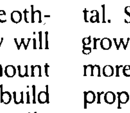
Burning July was one more kick in the shin for farmers already suffering from record low prices. This week Democrats in Congress proposed a $10.8 billion farm-relief package; Republicans countered with a $7.4 billion plan. It is not just a matter of economics. Iowa, a large farming state, has an important place in the voting ladder that leads up to next year's presidential election. The heat may be passing, but the hot air will linger on.

Urban sprawl

People want a place of their own

SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA

If more Americans liked apartment blocks, there would be less urban congestion; but they don't. The fourth in our series



BY 2020 California, already the most populous American state, is expected to be the home of over 45m people, about 11m more than it has now. To be sure, the Golden State covers a lot of space; only Alaska and Texas are larger. But much of that space consists of mountains and desert, and not all of the other parts can always be sure that they will have enough water. This limits the amount of land where people can confidently build their homes. The state's three most heavily populated areas—the Los Angeles basin, greater San Diego and the San Francisco Bay Area—are already starting to burst at the seams. The only region left that can realistically hope to take in large numbers of extra people is the Central Valley, which runs down the middle of the state like a depression left by Zeus's forearm.

The trouble is that the main cities in the valley, such as Fresno, Bakersfield and Sacramento, are already swelling with new growth. Not least Sacramento, which is also California's state capital. Since 1980, the city's population has grown from 276,000 to 396,200, an increase of more than 43%. And around Sacramento proper have sprung up a number of swiftly growing communities which bring the total population of the greater metropolitan area to 1.7m, a growth of nearly 14% in the past eight years.

The amount of land used for housing has grown even faster. The exact figures are hard to come by, since "greater Sacramento" cov-

The tax-cutters' song

WASHINGTON, DC

Ronald Reagan wouldn't recognise what the Republicans are up to

REPUBLICAN tax-cutters are being reminded that history repeats itself first as tragedy, then as farce. Ronald Reagan's tax cuts of 1981 made history. Newt Gingrich's government-busting Contract with America got embroiled in the tragedy of his own ambitions. Now Republicans are once more seeking to cut the state down to size, this time against a background of mistaken identities, raised voices and slamming doors.

Echoing President Reagan, who used to argue that federal money belonged to "taxpayers, not bureaucrats", Bill Archer, one of the main authors of the tax-cut proposals, says, "What this debate is about is downsizing the power of government." Republicans "believe the people can spend their money more wisely than the bureaucrats in Washington. If money is left in Washington, politicians will spend it every time. Tax cuts are the only defence."

So both the House and the Senate have voted to cut taxes by $792 billion over the next ten years, the biggest cut since Mr Reagan's. They want to cut all income-tax rates by one percentage point, reduce the top rate on capital gains from 20% to 18%, phase out inheritance tax on large estates (the "death penalty", Republicans call it) and provide relief from the "marriage penalty" under which husbands and wives often pay more tax together than separately.

All this is one side of a debate about the size of government in an age of budget surpluses. Republicans want to "starve the beast" by returning to taxpayers about 80% of the guessed-at $1 trillion of non-Social Security budget surpluses over the next decade. Democrats want to ensure that public-spending programmes are financed first before returning the rest—perhaps 30% of the money. "You have to ask, what do you want to get on defence, what do you want to get on Medicare, and you have to put first things first," says Jacob Lew, the White House budget director.

More subtly, as William Saletan has pointed out in *Slate*, an on-line magazine, Mr Clinton implicitly assumes that the government owns the surplus by portraying tax cuts as "spending" and by asking how Republicans would "finance" planned reductions. Conservatives argue that really the money belongs to the taxpayers, who hire the government to do things for them. Mr Clinton suggests the government should decide what to do with the surplus. Here is a fundamental difference of attitude between the two parties over the size of the state. So much for the middle way.

All the same, there are big differences between today's Republican tax-cutting zeal and the old-time religion of Messrs Reagan and Gingrich. Mr Reagan was set on rolling back the state, more or less regardless of fiscal circumstances—which turned out to be a huge deficit. This time, the budget surplus comes first: Republicans see it as a chance to cut taxes. This is an argument over sums of money as well as the role of government.

Nor is there much sign of the anti-spending ferocity of the past. Like a temperance preacher with a Bible in his hand but a bottle in his pocket, the Republicans have appended a startling range of business tax breaks to their proposals. These include a relaxation of some pension and health-plan regulations, permission for insurance companies to write off losses of affiliates against profits, and a tax credit for research-and-development costs which Silicon Valley loves. There is also help for fishing-tackle-box manufacturers and firms that convert chicken droppings into electricity. By amazing coincidence, the country's biggest tackle-box factory is in the constituency of the House speaker, and the main chicken-shit producers are in the constituency of the chairman of the Senate Finance Committee. John McCain, an old opponent of pork barrels, noting that Republicans had promised to change this sort of thing, says dryly, "I think it's fairly obvious that hasn't been the case."

Even if you exclude these boondoggles, Republicans are busy writing ordinary spending bills that could mean there might actually be no budget surpluses to hand back. The projected $1 trillion surplus over the next decade rests on the assumption that self-imposed spending limits called budget caps will be maintained. Will they? To meet the limits this year, Republicans are pretending with a straight face that $4.5 billion for next year's census is "emergency spending", and does not count against the caps. Such accounting tricks have become so egregious that some Republicans are now refusing to label recurrent budget items as emergencies. The problem is that, if you count them as ordinary spending, Congress will bust the caps. So "you have to change the law," says John Edward Porter, a senior Republican member of a spending committee. But, if you do that, congressmen have something like $20 billion-worth of new programmes waiting for approval. If they get it, there will be a deficit next year, not a surplus they can cheerfully return.

In short, while the congressional party as a whole is planning to cut taxes and government, some Republicans are simultaneously trying to spend the surplus, or at least part of it.

cause they are the most profitable, and homes for poorer families stay stuck on the drawing-board. To some extent this is encouraged by California's property-tax laws, under which expensive new homes provide far more tax to local governments than older, cheaper ones. As might be expected, Sacramento's expansion is driven by the housing demands of the well-to-do.

Still, there are a few gleams of light. Laguna West, a development built south of Sacramento at the beginning of the 1990s by Phil Angelides, was designed as a throwback to a time when neighbours talked over back fences and took the bus to work. It drew applause across the country. Mr Angelides may now be in a position to spread the gospel: he has become California's state treasurer.

More than 150 years ago, in 1848, a man called James Marshall was supervising the construction of a sawmill in the Sierra foothills when he noticed something glitter in a riverbed. That was the start of the famous Gold Rush, which ruined Marshall's employer, a landowner named John Sutter whose property in what is now the heart of metropolitan Sacramento was overrun by gold-mad prospectors. Sutter's ghost may be standing there now, fingers crossed that Sacramento can cope more successfully with the new rush of people heading towards it.

Och, ach, it's a friendly place

HAPPY, TEXAS

BACK in Europe, funny-sounding place-names such as Ramsbottom emerged slowly out of the feudal mulch. Not so in Texas. Here, names came as suddenly as the settlements. Admire the wry humour of the pioneer who called his new home Grit. And pity the macho cowboy who, thanks to an effete ancestor's whim, has to admit he hails from Twitty.

In Texas, place-names come in all styles. Marfa, a west Texas town bothered recently by lights said to come from alien spacecraft, was named after a character in one of Dostoevsky's novels. Eden and Utopia also fall into the ethereal category. Fate and Uncertain are darkly ambiguous, no doubt an attempt by the towns' founders to dampen the spirits of their more happy-go-lucky descendants. Flat, Flatonia and Levelland come straight to the point, as do Cactus and Notrees, a town so bald and remote that it resorts to decorating itself with tumbleweeds instead of trees at Christmas time.

Most towns in southern and western Texas have Spanish names, such as San Antonio and El Paso. But central Texas is dominated by Germans. There are New Baden, New Braunfels (named after its founder, Prince Carl von Solms-Braunfels), New Salem and New Ulm, not to mention Schertz, Schuler, Schroeder, Schulenberg and Schwertner. Scotland, naturally, did not take this lying down. It has provided, to name a few, Dundee, Edinburg (Texans have dropped the confusing h), McAllen, McGregor, McKinney, McLeod and, sandwiched between McLean and McClellan Lake, the town of Alanreed. Even Dallas shares its name with a village in the Scottish Highlands.

Most of Texas's heroes are well remembered. Turn to the map for Crockett, Travis, Austin and, of course, Houston (from Sam, governor and commander of the Texan army in the Mexican war). Alamo, Lonestar and Jacinto City (after the battle which won Texan independence from Mexico) have the same ring of patriotism. Only a few places—such as Washington, Taft and Roosevelt—grudgingly admit to a larger American patriotism. East of Dallas lies the town of Quitman, named after John Anthony Quitman, governor of Mexico after the Mexican-American war, and the only American ever to preside over Montezuma's palace.

Some names are pretty un-Texan. Humble, a suburb of Houston, would sit better in quietly spoken South Dakota than in the brazen Lone Star state. Impact, Cut-and-Shoot, Dimmit and Gun Barrel City are more like it.

