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FACING UP TO GLOBAL WARMING • BYZANTINE BANKRUPTCY LAWS

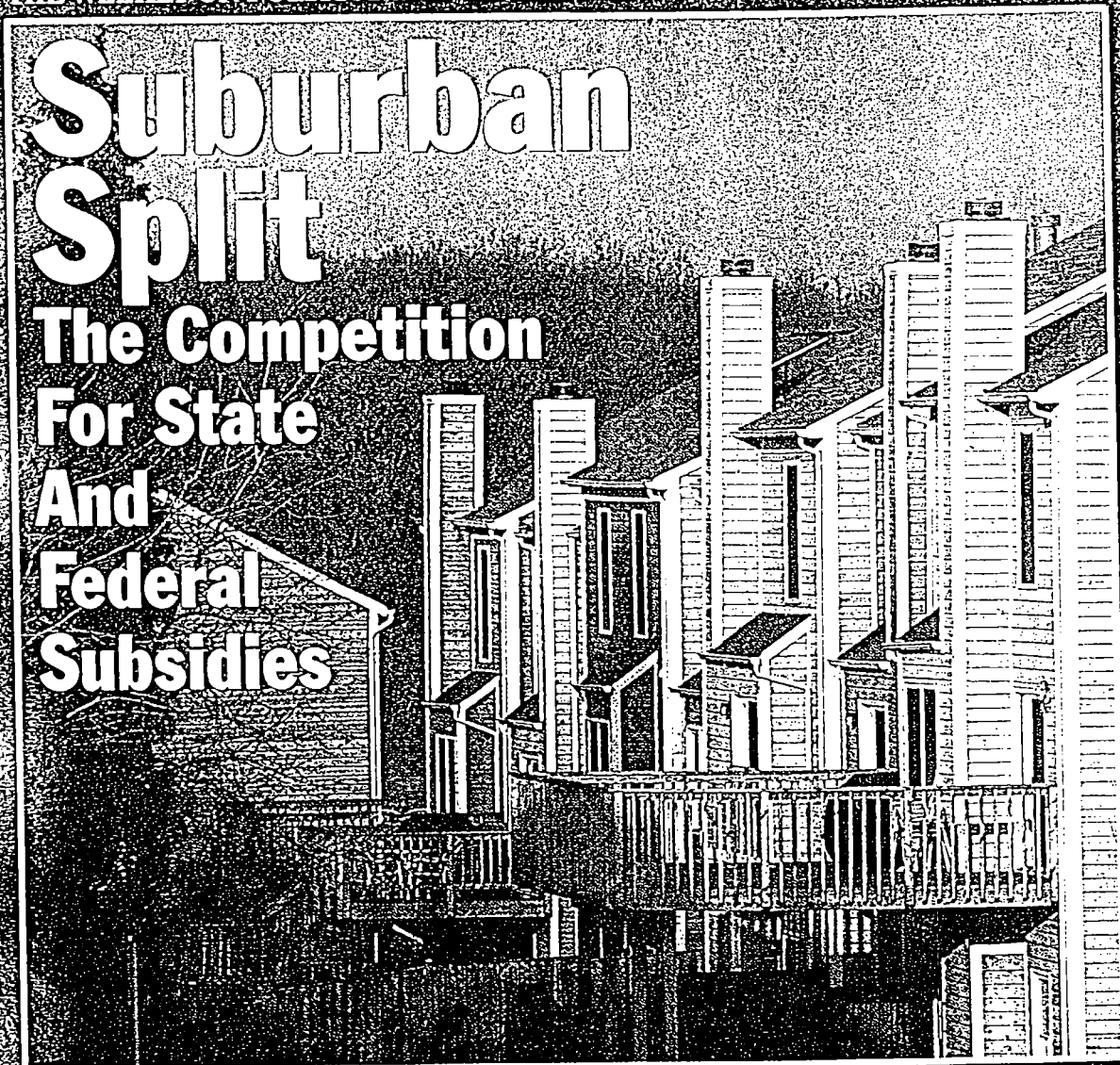
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Suburban Split

The Competition
For State
And
Federal
Subsidies



Splitsville

Older, close-in suburbs have discovered that they have little in common with booming new developments. Now these suburbs are starting to form alliances with cities, and both are demanding a bigger slice of government subsidies.

