

Forum: Environmental Assembly

Issue of: Establishing international standards in order to reduce consequences of urban sprawl, such as habitat fragmentation, water, and air pollution and increased infrastructure costs

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## **Table of Contents:**

- I. Introduction**
- II. Definition of key terms**
  - a) **Urban sprawl**
  - b) **Single-use development**
  - c) **Low-density**
  - d) **High-density**
- III. General Overview**
- IV. Major parties and their views**
  - a) **UN Environmental Assembly**
  - b) **Canada**
  - c) **China**
- V. Possible solutions**
  - a) **Allocating international funds to help LEDCs combat urban sprawl**
  - b) **Establishing a tax on urban areas**
- VI. Bibliography**

### **I. Introduction**

Urbanization and suburbanization are part of the natural cycle of a city. As the population in the city center increases, property prices surge, causing citizens (mostly the middle and lower classes) to move into the suburbs when they cannot afford to live in the city anymore. As sub-urbanization continues, and more and more people leave the city, properties' prices in the suburbs start to

rise while those in the city slowly fall. This causes a large number of people to move into the city when they cannot afford to live in the suburbs anymore. After this, the cycle starts again. This concept is a basic one, and one that applies to almost any big city and is not a problem in of itself. The problem begins when urbanization and suburbanization happen so rapidly, that the suburbs begin to “sprawl” out of control, causing chaotic and disorganized city planning. This phenomenon is called “urban sprawl” and it has some very serious consequences, not just for the people living there, but for the environment as well.

## **II. Definition of key terms**

### **a) Urban sprawl**

The term “Urban sprawl” is used to describe the phenomenon in which a large number of people migrate from the city to the suburb at a rapid rate, causing the suburb to chaotically grow out of control resulting in disorganized and unsustainable growth.

### **b) Single-use development**

This term is used to describe the distribution of large plots of land to serve a single purpose. For example, a large area within a suburb might be designated for industry, in which case the land would be used only for industry. This can result in segregation between classes, for example, poor industrial workers would need to live in or near the industrial sector because otherwise they would need to travel by car every day to get to work.

### **c) Low-density**

The term low-density is usually used in regards to population, referring to the number of people living in every square kilometer or mile, etc. In the case of low-density, the number of people residing per square kilometer is very low. This causes lower property prices, because the supply of land is higher and the demand is lower.

### **d) High-density**

High-density is the opposite of low-density, as it indicates that there is a large amount of people living in a smaller space. This causes property prices to surge. The problem with high density occurs when there is not enough housing to accommodate all the people living in the suburb or city, causing quality of life and prosperity to decrease.

## **III. General overview**

Urban sprawl is one of the hardest issues to combat, as it happens quickly and unexpectedly. As urban sprawl develops, one can see clear effects start to emerge. For one, single-use development is often a result of urban sprawl. The problem with single-use developments is that it creates an environment where every citizen needs a car, as it is impractical and sometimes downright impossible to move from area to area through other means, due to the sheer

distance. This, combined with chaotic and disorganized road systems, creates many problems such as traffic jams, which don't sound like a big deal, however, they are a major contributor to fossil fuel emissions as most people leave their car running while not moving. This also increases air pollution, creating an unhealthy environment for the citizens. Another result of urban sprawl is habitat loss for many animals. This is due to the fact that urban sprawl indicates a quick growth in urban areas that have a low population density, therefore more land is required to accommodate all of the new people. Since one of the key characteristics of urban sprawl is its surprising nature, politicians can't properly prepare for it by building space-efficient housing like apartment buildings. In developing nations especially, the rapid population growth can often result in urban sprawl, causing many unique and exotic animals to lose their habitat. Clear examples of this include South America, Africa, and Southeast Asia, all of which are areas with rapidly growing populations that are sacrificing entire rainforests and other natural terrains just to accommodate all of these new people. In conclusion, urban sprawl is unsustainable and is a issue that the international community needs to address now, as its effect on the environment is absolutely devastating.

#### **IV. Mayor parties and their views**

##### **a. UN Environmental Assembly**

The United Nations Environmental Assembly has tried time and time again to solve this issue, through projects like the city summit, however, urban sprawl is still thriving and a long term solution is required.

## **b. Canada**

Canada is a country that is extremely affected by urban sprawl due to its rising population, with some estimates claiming that up to 80% of its population now lives in urban areas. The Canadian government is trying its best to limit this, and are thus a perfect example of why this issue needs bigger international involvement.

## **c. China**

Due to China's enormous population, urban sprawl has been thriving for the past 20 years. It has had a severe impact on air pollution, causing many Chinese cities to limit car usage as a desperate effort to limit the toxic air.

## **V. Possible solutions**

### **a) Allocating international funds to help LEDCs prevent/limit urban sprawl**

A clear issue when dealing with urban sprawl is that many countries, specifically LEDCs, don't have the financial capability to deal with urban sprawl. A possible way of dealing with this is redistributing money from the UN to NGOs in order to make sure that the money is really combating urban sprawl.

### **b) Establishing a tax for urban areas**

Another way of encouraging governments to deal with urban sprawl would be the opposite of the former suggestion: establishing a tax that every nation has to pay for every square kilometer of urbanized land or something of the sort.

This will ensure that nations put fighting urban sprawl higher on their priority list, hopefully resulting in an international effort to fight urban sprawl.

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