Still, Moody and Petty aside, Texan place-names tend to have an upbeat flavour, as befits a state whose name is derived from an Indian word meaning "friendly". There are Energy, Smiley, Jolly and Joy. Best of all is Happy, a threadbare town of 588 souls set in the breezy, big-sky cattle country south of Amarillo. The name certainly cheered up your correspondent on a recent visit, but it is not easy to live up to. Despite the Happy Centre (where old folks hang out) and Happy High (not a marijuana farm but the town's school), Happyites seemed, that day at any rate, just a touch melancholy.

Community policing

Fighting crime, Japanese-style

COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA

IN A rough inner-city neighbourhood plagued with prostitution, drug-dealing and other messy things, a grey two-storey house with new red-brick stairs stands out like a beacon. This "rehabbed" building on Lady Street, always graceful in its lines and now tastefully renovated, makes a sharp contrast with the crumbling motel across the street. It is also notable for its inhabitants: two policemen who use identical one-bedroom flats in mainland America's first live-in *koban*, the Japanese for mini-station.

Opened earlier this summer, and modelled on Japan's little local police stations, Columbia's *koban* is an attempt to prevent crime by tackling some of the things that cause it: broken families, children who stop going to school, the failure of communities to help people at the end of their tether. By coming to the consumer, as it were, these two Columbia policemen—recent college graduates who volunteered for their rent-free rooms—have "a vested stake in the community", says Columbia's police chief, Charles Austin. It was Mr Austin, a veteran of 26 years of policing, who decided that South Carolina needed *kobans*. He had seen them when he was in Tokyo studying Japan's community-policing system in 1995. Puerto Rico, an island that is part of the United States, is also trying them out.

The *koban* is not the first creative idea to come from Mr Austin, who is studying to become a clergyman. In 1991, he arranged for police officers to be offered a loan at a modest 4% interest rate, and with no down-payment, when they move into a home within the city. They also get a bonus of $500 a year. More than a dozen policemen have accepted the offer, and officials say this move towards the front line has helped to cut crime.

On Lady Street, local people are encouraged to visit the carpeted first floor of the *koban* to report crimes. The building is used for neighbourhood meetings. It is intended to be a safe haven for youngsters and the elderly. It is also a work-station for social and educational services, with programmes designed to teach literacy to both children and adults. The *koban*'s officers, Taurus Sanders and Melron Kelly, walk their beat and visit the neighbours, offering tips on crime prevention and trying to calm troubled young people before they do anything foolish.

The experiment is based on the ideas of the Milton S. Eisenhower Foundation, of Washington, DC. During the past few years, non-residential *kobans* have been opened in a dozen cities, including Washington, Boston, Baltimore, Los Angeles, Memphis, Minneapolis and Philadelphia. Their aim is to reduce crime and violence, and the use of drugs; to improve school and job attendance; and to make it clear to the locals that they have policemen among them. In Columbia, it is also hoped that Lady Street's live-in *koban* will help the area's economy: the less crime there is, the more businesses may move in. If it works, Mr Austin thinks Columbia will soon have another one.

Fish catches man

SAN MATEO CREEK

ABOUT 50 miles south of Los Angeles, 30 steelhead trout are stopping traffic. The cars were due to run along Foothill South, the last piece of the toll-road network in southern California. But the appearance of the wayward—and endangered—fish in a creek along the proposed route may mean that it is never built.

Great, say its opponents. They point out that Foothill South, which is costing $900m, would slice an ugly wound through thousands of acres of ever-scarcer open space. San Mateo Creek, where the trout are, is the last free-flowing stream in the region. The last four miles of the freeway would intrude on it. This creek is the source of sediment needed by the famous nearby Trestles surfing beach, as well as being home to six endangered or threatened species. The Sierra Club calls the area one of 18 global "hot spots" where a vital ecosystem clashes with property development.

The freeway's supporters, led by the Transportation Corridor Agencies (TCA) and most local cities and towns, say it is badly needed. By 2003, according to forecasts, there will be 70,000 more commuters wanting to travel along this stretch of coast. Critics scoff at that; there seems no need for another six lanes of tarmac running parallel to Interstate 5 through Orange and San Diego Counties, and near the coast the traffic patterns have anyway shifted since Foothill South was proposed, moving inland to avoid the environmentally fragile shoreline. Besides, "other TCA toll ways are running 20-40% below forecast," says Dan Silver of the Endangered Habitats League in San Clemente.

None of these arguments cuts much ice with car-loving Californians. Will the trout persuade them? Foothill-haters hope so, but it seems unlikely. Scientists representing the TCA point out that steelhead trout are rarely seen that far south. They think this lot may just be lost—or even have been planted there. "If they're still there next year, then maybe protecting them is worth discussing," said one TCA official.

Seeing their chance, politicians have waded in. Ron Packard, a Republican who represents southern Orange County and northern San Diego County in the House of Representatives, managed to get a rider about Foothill South attached to a recent spending bill, exempting the toll way from further review by the Environmental Protection Agency. (That's the way to do it; nobody reads the small print in those things.)

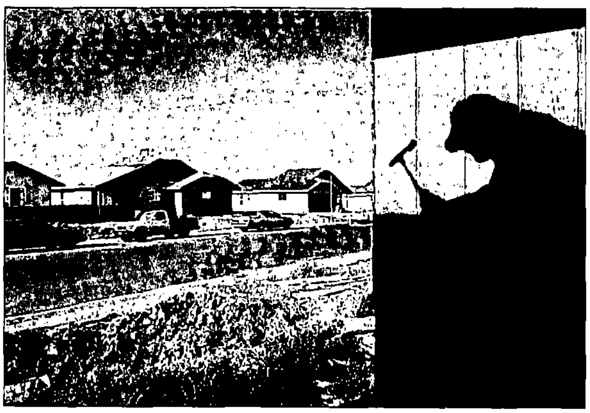
Tom Hayden, a famously left-wing Democratic state senator, is pushing from the other side. Having recently discovered that cities and counties throughout California have plans to run new highways through most of the state parks, Mr Hayden has set a bill to stop them on its way though the state Senate. It is likely to pass the Senate but get derailed in the more conservative lower chamber, where it will come up against powerful property developers, as well as the immense momentum TCA has gained after years of planning the Foothill South freeway.

And the creek and the trout, the cause of the trouble? No sign of either just now. Like most streams in arid southern California, the San Mateo Creek runs only in the winter. It will take another six months to find out if those steelhead trout will return, like the swallows at nearby San Juan Capistrano, and maybe block the road.

ers territory in four separate counties, which do not always work smoothly together. But take a drive around the area in your car and you will swiftly realise that most of the new residential building is of the one-house-on-a-large-piece-of-land variety. "Dysfunctional sprawl," Andy Sawyer, a former chairman of the Environmental Council of Sacramento, angrily calls it.

There is something of the old West's slapdash approach to nature in the way Sacramento's growth is taking place. Whereas home-owners in Los Angeles and San Francisco must carefully watch how much water they consume if they want to avoid a stiff surcharge, Sacramento's people have no limit on the amounts they use to wash their cars, fill their swimming-pools and keep their lawns lushly green. The approach to land-use can be just as cavalier. Developers wheel and deal in the halls of the state legislature. A few years ago, one group promised to bring a major-league baseball franchise to Sacramento in exchange for housing-development rights and a flood-control project on land that was previously pasture. The baseball team never turned up (though, admittedly, a basketball team did), but the developers got the approvals they wanted.

Urban growth is also affecting the quality of Sacramento's air, which is already dirtier than that of most of the country's metropolitan areas. The further spread of "dysfunctional sprawl" will make it even worse, as people have to drive farther and farther to get from home to work and back. It was the prospect of a cleaner environment than those of Los Angeles and San Francisco—and shorter rides to the office—that brought new businesses to Sacramento, many of them high-tech companies that preferred it to Silicon Valley. Now that advantage is in danger of being lost.



The builder eats away the open land

Professor Robert Johnston, of the department of environmental studies at the University of California campus in Davis, a Sacramento suburb, says the area could comfortably take more people if it had more apartment blocks and condominiums. Alas for his hopes, "not-in-my-backyard" distaste for such buildings means there are precious few of them. And some apartment buildings which did get built soon got converted into more lucrative offices.

Mr Johnston reckons that the heart of the problem is the lack of a regional mechanism to pull together the work of the various planning agencies in the area's four counties. The four do things in very different ways, with Yolo County's respect-the environment, plan-for-the-future approach at one extreme and El Dorado County's "Wild West free-for-all" at the other. Sacramento County and Placer County wobble in between.

He also points a finger at the fact that California has no fair-share housing law. The result is that, although developers often promise to include low-cost housing as part of new developments, the expensive houses generally get built first be-

The criminal unborn

CHICAGO

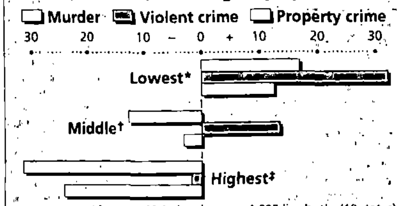
WHO would have thought the debate over abortion in America could become any more inflammatory? Now it has. John Donohue of Stanford University Law School and Steven Levitt, an economist at the University of Chicago, have released the results of an unpublished paper* that attributes as much as half of the sharp drop in American crime rates in the 1990s to the 1973 *Roe v Wade* decision by the Supreme Court that legalised abortion throughout the United States.