BY ROCHELLE L. STANFIELD

The suburbs are splitting. No longer are they the unified political force that pundits say they are. Confronted with harsh economic realities of decay and decline, the aging close-in suburbs are beginning to clash with newer developments located even farther from downtown.

"There is no monolith anymore called 'suburbs,'" Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Secretary Andrew M. Cuomo said. "There are newer suburbs and older suburbs. And the older suburbs have problems that are much akin to the cities' problems. And maybe there can be an alliance."

Indeed, some suburbs have already aligned themselves with central cities and other unfamiliar partners in decisions on how and where to invest state and federal subsidies, who gets the benefits and who is left out.

This political reconfiguration is in its infancy, but the forces propelling it are unrelenting, experts say. Once the facts and figures are explained, proponents argue, old-fashioned common sense would dictate that the self-interest of the older suburbs lies in forming a coalition with the central cities. Until recently, however, no one has been able to make that case persuasively enough to overcome decades of parochial thinking that drew a sharp line between city and suburb.

Enter splashy, multihued, computer-generated maps that now are beginning to tell the tale better than dry statistical tables or empty rhetoric ever could.

In vivid reds, blues, greens and oranges, the maps reveal that both central cities and inner-ring suburbs have lost population and endured a shrinking tax base, while watching state and federal subsidies finance the growth of fringe suburbs. Local politicians in a handful of areas claim that the maps will help them reconfigure suburban politics on such

close-to-home issues as highway and sewer construction, industrial location, school finance and housing.

A political metamorphosis, for example, is under way in Greater Cleveland, where maps of household income levels, home values and outmigration paint both inner-city Cleveland and its older suburbs in the same garish red of decline. The booming outer suburbs, meanwhile, shimmer in the bright blue of growth.

Maps in hand, the leaders of eight close-in Cleveland suburbs formed the First Ring Suburban Consortium headed by Euclid Mayor Paul Oyaski. Euclid is an old industrial suburb with abandoned factories and a declining population that mimic characteristics of Cleveland, its big neighbor to the West.

"Wealth and jobs and property values are migrating from the older communities to the newer communities," Oyaski said. "I knew that in my bones, but explaining economic statistics without some kind of visual aid is a difficult thing to do—so the maps are wonderful." (*For*



John Eisele

Orfield: Suburban solidarity is a myth.

more on computer mapping, see box, p. 864.)

So far, no formal relationship has been adopted between the First Ring Suburban Consortium and Cleveland, but positions taken on a host of issues by the two do coincide. The older suburbs also have what may be an even more powerful, if unusual, ally in the Catholic Church. Bishop Anthony M. Pilla, head of Cleveland's Catholic diocese, has elevated the abandonment of the city and inner suburbs and untamed outward growth into a moral issue for Catholics. In addition, environmental and farmland preservation groups opposed to suburban sprawl have joined the cause.

The first item on the agenda is redirecting state highway spending. The new coalition already claimed an initial victory by forcing the Ohio Transportation Department to take a second look at some of its plans to build new interchanges and widen interstate highways.

The only major legislative success for an inner-suburb/center-city coalition has been in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area. The leader was Democratic Farmer Labor state Rep. Myron Orfield, a pioneer mapmaker who wrote of his experience in *Metropolitics: A Regional Agenda for Community and Stability*, published this year. His suburban-city coalition obtained passage of state land use, tax equity and fair-housing legislation. Given Minnesota's reputation for genteel politics and civic-mindedness, however, most political observers don't consider Orfield's feat a true test of the widespread viability of these new coalitions.

Meanwhile, agitation is bubbling up in the metropolitan areas around Baltimore, Chicago, Miami, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, San Francisco and Seattle.

Of course, it's impossible to predict what's going to come of this ferment. Will the inner-ring suburbs split off and emerge as a third force in the metropolitan area? Or will they enter into real coalitions with the center city? If it is the latter, will these alliances have solidity and staying power in the face of the traditional divisions of culture, race and outlook?

"In many cases, the suburban interests have been openly hostile to the central city interests," Bruce J. Katz, director of the Brookings Institution's new Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy, acknowledged. "So the question is, can you overcome decades of division through shared interests and shared need?"

REGIONAL UNITY

Some regional planners dream of entire metropolitan areas overcoming their divisions and coalescing into a single

cooperative entity. That happened in the Portland (Ore.) region when the state acted to preserve open space by restricting growth to the inner suburbs. Most analysts, however, consider Oregon—like Minnesota—a special case.

