

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

## DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

---

Op-Eds from ENSC230 Energy and the  
Environment: Economics and Policies, Fall 2011

Undergraduate Research in Agricultural  
Economics

---

Fall 2011

### Urban Sprawl

Noah Philson  
rico9001@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/ageconug2>



Part of the [Agricultural and Resource Economics Commons](#)

---

Philson, Noah, "Urban Sprawl" (2011). *Op-Eds from ENSC230 Energy and the Environment: Economics and Policies, Fall 2011*. 3.

<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/ageconug2/3>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Undergraduate Research in Agricultural Economics at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Op-Eds from ENSC230 Energy and the Environment: Economics and Policies, Fall 2011 by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

ENSC 230/AECN 399 Energy and the Environment:  
Economics and Policy  
OP-ED  
12/09/2011

## **Urban Sprawl**

By Noah Philson  
Email: [rico9001@gmail.com](mailto:rico9001@gmail.com)

There is a major problem affecting a great deal of The United States. Not only does it make people unhealthy but it pollutes the environment and increases our dependency on oil. Something this horrible should be banned. Then why hasn't it been banned. Urban Sprawl causes all of these problems and more. It has become a destructive way of life for The United States. The sooner this problem is stopped the easier it will be to stop it.

Urban Sprawl is where a city builds outwards instead of upwards. Cities like Atlanta, Houston, and Phoenix are all building outwards and not up. By building like this, farmland and forests are destroyed causing damage to the environment. But it doesn't stop there; urban sprawl causes many more environmental problems.

With an abundance of energy in the U.S., vast amount of space, and the wealth of the average American; people began to build large luxurious houses not wanting to move into smaller apartment style housing. The invention of the automobile and availability of cheap fuel is what fueled this building style. Slowly the U.S. built large urban cities that were composed of large houses. But when gas started to become scarcer and the effects of CO<sub>2</sub> became known it was realized that this building style wasn't acceptable.

The U.S. was built with cheap and abundant oil that was not priced with the social costs. Social costs include the money needed to fix the damage done by the CO<sub>2</sub>. Because of this cheap oil the country is now dependent on oil. The U.S. was built sprawled out because it cost very little for the extra comfort. But now that the country is spread out and gas prices are rising, it is becoming harder to support this life style. What was once a cheap way to live is now becoming expensive.

Now it is known that urban sprawl affects the World in multiple ways, directly and indirectly. Urban sprawl helps cause global warming, water pollution, and bad health. Most of these problems are because people have to travel long distances because the city is built outwards. Travelling between destinations people have to use cars; and when using cars they both pollute the environment and destroy their health.

The pollution comes from the car's exhaust producing CO<sub>2</sub>. This is not only damaging to the environment and helping the global temperature rise; it is causing us to need more oil. To get this oil we are going to countries outside of ours and becoming dependent on these countries. We are using these countries as a crutch. But this is not the only way that urban sprawl promotes pollution.

Aside from the pollution produced from the excess of cars on the road cause; urban sprawl is polluting our water cycle. Urban sprawl causes more cement to cover the ground to create roads. This means that the water cannot go through the ground to be filtered. Instead the water is channeled off to other water systems outside of the city, this can cause widespread flooding. Excess cement also causes more radiation to be reflected back into the atmosphere instead of absorbing it into the ground. This radiation causes the Earth's temperature to rise as well. On top of this pollution we are cutting down more and more trees which can help prevent global warming. We then take these trees and use them to build more houses in urban areas which are going to help cause more pollution. This has come from the drives of private interests.

Because of private interests and gasoline being priced without social regards; the environment is now being polluted uncontrollably. The U.S.'s bad habit of urban sprawl and excessive use of fossil fuels is now being adopted in other countries. But the world cannot handle his trend as it is now showing through global warming. It is a revered dream that all nations now share. Everyone wants to have the huge relaxing style of the U.S.'s and its' urban sprawl. But this is not a style that the world can sustain. The United States needs to use methods that will stop and ease the pain of urban sprawl on the world and lead the world away from urban sprawl. Pricing things with social costs, along with imposing taxes making it harder to build suburbs will help. Stopping urban sprawl will help make our nation healthier and less dependent on other countries. The faster we act the easier it will be to stop.