The authors argue that the connection between abortion and crime is chillingly simple: a steep rise in abortions after 1973 has meant that many individuals prone to criminal activity in the 1990s were never born. There are two reasons for this. First, abortion shrinks the number of people who reach the age where they are most prone to commit crimes. Second, and more important, abortion is not random. Teenagers, unmarried women and blacks are more likely than average to have abortions; they are also more likely to have children at risk of committing crimes later in life. Similarly, women with unwanted pregnancies are less likely to be good parents and may do things during pregnancy, such as take drugs, that make future criminality more likely.

The authors present three strands of evidence to support their conclusion. First, the precipitous drop in crime across the country coincides with the period in which the generation affected by *Roe v Wade* would have reached the peak of its criminal activity, at the age of 18-24. Second, the five states that legalised abortion in 1970, three years before *Roe v Wade*, were the first to experience the drop in criminal activity. And, last, states with high abortion rates from 1973 to 1976 have seen the largest fall in crime since 1985, even after checking for other factors such as incarceration rates, racial composition and income. (In contrast, there is no relationship between abortion rates in the 1970s and crime before 1985, when abortion-affected groups had not yet reached criminal age.)

Common sense

Crime, 1985-97, % change, by abortion rate



*Average 46.1 abortions per 1,000 live births (10 states)
†Average 212.7 abortions per 1,000 live births (31 states)
‡Average 507.8 abortions per 1,000 live births (10 states)
Source: "Legalised Abortion and Crime"

The authors reckon that a 10% increase in the abortion rate is associated with a 1% decrease in crime; current crime rates would be 10-20% higher if abortion had not been legalised. Using current estimates for the social cost of crime, the authors estimate the concomitant social benefits of abortion to be in the order of $30 billion a year. They also predict that crime rates will continue to fall by 1-2% a year for 15-20 years as the full effects of legalised abortion are felt.

The premises of the paper all seem reasonably sound. It is by putting them together that the authors of the paper have managed to shock a lot of people, by no means all of them in America.

* "Legalised Abortion and Crime". June 24th, 1999, unpublished.

bought a downtown warehouse for $1m, turned it into 40 apartments, and sold all of them for $500,000 apiece. Chicago issued more than 25,000 residential and commercial building permits in 1998, up from 10,000 in 1993. The price of existing houses in Lincoln Park, one of the city's best neighbourhoods, has climbed 26% in two years.

This is sustainable, market-driven development, says Mr Katz. But in many cases, he points out, the government made the first investments that later attracted private capital. Milwaukee spent $9m to build a riverside walk that had been designed in 1904 by a famous urban architect but never constructed; the project spawned $50m in private development. Brookings has promulgated a list of "10 steps towards a living downtown". Most of the suggestions are common sense: save historic buildings, protect open space, make housing a priority, put things such as athletic stadiums and museums downtown.

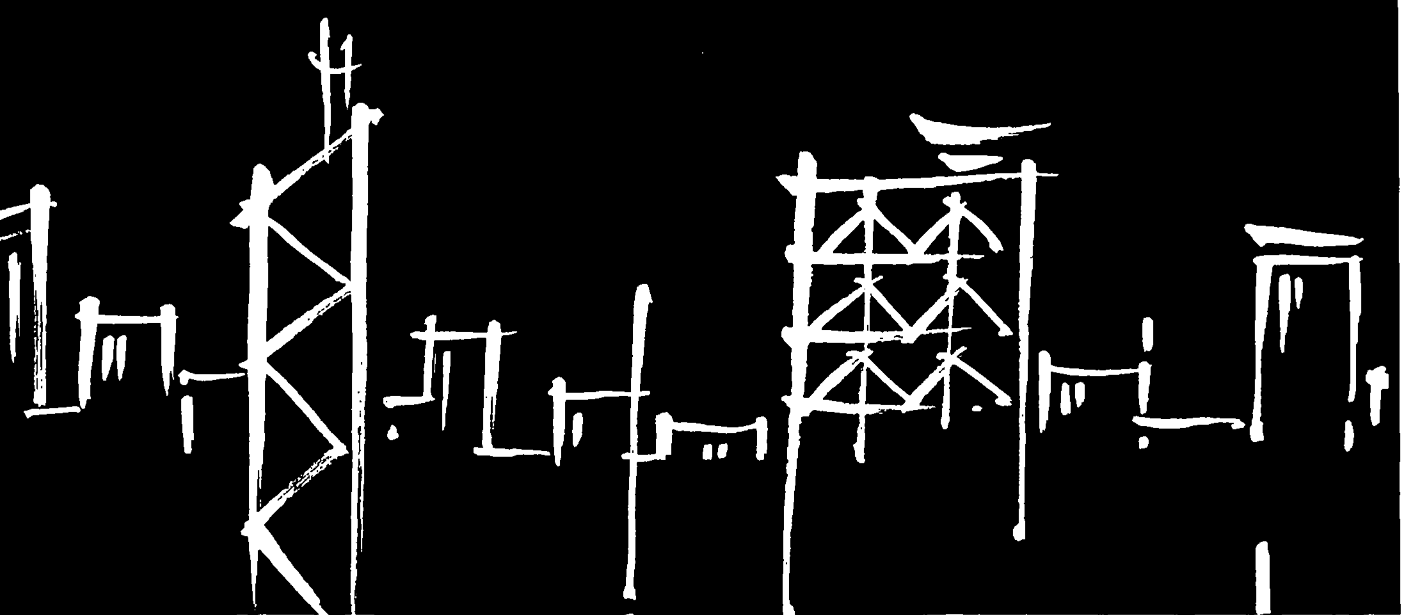
But what about families with children? Cities have the potential to be child-friendly, says Mr Norquist. They are designed around blocks with pavements; they can support museums, libraries, parks. But schools matter more than any of that. Milwaukee has a path-breaking school-choice programme, but only poorer residents can take part. Mr Norquist would like to see those income caps lifted entirely.

A number of mayors, including Richard Daley in Chicago and Dennis Archer in Detroit, have wrested control over their schools away from independent school boards in the hope that reforms will keep middle-class residents from leaving. Some of these systems have made impressive gains, but better is not necessarily good enough for keen parents. Lincoln Park High School, one of the best public high schools in Chicago, offers 13 advanced placement courses (classes that allow bright students to work towards college credit). New Trier, a suburban high school, offers nearly twice as many.

Cities would also benefit from a more development-friendly policy towards brownfields, abandoned industrial properties in need of cleaning up, says Mayor Helmke of Fort Wayne. Environmental laws make the new owner liable for toxic chemicals that may have been left behind on the property 50 years ago. "You get in the ownership chain, you pick up some of the liability," Mr Helmke explains. Until the incentives for redeveloping such properties change, it will be far safer for a developer to plough under a suburban soyabean field 30 miles from the city.

Urban life will never be for everyone, says Mr Norquist, who considers himself a "new urbanist". But it has at least become a respectable choice, which should not be a surprise. Cities have been the home of culture, religion and learning in all civilisations. The American flight to the suburbs over the past 50 years has been the real aberration.

...or you could plough up Illinois



to win a country-wide election. But it contains a danger. Because he has not yet been tested nationally, there is a risk that Republicans will crown him as their contender next year only to discover too late that he cannot withstand the rigours of a presidential election.

Already, the makings of the dirty war are discernible. The leader of the Democrats in the Senate, Tom Daschle of South Dakota, has become the first national politician to call for more scrutiny of Mr Bush's colourful past. The governor has so far refused to dignify questions like "When did you stop taking cocaine?" with an answer. But this calm silence may be hard to maintain in the heat of a long election campaign.

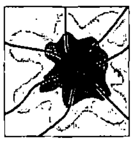
The real question about Iowa, therefore, is whether it will provide Mr Bush with a challenge. A crushing victory will not do that. A strong showing by a few of his opponents—or merely one—just might.

Urban sprawl

Aren't city centres great?

CHICAGO

Not all America's population movements are centrifugal. The fifth in our series looks at a small, but significant, shift in the other direction



A BOOMLET is going on in America's cities. This year, the Brookings Institution and the Fannie Mae Foundation examined 26 cities and found something that would have been inconceivable a decade ago: every one of them expects its downtown population to grow by 2010. Houston projects that its central-city population will quadruple; even Philadelphia, which has lost 600,000 people since 1950, foresees a 13% growth by 2010. Chicago expects a whopping 32% jump.

The data tell only part of the story. The survey asked about projected population growth in and around the central business districts. Most American cities still have deeply blighted pockets and many are losing population overall. The bulk of job growth is still in the suburbs, as Bruce Katz, director of the Brookings Institution Centre on Urban and Metropolitan Policy, points out. Still, the most desirable parts of many American cities are thriving, and therein lies one recipe for dealing with urban sprawl: keep people in cities and entice suburban residents to move back.