Nonetheless, the Cleveland area's chief planner envisions unity. "The [leaders of

Cheap housing at the fringe, however, might increase the departure of inner-ring residents.

According to Minnesota lawmaker Orfield, suburban solidarity is a myth perpetuated by the experts' treatment of suburbs as a single entity and the absence of analysis of suburban differences. While



Richard A. Blum

Cuomo: "The older suburbs have problems that are much akin to the cities' problems."

newer] suburban communities are saying, 'We understand the core of this community is important to our success.'" Paul A. Alsenas, director of the Cuyahoga County Planning Commission, said, "If the disparity between the central core and the wealthier surrounding communities is great, the entire region is weaker. And they basically understand that."

Maybe some day they will. For now, however, in major metropolitan regions across the country, the inner-ring suburbs are awakening to their weakened condition and are beginning to demand their fair share of money and indirect subsidies. With a much-diminished government pie, what they get has to come out of the slice allotted to the growth areas.

"Where at all possible, we should try to work together," insisted Dennis M. Clough, mayor of Westlake, a booming new suburb west of Cleveland, who then reluctantly acknowledged, "but sometimes there are conflicting agendas."

Such clashes don't always involve federal or state subsidies. The location of affordable housing for the poor and minorities is a bone of contention. Outer-fringe suburbs with high-priced homes don't want an influx of low-cost housing that would lower their property values. Inner suburbs that have more than their share of low-income housing don't want any more.

the Census Bureau sorts metropolitan areas according to size, it lumps together all communities within a given metropolitan area. Similarly, many public opinion polls routinely categorize responses as central city, suburb or rural.

"Every time people write about this politically, they talk about 'the suburbs.' Every study that's done demographically is about 'the suburbs,'" Orfield said in an interview. "It's the stupidest thing in the world. It's so wrong."

A careful examination of election results in the Chicago metropolitan area, he continued, reveals major splits between the older, poorer suburbs south and southwest of the city, and the rich, growing communities to the northwest. "But the people don't believe it because nobody explains to them how different their views and their interests are," he said.

"The people in the [inner] suburbs themselves, individually, know they're poor, but they don't want to talk about it because they don't realize how many other communities are in the same boat," Orfield continued. "Mapping helps explain how different their interests are from the interests of the wealthy suburbs. Once their interests are realigned, then it's just politics."

For 15 years, Thomas E. Bier, an urban affairs professor at Cleveland State University, has been plotting the outward movement of people, money

and taxes, first from Cleveland to the suburbs, and now from the inner suburbs to outlying areas. In a 1993 report about Cuyahoga County, for example, he found that from 1987-91, 77 per cent of the residents who sold their homes purchased one in a different community. That 87 per cent of Cleveland sellers departed from the center city surprised no one. But Bier also found that 75 per cent of suburban home sellers left a close-in community for greener acres on the fringe.

OUTER LIMITS

Of course, anyone who over the past two decades has taken a Sunday drive out into what used to be the countryside around any major metropolitan area can't have missed the burgeoning subdevelopments and industrial parks. Once-rural Medina County, west of Cuyahoga, is at the receiving end of the exodus from the inner suburbs around Cleveland. County Commissioner Sara L. Pavlovicz, who is concerned about this untamed growth,

nonetheless sees the migration as a natural reaction to the situation in the inner city and close-in suburbs.

"Since the 1970s, there's been quite an impetus of people into this area out of the Cleveland area. And many people are blaming that on the school busing situation, deterioration in the Cleveland city schools and quality-of-life issues in the whole Cleveland area," she said. "The building of highways enabled people to kind of follow their dreams."

Westlake Mayor Clough describes highway improvements as resulting from population shifts—not the other way around. "You get more people that move in and use a road, you're going to have to improve it," he said. "That comes with the shift of population."

What has been missed or ignored, however, is the engine driving the process. It's not simply the American Dream of a larger house surrounded by a healthy lawn, according to many urban affairs experts. "What needs to be understood is that the sprawl is not just a market phenomenon, but it's fueled and facilitated by govern-

ment subsidies," Brookings's Katz contends.

Urban economists and community organizers alike are adamant that government subsidies are the force behind out-migration. If government didn't underwrite outer-ring developments, they insist, those new communities would be too expensive for most of the families moving there. Ironically, residents of the cities and inner-ring suburbs often subsidize the new growth with their taxes.

