

How Urban Sprawl is Undermining America's Environment, Economy and Social Fabric. by F. Kaid Benfield, Matthew D. Raimi, and Donald D. T. Chen. (Washington: Natural Resources Defense Council and the Surface Transportation Policy Project, 1999, 215 pages, \$20 pb.)

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Even though this book is completely oblivious of anything close to the approach which we Georgists support to address sprawl development, right now it is likely to be the best single work covering the issues and the literature. For this reason, I recommend it to our readership. Its well written and detailed description of the problem and the challenge, all with voluminous footnotes, offers us a short cut to any substantiation we might need to argue the case.

The team of authors has managed to pull together in five chapters just about all the available evidence of current land use and transportation trends and their social costs, as well as providing a review of the arguments and the players that presently occupy the high ground of public debate. There is ample discussion of the loss of farmland, of the looming energy crisis we will soon face, of the economic implications of sprawl development, and of the relationship between land use and transportation patterns. The solutions offered are the ones we would expect to find: growth boundaries, transit oriented development, and other command-and-control devices that seem to have become fixations among contemporary urban planners. But the treatment is so comprehensive that one would be hard put to find a handier reference foil for the price.

It is heartening, perhaps to see the concern about sprawl and about land use patterns generally shift so quickly to the front burner of national consciousness. We should recall that it is really only since the last national election that the issue has appeared on the horizon at all. Given the fact that the debate about the various solutions is still superficial and tentative, we should not feel reluctant to enter the fray. And this book is an excellent place to get an introductory handle on the debate as it currently stands. □