Why are more Americans abandoning their love affair with far-flung suburbs and shopping malls? Demographics is one reason. Young professionals are marrying and having children later, allowing them to live in the city longer before buying a minivan and moving out. At the same time, "empty-nesters", couples who no longer have children living at home, are rediscovering the appeal of urban life. Indeed, the very excesses of the suburbs—big houses on big plots—make them less attractive for older couples. "These are people who don't want to mow yards," says Paul Helmke, mayor of Fort Wayne, Indiana, and former head of the country's Conference of Mayors.

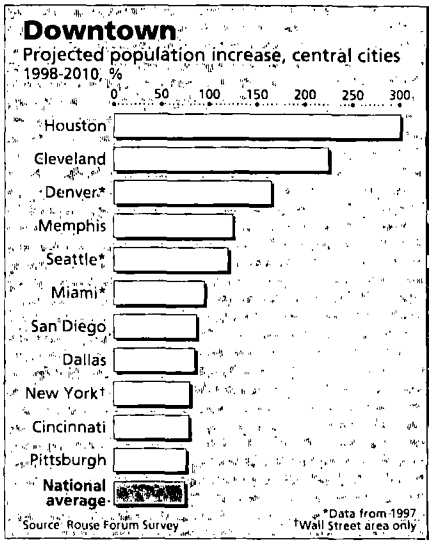
Urban living also has a new lustre because crime has plummeted. "People will not expose themselves to danger," says John Norquist, mayor of Milwaukee and author of "The Wealth of Cities". Milwaukee has not had a single homicide downtown in seven years. The ten largest American cities have seen an average drop in violent crime of 34% since 1991. Jerry Brown, a perennial Californian politician, once called America's incarceration binge "a strategy to control the surplus population in a capitalist system that is breaking down". Now that he has been elected mayor of Oakland and is trying to turn the city round, he has a different view. He told the *Wall Street Journal* recently that more criminals must go to jail and stay there.

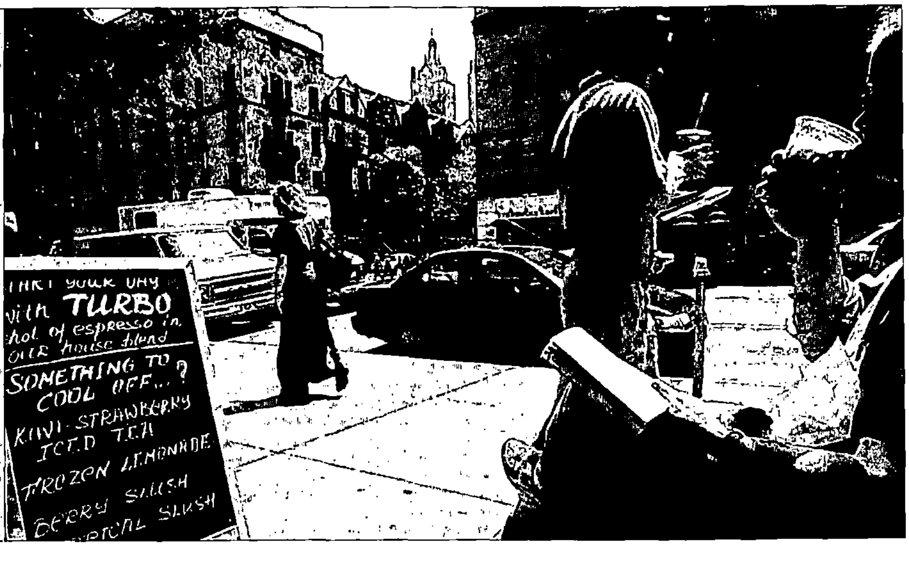
The labour market has also changed the urban-suburban dynamic. Companies fled to the suburbs on the assumption that an endless supply of white-collar workers would find their way to the office, wherever it happened to be. Meanwhile, urban planners pronounced that technology would render the density of cities obsolete.

Both those assumptions have proved wrong, particularly in the high-tech industry. Silicon Valley is proof that there is an advantage to being close to customers, suppliers and other firms in the industry. As for workers, the young programmers and executives who make up the information-technology sector prefer an urban lifestyle that is only a skateboard-ride away from the office. Ubid, an on-line auction company, has announced plans to move its headquarters from a suburb outside Chicago back into the city to "attract the right kind of talent". Workers everywhere have made it clear that they are tired of sitting in traffic on their way to offices that are nowhere near public transport.

Meanwhile, cities have rediscovered their comparative advantage: they are the natural hub of culture, the arts, good dining, sports and entertainment. Successful downtowns are "24-hour cities", says Mr Katz. "These are fun places to live."

Indeed, developers who have made a fortune building subdivisions on farmland now smell a profit in the city. Milwaukee has built 2,000 new housing units downtown in the past three years. Mayor Norquist tells the story (admiringly) of a developer who





Imported brains

Alien scientists take over USA!

GIVE her your tired, your poor, your huddled masses, yearning to do post-docs and patent drugs galore; the wretched refuse of your teeming labs shall find funding on this golden shore. Since the 1970s, a lot of the immigrants coming to the United States have arrived with PhDs burning holes in their pockets. As a study published in this week's *Science* magazine shows, America has incorporated this influx of talent so well that the top ranks of its scientific establishment are now replete with foreign-born workers.

Sharon Levin of the University of Missouri and Paula Stephan of Georgia State University took a look at more than 4,500 top-rate scientists and engineers who practise their craft in the United States. After checking how many of these had been born or educated abroad, they reckon that the most accomplished scientists in America are disproportionately foreign.

The two economists began by consulting the membership rolls of the National Academy of Sciences and the National Academy of Engineering—America's top scientific and technological clubs—for the past 20 years. They also included the authors of the papers and patents cited most frequently in scientific literature. Lastly, they culled lists of scientists from the boards of selected American biotechnology firms.

This dream team of researchers is one that befits a nation of immigrants. In almost all of the above categories, across almost all disciplines, the proportion of foreigners is greater than it should be considering their proportion of the scientific community as a whole. For instance, in 1980 only about a fifth of the scientists in America (those with doctorates, at any rate) had been born abroad. Over the subsequent decade, 60% of the American-based authors of the most-cited papers in the physical sciences were foreign-born, as were nearly 30% of the authors of the most-cited life-science papers. Almost a quarter of the founders or chairmen of the biotechnology companies that went public in the early 1990s also came originally from outside the country.

The main victims of all this, according to Ms Levin and Ms Stephan, are Germany and Britain. Superficially, the reason is not hard to find. It is money. British spending on research and development, as a fraction of GDP, slumped this year to a record low of 1.8%. Germany's was 2.4%. In America, it was 2.6%. Westward ho, then, after the money. Hoping to check the outward flow, a lobby group, Save British Science, has been pushing the British government to double its spending on science over the next nine years. Germany has pledged to double its spending by 2004.

But that may miss the point. The proportion of research financed by the taxpayer is falling in almost all industrial countries. It is private spending that is rising. But Europe is behind America here, too: and that is not so obviously open to a quick government fix.

Europe is not alone in its worries. China and India are also watching the American statistics, since the 2000 census is expected to show a fairly sharp increase in the supply of immigrant scientists from there, too. Skilled Asian immigrants are snapping up visas as fast as America can dole them out. In California's high-tech industries, Asians already hold over 50,000 jobs and produce $17 billion-worth of revenue.

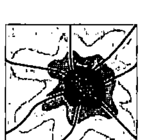
So, as other countries watch their talent wooed away, America is left to cope with an embarrassment of riches. But every silver lining has its cloud. If foreign scientists are so successful in America, it follows that at least some native researchers are losing out in the competition for senior positions. Opposition to immigration has classically come from the bottom rungs of American society. Is a nativist backlash possible in the quiet groves of academe as well? ■

Urban sprawl

Not quite the monster they call it

WASHINGTON, DC

The constant spreading out of America's cities seems expensive and unfair. Yet sprawl is still a defensible idea. The sixth and last of our series



THE phrase "a tax on jobs" is usually an insult to some revenue-raising scheme that increases the cost of labour by mistake. In Portland, Oregon, it is an exact description of city policy. Intel, the world's largest chip maker, has recently agreed to pay the county $1,000 a year for each new person it hires once its regional workforce has increased by 1,000. And this is not for some paperclip-making factory. Intel is Portland's largest employer and the area contains the company's biggest chip-making facility, the home of the Pentium III. It seems almost un-American.

Why has a hyper-competitive company (whose boss once wrote a book called "Only the Paranoid Survive") agreed to pay for the privilege of creating jobs? Because it is based in Portland, headquarters of the reaction against "anything-goes" development. And because all over America, for the past year, people have begun to worry about the unfettered expansion of jobs, factories, houses, offices, roads and shops that goes by the name of "sprawl".