To hook up a new house on the outer fringes of the Chicago region to water, sewer and other services costs \$50,000-\$60,000, calculates Scott Bernstein, president of the nonprofit organization Center for Neighborhood Technology in Chicago. That same procedure would cost only \$5,000-\$10,000 for a new house in an established suburb. Who foots the bill? Taxpayers in the established suburbs, Bernstein said.

The first task that Orfield and other political organizers of the close-in older suburbs set for themselves is to vividly portray the impact of government subsi-

TURNING MAPS INTO A USEFUL POLITICAL TOOL

Someday, brilliantly designed and spectacularly colorful computer-generated maps are likely to portray every nuance of government subsidies and incentives that underlie regional development patterns. They don't yet.

Promoters of computer mapping insist, however, that supersophisticated designs are just around the corner. After all, they note, using these maps for simple tasks such as community planning, public education and mobilizing public opinion is a recent phenomenon.

Computer-generated maps rely on sophisticated software called the Geographic Information System (GIS). Just a few years ago, GIS was extremely expensive and inordinately difficult to use. It also required a very powerful computer, out of reach of most nonprofit organizations and all but the largest local governments.

"The technical and cost problems have been largely overcome," said Michael A. Stegman, assistant Housing and Urban Development (HUD) secretary for policy development and research. The map-making software can be used on most computers "and a lot of the data are available from a variety of sources."

HUD is one of them. A few years ago, the department provided relatively



Stegman: Maps won't change the world.

primitive mapping software to localities and nonprofit organizations involved in two grant programs. It was part of a pet project of both Stegman and Secretary Andrew M. Cuomo when he was assistant secretary for community planning and development. HUD has now upgraded the software, made it a lot easier to use and included a map library in

a package that it plans to market for \$249 later this spring.

What local officials need is more government data translated into a form that the mapping software can read. "Frankly, another challenge we have is to get more-specific data," Cleveland Heights (Ohio) councilman Kenneth Montlack said. "It's a very difficult task to track down all the sources of funds and to figure out what dollars get spent where."

Cuyahoga County planning director Paul A. Alsenas, for example, wanted to construct a map that showed traffic patterns on major roads around the county, but the county engineer had not yet converted that data into digital form. "So we had to buy data from a company in Texas that should be available from folks a block and a half away from us," Alsenas said. "But at least we got it."

By themselves, the most startling maps won't forge political coalitions. "Let's not think that technology and maps will change the world," Stegman said. "You need charismatic leaders and strategists who know how to use this tool, who understand the fault lines of American society and how to bridge them, and who can now use this vehicle as a resource to mobilize public opinion."

Richard A. Bloom

dies to the outer suburbs on the inner suburbs and center city.

Sprawl often starts with highways, which the state builds and the federal government subsidizes. Indeed, it was highway construction that provoked Kenneth Montlack, a Cleveland Heights council member, to help organize the First Ring Suburban Consortium. Ohio's Transportation Department started adding express lanes to Interstate 271 east of Cleveland, Montlack recalled. "I determined that the state was spending roughly \$200 million for this to continue to move people farther out." As for money that his town needed to repair its infrastructure, Montlack added, "We had to beg for it on bended knee, and then we got very little."

Water and sewer lines, supported by state and a diminishing amount of federal money, follow the highways. And then comes the real cutthroat competition: tax abatements granted by local governments in the Greater Cleveland region, but sanctioned by the state government. Each suburb vies with its neighbors to package a tax cut to induce industries to locate within its borders.

"What it does is make all of us compete rather than working together," Medina County Commissioner Pavlovicz said. "I'd like to see all of these incentives done away with," she continued, expressing what remains a minority view.

Two federal subsidies promote out-migration in a much more subtle way, some experts said. The federal deduction of home mortgage interest enables—and sometimes encourages—households to purchase expensive homes. The capital gains tax on the sale of a home reinforces this upward spiral. It kicks in only when the homeowner fails to purchase, within two years, another house that's more expensive than the one he or she is selling.

There's no news in either of those revelations. The missing piece of the outmigration puzzle is that in Greater Cleveland, Bier's studies show, just about the only way to purchase a more expensive home is to move farther away from Cleveland.

