

Two Different Sprawl Perspectives from Two Site Value Tax Proponents

Sprawl is a Freedom Issue

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The following quoted excerpts are from Mr. Bast's article, "Managing Growth, Destroying Freedom," published in the Sept.-Oct. 1998 Issue of *Intellectual Ammunition*.

"Urban sprawl" worries some people. They say it will lead to a shortage of agricultural land, deplete the planet's limited supplies of fossil fuels, and load the air we breathe with hazardous pollutants. Others worry that sprawl reinforces social inequalities by separating jobs from workers and encouraging race- and income-based isolation. Still others think "sprawl" is compromising our quality of life by taking away the intimacy, social connectivity, and sense of social identity that come from living in compact neighborhoods....

Urban expansion is, in fact, responsible for surprisingly little conversion of either forest or croplands into roads, houses, and parking lots...

Air quality in nearly all major American cities has dramatically improved during the past twenty years, even as suburban "sprawl" boomed...

During the past twenty years, estimates of oil reserves have increased nearly every year due to new discoveries and technological advances, even as we consume more gasoline with each passing year...

As cities grow, property values in their central business districts rise, prompting businesses that require large amounts of space--typically manufacturers--to leave, and companies requiring less space--typically service providers--to enter... New employers will take the place of businesses that leave...

When suburban expansion harms low-income families, it is usually due to government policies that inflate the cost of housing in suburban areas, making it more difficult for low- and moderate-income families to relocate closer to the new suburban job markets...

Randal O'Toole says empirical investigations consistently find that lower operating costs in the suburbs more than offset the higher initial capital costs of installing new infrastructure....

A careful study of taxes paid by road users in 1992 found total revenues of \$114 billion, while spending on roads that year (including law enforcement and administration) was just \$76 billion...

The problems often attributed to unplanned growth are more often the result of prevailing government policies that distort market processes that would otherwise lead to win-win solutions.

(Mr. Bast is President of the Heartland Institute, a non-profit think tank based in Chicago. Heartland has over a

dozen "Georgist" documents posted on PolicyFax, its fax-on-demand information service, and expects to post more in the future. A Heartland Policy Study on site-value taxation, written by long-time Georgist Fred Foldvary, Ph.D, is currently undergoing peer review.)