Suddenly, sprawl has started to spread itself all over America's public agenda. The Republican governor of New Jersey, Christine Todd Whitman, calls the preservation of open space her most important task. The Democratic governor of Maryland, Parris Glendening, says that, education apart, "controlling sprawl is the most important issue facing us in terms of what our quality of life is going to be."

Almost everybody with a voice that needs to get heard seems to agree. Early this year, Vice-President Al Gore announced some tax breaks to help suburbs buy parks and build public-transport systems. Last November, voters approved 173 local referendums to limit suburban sprawl by, for example, allowing the purchase of farms near cities or by imposing boundaries restricting urban growth to particular spaces. It all seems to confirm a widespread view that sprawl—with its "mushburbs", strip malls and cities 100 miles wide—is wasteful and ugly: "dumb growth", not the smart kind that Messrs Gore and Glendening like.

Yet at the same time people are flocking to these malls, highways and mushburbs. Indeed, they may be doing so more enthusiastically, more wastefully and in more sprawl-creating ways than in the past. In 1920, there were roughly ten people per acre in America's cities, suburbs and towns. By 1990, there were only four. In areas built since 1960, there are just over two. So, if people want to spread themselves out, why call it wasteful and ugly? The usual answer is that it damages parts of the American landscape, and that those who benefit from it do not pay its real cost.

Some argue that sprawl erodes valuable farmland, threatening agriculture. According to the American Farmland Trust, the country loses about 50 acres of prime agri-

Ah, if he could really be The King

becomes, in wrestling lingo, a Battle Royale.

With almost two months to go before October 7th's election, the incumbent, Willie Herenton, is seemingly out in front of the crowded field. Running for his third term, Mr Herenton is the first black mayor of a city that is now 55% black, and has a brimming campaign chest. For the first time, though, he is facing a black opponent—and one whose name carries a good deal of clout in Memphis. City Councilman Joe Ford is a member of the Ford machine, a family that has had its hand in Memphis politics for decades. Mr Ford is the brother of the family's present patriarch, Harold Ford, who was Tennessee's first black congressman and is now running his brother's campaign chiefly, say some, in order to bring down Mr Herenton.

The rivalry between the mayor and the Ford family has grown especially bitter in recent weeks. At the candidates' first public get-together, Harold Ford leapt to his feet in the audience and shouted at Mr Herenton. The latter had the (lukewarm) endorsement of the Fords in his first campaign for mayor in 1991, but things turned sour over the years as the mayor and Mr Ford got into a battle over, among other things, the congressman's influence in city affairs. The congressman even considered running against Mayor Herenton himself, but decided instead to mastermind his brother's bid for City Hall. The mayor retorts that so much power in one family's hands (Harold Ford senior's son, Harold Ford junior, has taken his father's place as Memphis's congressman) is a bad thing.

The opinion polls say that the incumbent has a solid lead over all his challengers. Yet a closer look at the numbers reveals that Mr Herenton's support may be dwindling. According to a poll taken in July, although the mayor leads Mr Ford by 13 percentage points, only 38% of those polled said he deserved to have another term in office. In addition, the poll showed that the mayor's support among whites is slipping, and that Mr Ford may be taking from him the backing of some of Memphis's powerful unions. This matters because, Mr Ford also being black, Mr Herenton cannot rely solely on black voters (over 90% of whom voted for him in 1995) to carry him to victory on voting day in October.

David Madlock, of the University of Memphis, thinks that, although Mr Herenton can still win, he has yet to provide the voters with a clear picture of what he would do in a third term. He is just blandly reciting his modest list of accomplishments during the past eight years. Carey Hoffman, a spokesman for the mayor, equally blandly explains that Mr Herenton's aims will become clearer as the election draws closer.

The biggest problem for both the mayor and Mr Ford is the sheer number of other candidates. Even if each of them gets only a modest percentage of the vote, the total will eat deeply into the front-runners' support. The one who may cut the deepest is Jerry "The King" Lawler, a professional wrestler who is now the commentator on a wildly popular television wrestling programme. Like the governor of Minnesota, Jesse "The Body" Ventura (who encouraged him to run), Mr Lawler believes that a well-known name, and the appeal of an outsider, can collect quite a lot of votes. Mr Lawler shares with the Minnesota governor a penchant for direct talk ("I'd like to see things from your point of view, but I can't get my head up my rear end"). The popularity of professional wrestling should broaden his appeal to white and black voters alike.

Given that only 36% of eligible Memphians voted in the previous election, Mr Lawler's most powerful weapon may be an ability to draw voters to the polls who would otherwise have stayed at home. By keeping out of the bickering between the mayor and the Ford family, he is presenting himself as an alternative to politics-as-usual. Besides "The Body" in Minnesota, other wrestlers have refashioned themselves as politicians. Think of Tom "The Cullman Comet" Drake in Alabama, and Jerry "Kahn the Warlord" Kennett in North Carolina. For "The King", there are quite a lot of cheering precedents.

Pass the salt

TAMPA BAY, FLORIDA

A STATE built upon a vast swamp should hardly want for water. But for Florida, as for a growing number of American states, water is a perennial preoccupation and the main natural limitation to growth and development. It is a subject that is teasing some ingenious new ideas out of American scientists (see page 70). But the United States has always been good at using human ingenuity to beat natural obstacles, and water is no exception. A few miles south of Tampa Bay, a desalination plant is about to be built which will provide the cheapest drinking water ever extracted from the sea.

The plant will be built jointly by Stone & Webster, a big engineering firm, and Poseidon Resources, a company that manages infrastructure projects, for Tampa Bay Water, Florida's largest wholesale water supplier, which gave its final approval in July. America's largest, the plant will at first produce 25m gallons of drinking water a day at a wholesale cost of $1.71 per 1,000 gallons, or 45 cents per cubic metre, in the plant's first year of life. The average cost during the contract's 30-year life will be $2.08 per 1,000 gallons, a price that almost matches other options such as cleaning up wastewater (derided in Florida as "recycled sewage"). Water from the new plant will also cost only pennies more than water from wells, and without causing the environmental harm that has come from draining the water table.

The cost has been whittled down in several ways. One factor, says Peter Hofmann of Stone & Webster, has been the innovative public-private partnership: Tampa Bay Water ran an unusually open competition, specifying its requirements but not the way they should be met. A second factor has been that the new plant will be built beside an existing power station, which not only provides inexpensive electricity but also reduces the cost of disposing of the saline concentrate: the power station already spews out 1.4 billion gallons of water a day into the bay, which will easily dilute the 19m gallons of concentrate from the desalination plant.

Tampa Bay is already much less salty than even the Gulf of Mexico. That has made it possible to apply reverse-osmosis technology, less expensive than the distillation process which is usually used for seawater. And the membranes which are used for the process have become cheaper because more desalination plants are being built around the world. No surprise, then, that Mr Hofmann says he is "getting a lot of calls" and that a delegation from Singapore has just visited Tampa Bay. Singapore has plans for a 36m-gallons-a-day desalination plant—but the water is likely to cost around $8 per 1,000 gallons. Glug.

cultural land to development every hour. Where Old Macdonald had a farm, a hamburger joint now stands. The new McDonald's may be uglier than a billowing landscape but the notion that this is wrong because it damages farming is preposterous. Farmland is required not for its own sake, but to grow food. There is currently a depression in American farming because over-production has driven prices down to levels which, in some cases, have not been seen since the 1930s. The country does not need to grow more food on more land.

The price paid

The inner city is a more plausible victim. Over the past three decades, urban poverty has grown distinctly worse and the number of people living in ghettos where 40% of the population is below the poverty line has doubled. This is the corollary of the evacuation of city centres by the middle classes, who take jobs and tax revenues with them. But sprawl changes the nature of the division between rich and poor, separating them physically. It does not create that division; and, if sprawl were stopped tomorrow, it would do little to narrow the gap. The most effective anti-poverty measures are better education and more job-training.

The connection between sprawl and crime is also less clear-cut than it seems. There is a link, unquestionably. But it is not clear which is cause and which effect. In 1992, a survey of those who had left New York found that fear of crime was easily the most common reason for decamping to the suburbs. Crime causes sprawl, as well as the other way round. Here too the solution may lie not in anti-sprawl policies but in anti-crime ones. And, of course, that is what has happened. Crime rates in many cities have fallen sharply in the 1990s. Lo and behold, the population of many city centres has begun to rise again.

Perhaps the most surprising victims of sprawl are the suburbs themselves. Ever since April's killing of schoolchildren in Littleton, a rich suburb of Denver, Americans have been agonising that the suburban bliss they sought—large houses, clear air, better schools, less crime—was turning sour. Older suburbs are starting to suffer from some of the crime and joblessness that afflict inner cities. And, as outer suburbs have proliferated, Americans have had to drive farther and farther to work, home or the shops. The total number of passenger miles increased from under 1.5 trillion a year in 1980 to 2.4 trillion in 1995. An index that measures road congestion rose 22% over the same period.

In short, sprawl does impose some costs on particular groups in America, especially those in the inner cities. More subtly, it may also be inefficient in the sense that it benefits from subsidies that make it even more sprawly than it would otherwise have been.