Inner-suburban politicians have begun to grasp the dynamics of development subsidies. Making the case to constituents and then mobilizing a drive in the state legislature is a huge leap. They are beginning to turn to computer-generated maps. But the maps don't yet enable them to tell the full story.

One of Bier's maps, for example, depicts in bright orange the overwhelming proportion of Cleveland and inner-suburb home sellers who move out of their community, and in bright blue the minuscule proportion of home sellers who do so in outlying areas. But his maps don't make the connection between that phenomenon



John Liscio

Katz: Suburban sprawl is "fueled and facilitated by government subsidies."

and the amount of mortgage-interest deductions or the capital gains tax.

COALITION-BUILDING

For decades, community organizers, nonprofit organizations and various interest groups have pressed for redress of the investment imbalance between declining center cities and their booming suburbs. They are now recruiting the inner suburbs as allies, too. But they recognize they face a huge uphill struggle against powerful, entrenched and wealthy interests at the suburban fringe.

The campaign that is furthest along is Orfield's in the Minneapolis region. He focused on inequities between inner-ring and outer-ring suburbs. His maps show the growth of poverty, crime, low-income housing, and poor schools and schoolchildren in the inner-ring suburbs, and demonstrate that the older suburbs in those areas looked a lot like the center city—and very different from the newer, growing suburbs.

Orfield parlayed discontent over those disparities into legislation that forced the newer suburbs to share their growing tax base with the older ones and to accept low-income housing. But it wasn't easy. All of his proposals were dramatically weakened by compromise as they slowly wended through the Legislature. And then several pieces of legislation were vetoed by the Republican governor.

The hard slog of legislative politics is still ahead for the organizers in Greater Cleveland. Oyaski and Montlack of the First Ring consortium plan to oppose a state gas-tax increase earmarked for highway construction projects, which is expected to be proposed in the next legislative session. But they concede that they've only begun to lobby their state representatives and senators.

The charismatic leader of the Cleveland fight, Bishop Pilla, for the most part has waged his campaign on a moral and ethical plane rather than a legislative one. But the Catholic churches are organizing throughout the area, and many local observers expect the Bishop's Church in the City initiative to turn political. "The negatives that have resulted in our region from 40 years of building new suburbs while abandoning old cities have accumulated to where they are serious obstacles to economic growth," wrote Pilla, who is also worried about the impact these changes have on urban parishes. "While these problems are most evident in the core cities, they now are at the doorsteps of inner suburbs."

In other cities, such as Chicago, no political leader has yet emerged to lead a suburb-versus-suburb campaign. Most of the organizing is under way in churches, community and environmental groups and other nonprofits in the community.

A religious foundation in Chicago, the Gamaliel Foundation, formed the Metropolitan Alliance of Congregations to organize church groups across the region. It now encompasses more than 100 church-based groups that are most active in the harder-pressed working-class suburbs south and southwest of the city.

Orfield, who crafted a set of maps for a Chicago foundation and is now working with Cleveland, feels certain that the rumblings being heard in suburban church halls and community rooms will erupt into politics.

"The problems of the inner suburbs are more severe than they've ever been," he said. "There's no place that doesn't have these problems. You just have to get people up to speed, give them the tools, and a charismatic leader will emerge. It has to happen." Maybe. ■

Curb the sprawl of the suburbs

By Bruce Katz

Congress soon will decide how to allocate \$175 billion over the next five years to preserve, modernize and expand U.S. highways and transit systems.

This legislation will fundamentally shape the physical form and social fabric of our cities and metropolitan areas for decades. Most significantly, it will help determine whether suburban sprawl — with its profound environmental, social and economic consequences — remains the prevalent development pattern in the early 21st century.

The Washington policy conversation to date has focused little on the question of sprawl. It centers instead on several vital but technical and abstract issues. Should the highway and transit trust funds be on or off budget? Is each state receiving its fair share of federal transportation dollars? These issues are the stuff of Washington policy debates.

Yet they do not recognize key changes in the metropolitan communities where 80 percent of Americans now live, work and play.

Metropolitan America is experiencing frighteningly similar patterns of growth and development — explosive sprawl where farmland once stretched, and decline and abandonment in central cities and older suburbs.

