

## **Problems, Policies, and Politics: The Case of Urban Sprawl**

Americans disagree on whether the movement of housing and jobs from urban areas to suburban and even rural areas is a positive or worrisome trend. The critics label the trend “sprawl” and point to a laundry list of problems that sprawl exacerbates for planet Earth and its inhabitants. In this paper, your task is to analyze the policy and political controversies surrounding the issue of urban sprawl. The first part of the assignment is to briefly articulate the competing viewpoints on the extent to which “sprawl” is a problem and to defend where you stand. Second, provide a brief overview of policy proposals that deserve serious consideration to mitigate urban sprawl. This should include *some* focus on *national* policies rather than focusing exclusively on local and regional policy proposals. Defend which policy proposal(s) – if any – you find most promising at the national level (and feel free to also defend local/regional proposal(s) too). Third, analyze the political context surrounding the policy/policies you analyze. How optimistic are you that the national political mood aligns itself with your proposal? Where is the opposition to “smart growth” coming from – ideological conservatives? Pro-business interest groups? Federal government subsidies? Ordinary Americans and their lifestyles? Or others?

Your paper should demonstrate your command of the course material, drawing extensively from – and articulating the core arguments of – the assigned readings from the first three weeks of the syllabus. The best papers will demonstrate in-depth understanding of the course readings.

The recommended length of your paper is between 4 and 6 pages (double-spaced, 1 inch margins, 12 point font). Please *number the pages* and *staple the document*. Your paper will be due by Wednesday, January 30 (Week 4), at 10am. You may turn in a paper copy, or you may email the paper as an attachment to me at [dlipson@kzoo.edu](mailto:dlipson@kzoo.edu). If you email the paper, please save the document in Word format and name the file `FirstnameLastnamePaper1.doc` (e.g. JaneSmithPaper1.doc).