First, transport policies. Without America's sustained public spending on highways—well over $1 trillion in the past 20 years—the growth of the suburbs would not have been possible. For obvious reasons, spending on roads is disproportionately greater in suburbs than in city centres: almost 50% higher in Philadelphia, according to one study. Maryland's state planning director called the roads programme an "insidious form of entitlement—the idea that state government has an open-ended obligation, regardless of where you choose to build a house or open a business, to be there to build roads, schools, sewers."

Next, the structure of American local government. Almost every metropolitan area is divided into dozens, sometimes hundreds, of local administrative units (265 in Chicago, 780 in New York). Except in Portland and Minneapolis, each local government is free to make its own decisions about whether to permit the building of a new office block or shopping mall, regardless of any cost the decision imposes on neighbours. And the locality gets to keep any property-tax revenue that results. The upshot is a competition for commercial development that pulls new buildings towards richer suburbs and out of city centres, which have ill-trained workforces and heavy welfare burdens and cannot afford favourable tax treatment for developers. Around 70% of American jobs are now in suburbs.

Third, the tax system. In America, all interest payments on your home can be offset against federal income tax. The profit on house sales can also be exempt from capital-gains tax. The cost of this housing relief is large: $58 billion last year. By lowering the real cost of owning a house, it encourages people to buy bigger properties, which makes housing lots larger, and suburbs even more sprawling. One study has suggested that the tax system alone reduces the population density in urban areas by 15%.

More than that, it can change the pattern of metropolitan development because of the way local governments react. Left to itself, the housing market should ensure that at least some of those who are now marooned in inner cities should be able to move to the suburbs, where land is cheaper. But this has not happened. Instead, suburban governments have insisted that plots of land be large, increasing the cost of suburban property and preventing the poor from moving out. In sum, the growth of sprawl is not just a matter of personal preference. It is also a product of public policy.

Yet whether you can really conclude from this that sprawl is wasteful and ought to be discouraged is another matter. Clearly, it imposes some costs; clearly, some policies distend the process artificially. But these are marginal features. As Pietro Nivola of the Brookings Institution writes, "Whatever our sprawling suburbia's multiple shortcomings, weighing them requires a reality test, not an invidious comparison with Utopia."

America's demographic challenge provides that test. Between 1950 and 1997 the country's population increased by 116m. In the next 50 years it will grow by around 125m more. No other rich country faces such population pressure. And no other rich country has such vast empty spaces to move into. Sprawl may have its flaws, but pushing these extra people into European cites, with their mesh of residential blocks, contiguous shops and public transport, would probably be more wasteful and even (given Americans' preferences) socially explosive. Sprawl is not a threat. It is the process of beating the country out more thinly, like gold leaf.

You can see what pulled them out there

Help from the Hidden Hand

EACH Friday, Saturday and Sunday—take the Sabbath of your religious inheritance or choice—America's places of worship are filled with the faithful. Nine Americans out of every ten polled say that religion is either "fairly" or "very" important to them; seven out of ten claim affiliation to a religious group; four of every ten regularly attend a church, synagogue or mosque. For all that the constitution's very first amendment seeks to separate church from state, there is no denying that America, by its history and its evolution, is a more religious nation than most (in infidel, or at least insouciant, Britain, barely a tenth of the population is religiously observant). Indeed, even America's supposedly feckless young proclaim their faith: witness their proud hymn-singing after last April's high-school slaughter in Littleton, Colorado.

So no wonder America's politicians are also avowedly religious. Congress begins each day's session in solemn prayer; "God bless America" is a plea that comes automatically to any modern president's lips (along, in Bill Clinton's case, with biblical quotations and words of contrition); and among the nation's 100 senators only Colorado's Ben Nighthorse Campbell and Washington's Patty Murray admit to having no religious affiliation. In other words, despite that first amendment, America's politicians will invoke God's name and espouse the virtue of faith as readily as, say, politicians in Iran. So one should not expect George W. Bush, the Republican nominee-apparent, to be any different.

Mr Bush has recently been outlining "a different role for government, a fresh start, a bold new approach". In place of "the failed compassion of towering, distant bureaucracies", America's poor, its drug addicts and its socially inadequate will have access to "a quiet river of goodness and kindness that cuts through stone", he told an audience in Indianapolis. "In every instance where my administration sees a responsibility to help people," he went on, "we will look first to faith-based organisations, charities and community groups that have shown their ability to save and change lives."

"Faith-based"? Al Gore, on the Democratic side, has discovered the concept too, and finds it rings nicely on the hustings. But is this not code for steering the taxpayers' dollars to religious groups, in defiance of that supposed traditional wisdom? It seems a long way from President Ulysses S. Grant, who once declared: "Leave the matter of religion to the family altar, the church and the private school, supported entirely by private contributions. Keep the church and state forever separate."

But perhaps it depends on how you define separation. "In God We Trust" was first engraved on American coins in 1864, when President Grant was just General Grant, and became mandatory for all coins and bills in 1955, just a year after the phrase "under God" was added to the pledge of allegiance. In the past few weeks the House of Representatives has voted to allow public schools to post the ten commandments on their walls, Kansas has joined the states where the teaching of evolution is merely optional, and the House only just fell short of the two-thirds majority needed to pass a resolution calling on Americans to "observe a day of solemn prayer, fasting and humiliation before God."

Arguably, all this is more "gesture politics" than substance. But what of the 1996 federal welfare-reform law? Now widely praised across the political spectrum, this law specifically provides for "charitable choice", permitting faith-based groups to receive federal cash for job-training programmes and other welfare-linked services so long as there are secular alternatives. Add the increasingly popular notion that children may receive federal vouchers to attend private religious schools, and it is hardly surprising that first-amendment zealots react with alarm. Government regulation, they believe, will unavoidably follow the use of government dollars. Religious and irreligious alike have been warned.

The risk will presumably be worse if a future President George Bush expands "charitable choice". After all, it is hard to see the Scientologists or the Moonies being as politically palatable as Episcopalians and Catholics. Is the George W. brand of compassion therefore something that will insidiously, albeit unintentionally, undermine a social order based on the notion that America has no established religion and that its citizens have absolute freedom of belief? Surely not for a long time—and meanwhile there is plenty of evidence that faith-based groups, be they the Salvation Army or the Nation of Islam, do a much better job than any government agency of weaning the young away from drugs and street crime.

The better criticism of George W.'s compassion is that it is so partial. Of course America's prisoners, and their 1.3m children, will benefit if faith-based organisations and charities have a bit more money with which to help them. (Mr Bush talks of giving $8 billion to them, and many other deserving causes, through various tax incentives in the first year of his presidency.) But in a country as rich and generous as the United States, why should this be necessary? Already almost half of the nation's adults do some form of voluntary work, and last year gifts to charity rose by 9% to $175 billion.

One answer may well be that government programmes are the inefficient products of "towering, distant bureaucracies". But another is that God-fearing politicians such as Mr Bush have too often helped to create the problems they seek to cure. Mr Bush bemoans the fact that so many children have parents in prison. "These are the forgotten children—almost six times more likely to go to prison themselves—and they should not be punished for the sins of their fathers." So would it not be sensible to put fewer parents in prison in the first place? (America's prison population has tripled in the past 15 years.)

Apparently not. These are, to be sure, complicated issues. But in George Bush's Texas the prison population at the last count (for 1996) was over 132,000, more than in any other state except California. The governor takes pride in a tough approach which, for example, makes sure that drug offenders get jail rather than treatment. "Compassionate conservatism" may be a catchy campaign slogan, but the element of compassion clearly has its limits.

9TH STORY of Level 1 printed in FULL format.

The Economist

May 08, 1999, U.S. Edition

SECTION: Urban sprawl

LENGTH: 976 words

HEADLINE: To traffic hell and back

DATELINE: atlanta

BODY:

LONG before Vice-President Al Gore stumbled on the idea, Atlantans recognised the perils of suburban sprawl. They are driving themselves crazy, and they know it. The traffic problem was desperate a decade ago; now it is even worse. The city's average commuter drives 34 miles a day, more even than his peer in Los Angeles, and "rush hour" lasts all day. Babies have been born in the impenetrable jams that make some desperate motorists leave their cars to relieve themselves behind roadside bushes. The crush can lead to road-rage explosions in which guns are drawn and even fired. And attempting to leave your car may be even more difficult. Downtown shops such as Harry's in a Hurry, which provides fresh and prepared gourmet foods to the perpetually impatient, hire off-duty policemen to stop the traffic so that upscale drivers of spotless sports utility vehicles can manoeuvre in and out of the car park.

Yet people still take to the roads because they know that, in a city shaped by the car, driving is just about the only way of getting around. In the past 30 years the population of the metropolitan area has doubled, to more than 3m; zoning regulations have created vast residential communities far away from offices and shopping areas and largely without the bus and light-rail routes that could get people to them. Between 1990 and 1994, Atlanta added freeways and arterial roads at a faster pace than any of the other top 50 urban areas in the United States. Driving is also ludicrously cheap: Atlantans paid less than a dollar a gallon for their petrol last year. When it comes to ground-level ozone pollution (most of which emanates from cars), the city is one of the country's worst offenders.

