

The Truth about

SPRAWL

Americans are concerned about gridlocked traffic, disappearing open space and overcrowding.



Farms and open space are disappearing daily to supply land for more suburban development.



Sprawl and traffic have become major issues for many Americans as their daily lives are negatively impacted.

Is high-density “smart growth” the solution?

“Smart growth” has been widely touted by politicians, some environmentalists and the media as the silver bullet that will solve growth-caused problems.

But is smart growth good policy or just a marketing ploy? Curiously, it is championed by groups as diverse as the Sierra Club and the National Association of Home Builders.

At its core, smart growth is an updated rehash of planning strategies that is pro-growth while maintaining some open space. It recommends

increased public transit, green zones around cities and infill of underused urban space. Americans are further urged to embrace much denser housing (even as they purchase spacious suburban homes).

Ted Turner, founder of CNN, said in 1998, “I maintain that there is no such thing as smart growth. Further growth is a catastrophe. We’re going to live in a ‘Road Warriors’ (future),” referring to the movie about a post-apocalyptic wasteland.

America's Overpopulation...

A major source of sprawl and much environmental degradation



America's POPULATION is growing faster than any other industrialized country. California is growing more rapidly than Bangladesh and will be as densely populated as China in 30 years.

But how did this happen? Aren't native-born Americans having smaller families?

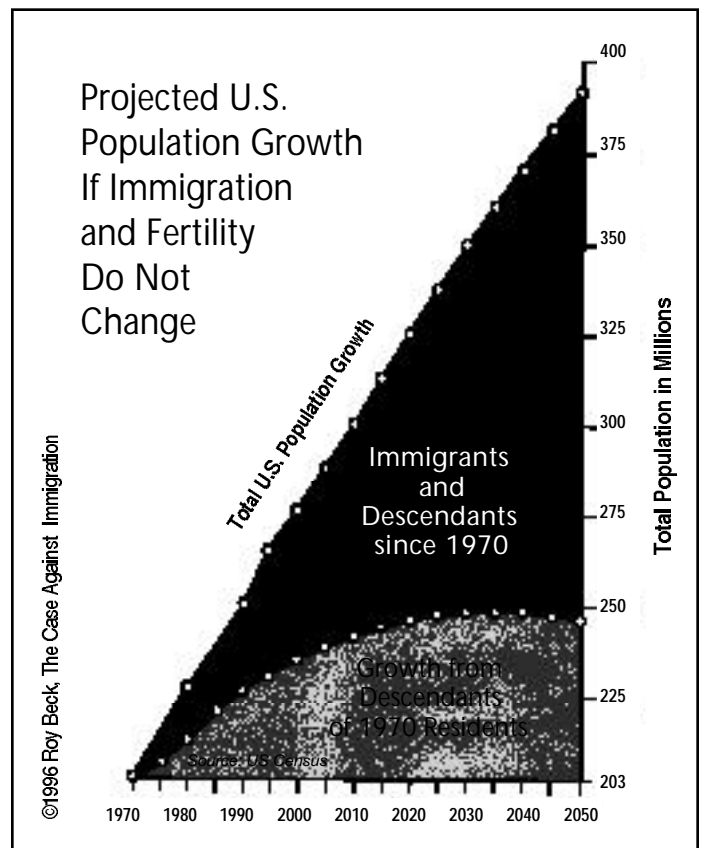
They are — Americans have replacement-level fertility .

The cause of our endless population growth is mass IMMIGRATION.

Since 1970, more than 30 million immigrants and their descendants have been added to the United States.

"Middle range Census Bureau projections show our population rising to nearly 400 million by the year 2050, an increase the equivalent of adding 40 cities the size of Los Angeles. But many demographers believe it will actually be much worse, and alternative Census Bureau projections agree: if current immigration trends continue, the population will exceed half a billion by the middle of the next century."

— Rep. Tony Beilenson (D-CA), 1996



Who We Are...

SUSPS is a national group of thousands of Sierra Club members. Our primary focus is to return the Sierra Club to its traditional position that environmentalism must include responsible limits to population growth. As our name implies, we believe that conservationists must indeed think globally and act locally (in this case, nationally). We advocate a comprehensive American environmental policy — one that includes lowering wasteful consumption, halting U.S. population growth by reducing immigration and birth rates, and supporting international family planning. For more information, see our web site at www.susps.org.

