

Urban Sprawl Policy

Trinity Gomez, Environmental Studies Program, California State University
Monterey Bay



Urban sprawl is an epidemic across the nation causing a multitude of environmental issues including emissions of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. Policy at the local and state level are being implicated to combat sprawl.

Smart Growth

Urban sprawl is a wide spread issue across the United States, and many local and state governments have begun to adopt what are known as “smart growth” reforms to combat sprawl and its effects on the environment such as emissions. Smart growth policies do not have a uniform definition, therefore polices can look different in every area they are implemented (Cooper, 2004). A broad definition may include, “Compact neighborhoods that combine housing,

offices, schools and other amenities linked by public transportation and sidewalks,” though not all policy entails such aspects (Cooper 2004, X). In Maryland, Governor Parris Glendening took on and implicated the Smart Growth and Neighborhood Conservation Act of 1997. The policy involved an approach known as infilling, cities in the state were “required to deny or limit subsidies for new roads, sewers and schools outside state-identified smart growth areas” (cite source, Year, X). This was intended to improve the use of public transportation, reduced driving, and create shopping, dining and entertainment centers that were easily accessible through biking or walking (Cooper, 2004). Despite the positive impacts that this act encouraged, there were many critiques from the residents that had been living in the area for a long

time. Some felt as though their quality of life was reduced by the necessary reforms to abide to the Smart Growth and Neighborhood Conservation Act (cite source). The overall initiative also ran the possibility of having an opposite effect of the goals for smart growth because some feared that the act would increase congestion and crowds rather than reducing them, contributing more to the effects sprawl has on emission output (Cooper, 2004). On the federal level, the few attempts for smart growth legislation have not made it out of committees and have not become law. One example of this is on February 12, 2003, Senator Mark Udall introduced the Urban Sprawl and Smart Growth Act to the House of Representatives. The bill would have required the Council of Environmental Quality to conduct a study on urban sprawl and smart growth, taking into consideration the environmental assessments of a minimum of 15 federal agencies (Urban sprawl and smart growth study act, H.R. 748). The purpose for the act was to get the federal government involved in the prevention of urban sprawl despite growth management being a state or local issue (Urban sprawl and smart growth study act, H.R. 748). This bill was introduced twice, once in 2002 and again in 2003; despite multiple efforts it never was enacted into a law.

Urban Growth Boundaries in Oregon

The state of Oregon is the largest smart growth region in the United States. Urban growth boundaries under Oregon Senate Bill 100 require all Oregon cities and counties to create a comprehensive land use plan to control urban expansion onto farm and forest areas (Christensen & Rojas, 2019). The law expanded on senate bill 10 which required land use plans that followed 10

state goals (Abbott, n.d). Portland's urban growth area has expanded significantly and has been redrawn multiple times, with concerns about how land around the urban growth boundaries have been brought into question, there are four sets of priorities that the law holds laying out the criteria for incorporating new : Urban reserves which are regions directly outside the boundary, Exception land, neither rural or urban areas, Marginal land, and farm or forest land (Christensen & Rojas, 2019). Smart growth in Oregon has been the pioneer for many of the other programs being developed in other states (Christensen & Rojas, 2019).

Literature Cited

Abbott, C. (n.d). Senate Bill 100. *The Oregon Encyclopedia*. Retrieved from https://oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/senate_bill_100/

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