Until recently, the area's politicians have been at odds over what to do. All sorts of things have been attempted: new roads, high-occupancy vehicle lanes, a Highway Emergency Roadside Operation (HERO) to get disabled vehicles quickly off the road. Officials have exhorted people to move to the centre of town and, failing that, have tried at least to get them to use MARTA, the city's light-rail link. MARTA is an impressive system as far as it goes, and rider-figures for the fiscal year just ending are expected to be 84m. But it famously does not go where people want to go, it has too few stations, and the fares (though a mere $1.50 for most single trips) compare badly with the present price of petrol. As one Atlantan all-too-typically concludes, "Why not just drive there and listen to the radio?"

The biggest problem, though, is that any ideas for coping with sprawl have always run up against local politics, racial tensions, history and, not least, geography. Georgia is made up of a large number of tiny counties: the Atlanta metro area contains 13 of them, and the extended metro area no fewer than 20. These cling to their political autonomy, which, as they see it, includes total control over local transport. Race complicates the picture. Because the metro area's population is 26% black, the whiter counties have long avoided anything that might bring them any closer to the black core. That is the real reason why links to MARTA (which was said in its early days to stand for "Moving Africans Rapidly Through Atlanta") have been resisted and why, even in a much more tolerant city, people in the outlying suburbs stick doggedly to their cars.

Now, however, the city has run up against a federal road block. Under the Clean Air Act, Atlanta was told last year that it would get no more federal road money until it came up with a transport plan that cut air pollution. Suddenly, the old issues of race and local control seemed less pressing, and co-operation between city and suburbs more appealing.

Last autumn a committee of business leaders, including Atlanta's mayor, Bill Campbell, and some of the city's biggest developers, presented the newly elected Democratic governor, Roy Barnes, with the Metro Atlanta Transportation Initiative. This included the bold notion of a regional transport authority, an idea bound to stir up old rivalries; but the businessmen were willing to offer the governor political cover in exchange for his support.

As it turned out, none was necessary. Mr Barnes -- perhaps because he had campaigned on the issue of suburban sprawl, perhaps because he comes from Cobb County and is already familiar with a hellish commute -- backed the idea enthusiastically, even coming up with his own version. Public opinion favoured the plan, too; everyone is against sprawl in Atlanta these days. The expected political opposition evaporated, and on March 30th the Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (GRTA) was overwhelmingly approved by the legislature.

The bill gives Mr Barnes powers other governors can only dream of. He is in charge of appointing the 15 members of an agency with sweeping authority over all transport projects in the metro area. The GRTA has the power to finance and operate public transport; it can impose the transport plans it favours, even in defiance of the state Department of Transportation; it can require local governments to finance those plans (under threat of taking away their state money if they refuse); it can veto major projects, such as malls, in the 13 counties the agency covers. Its first project may be the building of a light-rail link in the northern suburbs, presumably to help the governor's commute.

At least, those are its powers on paper. Exactly how much it will achieve is impossible to guess. It may be that Atlanta has already sprawled so far that it can never become a compact, pedestrian-friendly, quasi-European city of the sort American developers increasingly seem to yearn for. Once a city has sold its soul to the car, it is probably too late to get it back. But at least Atlanta is trying, and that is a start.

GRAPHIC: graphic, no caption

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: August 6, 1999

6TH STORY of Level 1 printed in FULL format.

The Economist

July 17, 1999, U.S. Edition

SECTION: Urban sprawl

LENGTH: 731 words

HEADLINE: A hydra in the desert

DATELINE: phoenix, arizona

HIGHLIGHT:
America's big cities just keep expanding. Can they go on doing so for ever? In the first of a series, we report from Phoenix, the fastest-growing big city of all

BODY:

WHEN Arizona became a state in 1912, the first man it sent to the United States Senate was a loquacious cowboy called Henry Fountain Ashurst. In his first address to the Senate, Mr Ashurst boasted that Arizona was "poised to become a veritable paradise." Only two things were needed, he said: "Water, and lots of good people". According to legend, a senator from New England responded, "If the gentleman from Arizona will forgive me, that's all they need in hell."

These days, it is Arizonans who are having the laugh. Their state has been a huge success story in the second half of the 20th century partly because it has honoured Ashurst's first criterion for prosperity. It has built massive dams and irrigation projects, providing enough water for a rapidly growing population. The 1990s have also brought a booming high-tech industry. Water, people, work: everything seems to be going Arizona's way.

The core of the state's spectacular growth is Phoenix, a capital city brought to life from the unforgiving desert. Once home only to agrarian Indian tribes and copper prospectors, Phoenix is now the fastest-growing city (among cities with a population of 1m or more) in the United States. During the 1990s, according to recent Census Bureau data, its population increased by 21%. Unlike many cities in the east whose population has dropped during the decade as people have shifted to the suburbs, central Phoenix has gained 200,000 new residents. But the suburbs have flourished, too; Mesa, Scottsdale and Chandler have expanded so rapidly that the whole metropolitan area, not just the city itself, sets a countrywide record.

Several factors have fed this growth, apart from the general demographic trend in favour of the southern and western states. The presence of big high-tech companies such as Motorola, Intel and Honeywell has lured people in recent years, but long before that a policy of limited government and few regulations pulled businessmen into Phoenix. And Arizona recovered from the recession of the early 1990s more quickly than its neighbours. According to Marc Perry of the Census Bureau, much of the 1990s migration to Phoenix comes from

California, which lingered in recession longer than the other western states.
The migration to new jobs means that Phoenix's population has remained relatively young. Retired people account for a much smaller part of the population growth in Arizona than in other retirement havens, such as Florida. The relative youth of Phoenix's newest inhabitants becomes clear when you drive north from the centre of town. Thousands of family homes, in residential developments with names like Arrowhead Valley and Citrus Creek, are being built for miles in every direction.

So rapid a growth has inevitably bred controversy. As Phoenix spreads farther into the desert, some city officials and environmental groups think the sprawl will become unmanageable. Sandy Bahr of the Sierra Club reckons that "Phoenix is well on its way to becoming Los Angeles." By some estimates, new construction is cutting into the Sonoran Desert at the rate of an acre an hour.

The ease with which new land can be developed around Phoenix is partly due to geography: there are no mountains or big lakes to place natural checks on growth. A more compelling reason, however, is the fierce anti-regulatory strain in Arizona politics. The state legislature has shied away from enforcing guidelines for urban development in the Phoenix area. On the contrary, it has encouraged it by freeing most developers from environmental-impact fees.

The state's governor, Jane Hull, has set up a commission to design regulations for future development, but there are doubts that it will come up with anything enforceable. Instead, the Sierra Club's Ms Bahr pins her hopes on a set of strict regulations drafted by the club, which will be put to the voters in November next year.

If the city ever decides to set limits on its growth, it is unlikely to be because of fears for the environment. There are millions of untouched desert acres around Phoenix where new suburbs could easily spring up. Most people think that the current water system can cope with urban growth far into the future. Despite their laisser-faire approach to life, Arizonans like the nature they see around them. One day, the two things will clash. But not yet, they reckon.

GRAPHIC: graphic, no caption

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: August 6, 1999

5TH STORY of Level 1 printed in FULL format.

The Economist

July 24, 1999, U.S. Edition

SECTION: Urban sprawl

LENGTH: 1080 words

HEADLINE: Right in the governor's back yard

DATELINE: minneapolis and st paul

HIGHLIGHT:
It's not just the sun that makes cities grow. In the second of our series, we report from Minnesota

BODY:

ON A recent Saturday morning, cyclists gathered on an island in the Mississippi river near St Paul to embark on the fourth annual "Tour de Sprawl", a bike tour sponsored by the Sierra Club. Some of them held picket signs, but the stunning blue sky and a soft breeze seemed to soften their protest.

Not to say there's none to be had. The Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St Paul ranked eighth on the Sierra Club's 1998 blacklist of sprawling cities of 1m or more. According to the club's figures, growth there is covering 64 acres a day. People spend almost three times as long in traffic jams today as they did in 1982,and the miles of congested freeway are predicted to double by 2020.

The reason for all this is clear enough. Because cities at the edge of metropolitan areas, in Minnesota as elsewhere, are bent on building a solid tax base, many choose to plan only for big, expensive houses on big sites. Increasingly, communities of huge houses and tiny saplings are springing up around a golf course or a man-made lake. Prosperity has caused a boom in construction; in 1998, housing permits in the Twin Cities shot up by 20% over the year before. But most of this building was going on many miles from the city centres.

Meanwhile, in the older northern and western suburbs of Minneapolis, schools have closed at an alarming rate as people flee ever outward. From 1970 to 1990, 78 schools opened in the outer suburbs, while 162 closed in the central city and the inner suburban ring. Many workers there have to travel to the favoured suburbs to work, thus spending more time on the roads and more of their income on petrol. Some take "reverse commutes" on buses that shuttle workers from the less-favoured spots to the wealthier upstart communities. These vehicles are sometimes known as "Soweto buses", implying that workers can work in the leafy suburbs, but aren't fit to live there.