Sprawl: It's Too Many People

Believe your eyes

- In the decade of the 1990s, 70 percent of the increase in U.S. population growth was due to immigrants and their children.
- The present immigration rate will cause America's population to double within the lifetimes of children born today.
- All conservation victories will be obliterated by the physical needs of additional millions of people requiring housing, highways and water.
- The California Transportation Committee forecast in May 1999 that the state would need to spend \$100 billion on infrastructure and repair in the next decade just to keep up with the state's explosive population growth.



Freedom of the Open Road?

The automobile was once an American icon of freedom and independence. These days, a car is more like a cell in a gridlock prison.

In 1975, Americans averaged 41 percent of their peak-hour travel time driving under congested conditions. By 1994, that figure had increased to 68 percent.

Sprawl also means that Americans are driving further. In 1975, the average American drove 23 miles in traffic during peak hour. By 1994 that figure had reached 45 miles, a near doubling.

Loss of Farmland — Cornell Professor David Pimentel has studied the effects of population growth on American agriculture and food supply. He has concluded that U.S. crop and pasture land resources in 2050 will be reduced to about half their present levels on a per person basis and the U.S. will cease to be a grain exporter by 2025. Both the variety and amount of food will be restricted by availability and cost.

Future generations of Americans will likely have less animal protein in their diets and will be paying a higher percentage of their incomes for food. According to Professor Pimentel, Americans may eventually spend 30 to 50 percent of their incomes on food, a substantial increase over today's 15 percent.



Facing the Future

Tough decisions now versus catastrophe later

While it is certainly true that sprawl is encouraged by ill-considered zoning, tax advantages and other short-sighted policies, exploding population growth is clearly a major causative factor. Congress' insistence on a policy of overpopulation is transforming America from the home of purple mountains' majesty to gridlocked suburbs from sea to shining sea.

Much of our interstate highway system was built in the 1950s and 1960s when U.S. population ranged between 150 and 179 million. Now, a short half century later, the population is 288 million — 100 million more Americans. Sprawl and gridlock should not be surprising.

Remarkably, when sprawl is discussed, the demographic forces at work are rarely mentioned. Media and government apparently have a hard time grasping the idea that a rapidly growing population is a major source of many pressing difficulties all around. Of course, it is hard for a politician to say that growth might not be totally beneficial. In addition, many are so sensitized by political correctness that they are afraid to speak the dreaded "P" word — "population."

Political Correctness vs. Conservation

This sensibility may make the free-speech police happy but it is not good for the planet. The skyrocketing number of humans has profound consequences for every aspect of our lives and the future being mindlessly created. Our population profligacy is causing environmental changes that lessen the quality of life for everyone now and extending into the future. The results are more extreme in the U.S. because our high level of consumption multiplies each person's effect. The future as we are enacting it will surely be a time of water rationing, increased food costs and overcrowding. Our treasured



The housing industry welcomes nonstop population growth — and the Sierra Club does not object.

American freedoms will be curtailed because of government intervention required to keep order among so many.

Regrettably, many environmentalists fear saying "population." For example, the Sierra

Club instituted a major anti-sprawl campaign in 1998 with a report, "The Dark Side of the American Dream," which did not even mention U.S. population growth as a root cause. Rather than honestly facing unending population growth, the Sierra Club has embraced so-called "smart growth." Little more than an updated approach to urban planning, smart growth means enticing people to live in high-density cities interwoven with green belts in which little or no development is permitted. It offers small palliatives, but cannot solve the fundamental problems caused by the endless population growth that America faces.

Perhaps it is the cause of this growth that unnerves some environmental organizations. The U.S. is growing by more than two million people every year, 60 percent of which is driven by immigration — legal, illegal and the children born to immigrants.

The bottom line is that "smart growth" is a symptomatic approach and can only slow — not stop — the slide toward a society too crowded to function. The only solution is to narrow the human on-ramp by Congressional reduction of immigration to sustainable levels. Moderate immigration was the historical norm until legislative changes in 1965, and now a return to traditional levels is required to establish sustainability. U.S. population must be stabilized soon if we hope to save America's environment.

