

Addressing Urban Sprawl

by Sophia



WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, we understand urban sprawl and the ongoing efforts to address it. We will discuss government efforts to mitigate urban sprawl problems through regulations and market incentives. We will also explore future opportunities to manage urban sprawl, as well as the barriers to addressing urban sprawl issues. Specifically, this lesson will cover the following:

1. Addressing Urban Sprawl: Regulations and Market Incentives

There are two main areas where governments are attempting to solve urban sprawl issues, and they can vary depending on whether it is a state or a local government. The following table summarizes strategies in the two areas of regulations and market incentives.

Regulation Solutions	Market Incentives
Designing zoning requirements to control the kind of land that can be developed in certain areas	Subsidies that support density and discourage sprawl; These can be quite effective and can include financial incentives for repurposing existing land instead of building on undeveloped property Tax breaks for activities or constructions that support population density Publicly funded mass transit, which can reduce the need for personal transport, thereby reducing the need for wider roads while encouraging higher population density and proximity to mass transit services
Levying impact fees and requiring developers to fund projects for public good, particularly related to population growth	
Limiting the urban growth boundary so that cities are forced to increase population density instead of sprawl	
Sharing information and designing education campaigns aimed at encouraging urban density rather than sprawl	
Designating certain areas as green zones to protect undeveloped land	



Oregon has mandated urban growth boundaries for all its cities.

2. Future Opportunities

There are several opportunities we are beginning to take advantage of. If fostered, they can provide future solutions to urban sprawl. The following are some such opportunities:

- When planning urban green spaces, we are leaving parks open for grassy areas. These urban green spaces are increasing nationally. Currently, there are over 1 million acres of parks in the United States.
- There are ongoing public and private efforts to repurpose old plots that were polluted in prior use, also called brownfields. This allows such plots and any old buildings on the plots to be used for something else.
- Cities across the country are trying to revitalize their city centers to encourage dense urban living through identity creation, mass transit, mixed land use, and zoning.



3. Challenges to Addressing Urban Sprawl

There are some real challenges to addressing urban sprawl. The table below summarizes some important challenges.

Issue	Challenge
Historical zoning laws	These laws prevent mixed use and urban density, and they can be slow and difficult to change.
Adequate services	Providing services such as parking, grocery stores, and emergency response within dense urban settings can also be difficult.
Stakeholder disagreement	In denser municipalities, there are more stakeholders and groups to bring into alignment, which can cause conflict.
Private developers	Financed through banks, private developers can be adamant and difficult to dissuade from facilitating urban sprawl.
Agencies	Those providing development permits can be difficult to control and manage for density.

Communities	Designing communities to provide comfortable housing within a reasonable distance to businesses can also be difficult.
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SUMMARY

In this lesson, we learned about government efforts to **address and mitigate urban sprawl**, in the form of **regulations and market incentives**. We learned about **future opportunities** to decrease urban sprawl and **challenges to addressing urban sprawl** including barriers to creating change that would encourage urban density.

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