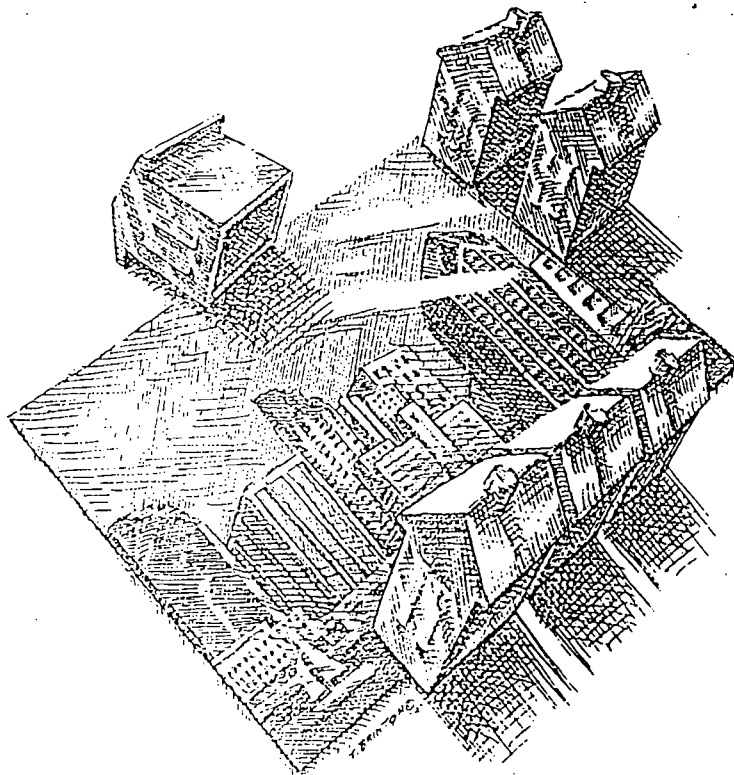
Between 1970 and 1990, for example, the population of the Philadelphia metropolitan area increased by only 3.8 percent, but the amount of land in the region used for urban purposes grew by 36 percent. That created a development explosion in the northwestern low-density suburbs.

Sprawl has enormous consequences for all of us, but particularly those left behind in older communities — families in poverty, the elderly, minorities.

About 8 million people now live in neighborhoods where more than 40 percent of the residents are poor — almost double the number in 1970. And their local governments suffer constant drains of taxable resources as more households, firms and jobs move to far suburbs.

For the rest of us, no matter where we live, sprawl also has costs. It diminishes the competitiveness of metropolitan areas, worsens traffic congestion, increases the costs of highways and other infrastructures and abandons assets that still could be used.

These patterns are reversible. They are not the inevitable product of the marketplace and consumer preferences. Rather, sprawl depends on many government subsidies in the form of spending for new roads, sewers, schools, fire and police protection. Without these subsidies, many housing sub-



TIM BRINTON

*Subdivisions and strip malls are not inevitable.
But federal subsidies often pave the way for them.*

divisions, malls and industry on the outer fringe of our metropolitan areas would simply not be economically feasible.

And who helps pay for these subsidies? Often the city and older suburban communities that are the ultimate losers when sprawl takes hold.

After years of silence, diverse local coalitions are now beginning to "get it" and are

assessing the role of federal and state money in fueling sprawl and undercutting their own economies.

Mayors of cities and older suburbs are asking why newly developing suburbs are receiving disproportionate shares of federal transportation and state infrastructure funds. Downtown business and civic leaders are questioning the wisdom of providing

public subsidies to economic interests that compete with established concerns in older areas.

Farmers and families in small towns are bemoaning the loss of quality of life in rural areas with the onset of people and congestion.

People in metropolitan areas are coming out against sprawl and in favor of preserving open spaces and rebuilding older communities.

Minnesota has upgraded metropolitan governance in the Twin Cities area and has enacted a regional tax-sharing plan to create more equity and stability in paying for services across jurisdictional lines.

Maryland recently enacted a "smart growth" legislative package, which steers billions of state road, sewer and school money away from farms and open spaces to areas targeted for concentrated growth.

Colorado, Delaware and other states are working on alternative versions of smart growth to curb sprawl.