Plenty of groups are struggling to get sprawl under control. The biggest is the Metropolitan Council, based in St Paul, a regional organisation that supervises transport, sewerage, housing and planning. The council wants houses closer together, with an average of 7,500 square feet of land -- no more -- for every new house built. It would also like to see housing for the rich, not-so-rich and poor mixed together and, not least, a centralised, efficient sewerage system.

These aims were mere dreams until two years ago, when some of the older suburbs joined forces to wrest control of sewerage and transport financing from the state government. That put more than $650m of state money under the Metropolitan Council's direct supervision, and made it one of the largest regional-government bodies in the United States. The council's new power allows it to withhold money for sewerage and transport from new developments in the seven-county metropolitan area if these do not comply with its planning requirements.

But growth is happening fastest in at least four far-flung counties that are not under the council's direct domain. There, the council can do no more than plead with city officials to put limits on growth. But it is also carrying out a survey, jointly with Minnesota Planning, into metropolitan land use, which hopes to knit together city, county and state organisations to save farmland and open space and to revitalise the urban core by creating clear boundaries between city and country. The chairman of the council is Ted Mondale, the son of former Vice-President Walter Mondale. The head of Minnesota Planning is Dean Barkley of the Reform Party, best known until now for helping to engineer Governor Jesse Ventura's rise to power.

The survey will also consider how the state can plan housing developments around the projected light-rail system. The first line, a 12-mile stretch from the Mall of America in Bloomington to downtown Minneapolis, will open in 2003. Later, spokes will extend from Minneapolis outward into the suburbs. Planners hope that the system will carry workers cheaply to their jobs, encourage growth along the railway lines and keep people from staking claims in distant communities. Half of the $446m cost is expected to come from federal coffers by the end of the summer.

The governor, too, has some proposals up his sleeve, not least because sprawl is affecting him personally. Mr Ventura grew up in central Minneapolis, but has since settled down on a 32-acre ranch in Maple Grove on the north-western edge of urban development. Controversy hovers over Maple Grove. In 1995, the Metropolitan Council required over half of all new housing units there to be "affordable" (ie, for those on low and middling incomes) but, by 1997, only a fifth of new developments met the test. One developer brought a civil-rights suit against the city, and a city manager was fired for trying to push for more housing for the poor. The city then ended a reverse-commute programme suggested by the council. Only pressure from an affiliate of the Catholic archdiocese persuaded the city to approve a paltry 19 units of affordable housing. Today, huge new (non-affordable) housing developments are spreading over the cornfields near Mr Ventura's ranch.

Rankled by what he sees from his own back yard, the governor has strongly supported commuter and light rail transport systems and endorsed, in June, ten principles for development put forward by Minnesota's Smart Growth Network. These included encouraging development in places already equipped with roads and sewers, rather than in empty country; providing a mixture of land uses, which might bring with it a variety of housing and jobs; and promoting "the revitalisation of existing urban and rural communities."

Yet Mr Ventura has his opponents. Republicans in the state legislature are suspicious of all these manoeuvres and the left-leaning groups that back them. They have succeeded in shutting down a fairly new advisory council on community-based planning, and hope to keep their opponents from "densifying" the outer-ring suburbs which, increasingly, make up their core constituency. They do not deny the need for some planning, but are fearful of what they see as social engineering. Let people live where they like, they say. Do not force them into planned communities inspired by some New Urbanist hallucination. As for the governor, a few local politicians wonder aloud why he is willing to deny others the right to build on multiple-acre plots while he enjoys his own.

GRAPHIC: graphic, no caption

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: August 6, 1999

4TH STORY of Level 1 printed in FULL format.

The Economist

July 31, 1999, U.S. Edition

SECTION: Urban sprawl

LENGTH: 1043 words

HEADLINE: Wired in the woods

DATELINE: ISSAQUAH, WASHINGTON

HIGHLIGHT:
When it comes to unbridled urban growth, the new economy can be the chief culprit. The third in our series comes from the Pacific north-west

BODY:
EACH October, the Seattle suburb of Issaquah holds a Salmon Days festival. Revellers wear fish-shaped hats, eat fish tacos, and tour a fish hatchery right in the middle of downtown Issaquah (pronounced Iss-uh-kwah) and adjacent to Issaquah Creek, a productive salmon-spawning stream. It may not be long, however, before Salmon Days becomes more than a yearly event. That is because the salmon that swim up Issaquah Creek now enjoy federal protection, courtesy of an Endangered Species Act listing for regional salmon species that was announced in the spring.

The listing has caused chaos on a wide scale. In this wildly growing part of the country, new roads, housing developments and shopping malls are already being held up while local officials try to work out whether their proposals are salmon-friendly enough. Ava Frisinger, the mayor of Issaquah, hopes that the city will escape being ruled by federal salmon mullahs. If it does, that will be about the only urban and suburban ill her little town will avoid.

Issaquah is at the epicentre of enormous changes that are shaking the Seattle metropolitan area. These include traffic congestion that is among the worst in the nation, air pollution, soaring housing prices, crowded schools and a growing sense that local government is almost helpless to solve these problems. Issaquah itself, a town of not quite 10,000 people, has another 40,000 people living chock-a-block at its boundaries. It sits astride Interstate 90, a six-lane highway, and at the confluence of several deep valleys that funnel cars from more remote suburban areas through a street grid laid out in the 1920s.

The town's small airport, which was once favoured by skydivers and glider pilots, is now a bustling retail mall with a Costco (one of those giant warehouses where loo rolls can be bought two dozen at a time), a giant Eagle hardware store, a Barnes & Noble and Italian restaurants. Newcomers to the area, eager to have their own piece of the wooded hills that surround Issaquah, have overwhelmed the land round the city with subdivisions jammed with $500,000 homes. Mount Ranier, the highest peak in the state, is often obscured by exhaust fumes.

The culprit -- if a booming economy deserves the word -- is an exploding high-tech industry powered by Microsoft, and dozens of spin-off companies founded by Microsoft alumni hoping to imitate their alma mater. Remove the high-tech boom, and the area is at best holding steady. Throughout the Pacific north-west, says Alan Durning, director of a Seattle-based environmental group that watches regional economic trends, the past 20 years have seen 500 lumber and paper mills shut, 8,000 fishing boats taken out of the water and 15,000 farms and ranches shut down. Employment at Boeing is roughly the same as it was in the late 1970s. Yet during that time the region has added an astonishing 3m jobs, a 56% increase.

These new "green-collar" jobs (Mr Durning's phrase) should be every economic planner's dream. The Microsoft campus, for instance, sprouts no smokestacks, has no pipelines dumping toxic waste into streams, and sucks up only as much energy as fluorescent light bulbs and PCs consume. The people who hold these jobs are almost universally green-minded, habitual recyclers of Coke cans and newspapers, eager to see forests and streams preserved so that they can hike, ski, kayak and mountain-bike.

Unfortunately, those same people also demand five-bedroom houses, cars (the favoured kind in Issaquah is the two-ton-plus, four-wheel-drive Ford Expedition) and plenty of places to shop. It is an irony, laments Paul Sommers, an economic-policy analyst with the University of Washington, that the same people drawn to a region because of its physical beauty, clean air and abundant water are perhaps now doing more to destroy those things than 100 years of logging and heavy industry.

Issaquah is struggling to blunt the effects of these changes, with mixed results. For the time being it has slowed development until road construction within city limits can catch up with traffic growth. But that accomplishes little when hundreds of homes and new businesses pop up almost overnight outside Issaquah's jurisdiction. And local topography is no help. Steep hills and lakes cover much of the region, leaving few new pathways for a road grid that has not changed much for 50 years. Seattle itself has embarked on a costly light-rail project, but that will have next to no impact on Issaquah, miles beyond the nearest station. And since the high-tech economy, being independent of traditional city centres and communications, is apt to pop up anywhere, transport planning is virtually useless.

Solutions will be slow to come, if they come at all. One hopeful sign is the explosion of high-rise housing in Seattle and Bellevue, a closer-in suburban city that 20 years ago was much like Issaquah today. Such high-density housing -- something Americans at last seem willing to buy -- will do a great deal to reduce the push for more suburban sprawl, while making public transport more efficient. But if even a handful of the current batch of would-be Microsoft clones finds success, growth may multiply. Already enough office space for 50,000 workers is planned for a suburban area stretching from Issaquah to Redmond, some ten miles to the north, in an area that is impossible to serve with public transport.

Mayor Frisinger of Issaquah still believes that local government can cope with growth and yet preserve her city's small-town feel. But even she admits that the trends are not in her favour, and not just in the matter of development. Increasingly, she notes, residents pass around ideas and opinions via the Internet. In a meeting-happy city such as Issaquah -- where a dispute over what colour to paint a barn went on for months -- this means that the community's leaders must contend with a growing cacophony of voices. "It could be chaos," she says. "People change their minds so quickly, and decisions made three years ago are met with a reaction of, Well, this is now'."

As high-tech companies grow, even more voters are apt to be wired. Democracy at the speed of light, and traffic at the speed of a snail, should be an interesting mix.

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