The federal government should be a partner, not just an observer, in these efforts. Here are three simple things that can be done in this year's transportation bill:

- Think metropolitan. Congress should preserve and strengthen, not scale back, the metropolitan role in transportation planning and spending. In metropolitan areas, transportation, land use, economic development and environmental issues come together in practical ways.
- Empower citizens. For all the national talk about "civil society," basic information about how and where federal funds are spent rarely is shared with the public or presented in a form that average citizens can understand. Congress should require state and metropolitan transportation entities to disclose their spending patterns by political jurisdiction, to use computer mapping tools to illustrate the disparate patterns, and to make such information widely available. Such right-to-know laws already govern housing, banking and environmental areas.
- Reward smart growth. Congress should reward states and regions that make smart growth a central part of their transportation mission. For example, Congress could provide additional incentives — regulatory relief, supplemental funding — to those communities. Or it could send direct grants to state and metropolitan governments to integrate transportation and land-use planning.

This 1997 legislative checklist is hardly complete. But it shows the type of rethinking about policies possible when the world is viewed from a metropolitan perspective.

Bruce Katz is director of the new Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy at the Brookings Institution. He was formerly chief of staff to HUD Secretary Henry Cisneros.

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Social Issues

middle-class families and businesses will stay in the inner core. Regional transit systems and affordable housing, meanwhile, will bring poor city residents to jobs and homes in the suburbs, reducing the concentration of poverty in the city.

Such arguments are winning converts among business executives, who say the long-term vitality of a region is tied to the health of urban downtowns. In Pittsburgh, for instance, CEOs want a metrowide sales-tax increase to finance new riverfront projects downtown. "A lot of businesses recognize that inner cores are assets they should build up, and that leapfrogging sprawl is economically inefficient," says Bruce Katz, an urban affairs expert at the Brookings Institution.

The new movement began in 1992 when Myron Orfield, a Minnesota state legislator, made computer-generated maps that tracked the migration of wealth from the Twin Cities. He found vast disparities between inner-ring and fringe communities in household income, infrastructure subsidies, and tax burdens. Orfield, who coined the term "metropoliticos," says similar maps show the same phenomenon in Baltimore, Chicago, Milwaukee, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and Seattle.

UPHILL. The urban-suburban alliances face an uphill battle against powerful private landowners and municipalities opposed to ceding autonomy and money. But in Minnesota, a coalition of city and inner-suburban legislators led by Orfield passed fair-housing state legislation in 1993 and 1994 and a tax-sharing bill in 1995 that was vetoed by the governor. It also put \$1 billion of regional sewer, transit, and land-use planning under a metro council with taxing authority.

Now, nascent alliances are starting to score victories elsewhere. Maryland Governor Parris Glendening recently pushed through legislation confining state infrastructure subsidies largely to existing municipalities. It also would ease environmental cleanup rules for companies that want to locate on aban-

doned industrial sites. Glendening says the initiative would do much "to help established communities, to upgrade or rebuild infrastructure, [and] to direct jobs and business to older areas." In York, Pa., a business coalition is seeking a state measure offering incentives to outlying municipalities to curb growth. And church ministers around Gary, Ind.,

THE AGENDA OF METROPOLITICOS

TAX SHARING Close wealth disparities within regions by requiring fast-growing towns to shift some tax resources to cities and aging inner suburbs

NEW HOUSING Reduce poverty concentration in cities by building low-income homes in outlying suburbs

END SUBSIDIES Cut off government payments for exurban highway, water, and sewer construction, shifting development money to core communities

REGIONAL TRANSIT Build transportation systems to provide inner-city workers access to suburban jobs

DATA: BUSINESS WEEK

have convinced county officials to place a landfill in an exurb rather than expand an urban one, and to keep a courthouse in downtown Hammond.

Do such strategies work? Advocates point to Oregon, where counties were required 20 years ago to draw an Urban Growth Boundary. Lands beyond the boundaries are zoned for farms and forests only—no new homes, offices, or shopping centers. The result: While the Portland area's urbanized population grew by 14% in the 1980s, developed land expanded by just 11%, says urban consultant David Rusk. Downtown Portland is booming, and property values in even the poorest district have doubled in the past five years.

Resistance to such restrictions is inevitable, of course.

Robert F. Crossk, a member of the county council that represents Gary's outlying suburbs, says urban residents "should be worrying about their crime and youth problems instead of telling us how to run our government. Every area should be able to grow the way it wants." To which the metropoliticos respond: Unless the forces of sprawl and polarization are checked, the middle class will move perpetually outward. Today's exurbs, then, could become the Euclids of tomorrow.

By Susan B. Garland in Washington, with Peter Galuszka in Euclid, Ohio

Portland's efforts to curb sprawl doubled property values in even the poorest areas