

with respect to the political legitimacy of decisions and the success of their implementation.

Part V features chapters on emerging tools in management, namely the Internet, decision support systems, adaptive ecosystem management, alternative dispute resolution (ADR), regional environmental impact assessment (REIA), and the Central American Water Tribunal. Juxtaposed against the realities of African and south-east Asian countries described earlier in the volume, the chapters on Internet-based tools and decision support systems make evident the enormous chasm between the opportunities for public participation in certain contexts as compared to others. Soft technologies that are more grounded in people-to-people interactions, such as adaptive management, ADR, and REIA applications, would seem to open avenues more likely within reach in resource-poor regions and offer hope for addressing fundamental issues of communication and trust.

The chapters in this volume together remind us of the need to overcome the tremendous inequities in access not only to information, participatory processes, and justice, but also to basic elements of human life, namely the alleviation of poverty, illiteracy, and war. The editors' summary of the lessons learned from the public participation efforts makes clear that facilitating participation of the public in many regions of the world will require vast modification of the institutions and tools developed thus far.

Connie P. Ozawa

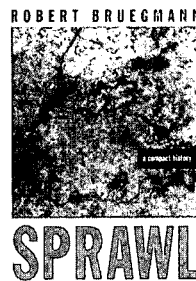
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Review Roundtable: The Sprawl Debate Revisited



This Land: The Battle over Sprawl and the Future of America

Anthony Flint. The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 2006. 310 pages. \$24.95.



Sprawl: A Compact History

Robert Bruegmann. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2006. 306 pages. \$27.50, \$17 (paperback).

Roundtable Overview

Robert E. Lang and Jennifer R. LeFurgy

Ten years ago, *JAPA* published a point-counterpoint debate on sprawl between Reid Ewing and co-authors Peter Gordon and Harry Richardson. The exchange sparked controversy and was widely regarded as summarizing the opposing positions on sprawl up to that time. The debate focused mostly on the costs of sprawl, with Ewing making the case for a compact city form while Gordon and Richardson argued for a more dispersed, market-led development pattern.

This Review Roundtable revisits the sprawl debate by exploring two new books on the subject. The books are Robert Bruegmann's *Sprawl: A Compact History* and Anthony Flint's *This Land*. Although the books do not address each other's arguments directly, we felt they would serve as proxies for the two sides. Bruegmann's book takes a historical-libertarian view on the topic and argues that sprawl is not a problem, while Flint's work is more critical and cautionary.

Several key researchers whose ideas helped inform the 1997 debate have continued to publish on the topic. For example, Anthony Downs of the Brookings Institution wrote in 1999 about the link between sprawl and urban decline ("Some realities about sprawl and urban decline," *Housing Policy Debate* 10(4), 955-974). In addition, in 2000 Robert Burchell of Rutgers University and coauthors updated and refined earlier efforts to determine the costs of sprawl. (*Costs of sprawl—2000*. Washington, DC: Transit Cooperative Research Program. TCRP Report 74).

Researchers also sought to define and measure sprawl in the United States. Interestingly, one of the better known efforts is an analysis in *USA Today* in 2001 by Haya El Nasser and Paul Overberg

("A comprehensive look at sprawl in America," pp. A1, 12–13, February 22). The newspaper employed methods first suggested by Anthony Downs to gauge shifts in population density at the metropolitan level. Academic work focused on metropolitan density patterns followed, while other researchers developed a more multidimensional method to track urban sprawl.

A consistent finding in these studies is that sprawl varies widely among U.S. metropolitan areas. Yet a distinct regional pattern also emerges. The West, especially the Southwest, maintains surprisingly dense metropolitan form. The fact that Los Angeles, the poster child of sprawl in Ewing's 1997 critique, has the densest census-defined urbanized area in the United States demonstrates to Bruegmann how smart growth advocates such as Ewing have misread sprawl. The same is true for other notable Sunbelt cities famous for their sprawl such as Phoenix and Las Vegas. As Bruegmann notes:

Cities like Phoenix, Los Angeles and Las Vegas are often described as the ultimate in sprawl. In fact they tend to be rather compact settlements with little abandoned housing or vacant land at the center and almost none of the exurban penumbra that surrounds almost all of the older cities of the American northeast (p. 66).

Our panel noted that both subject books were generally readable; however, they clearly favored Flint's work over Bruegmann's. This comes as no surprise given that most participants are urban planning faculty and that the planning field in general comes down against sprawl. Yet most panelists did give Bruegmann credit for his scholarship, as Robert Fishman notes:

Bruegmann is really the first libertarian whom one can take seriously on the city. He really knows urban history; he knows the way cities work. And he is trying to understand sprawl from that perspective. I think he is asking: What does policy mean? How can we really implement it?

Flint, while striking some as too journalistic, was praised for the sophistication with which he depicted the current debate over sprawl. Flint's on-the-ground reporting of how people perceive sprawl was noted by several roundtable panelists. In fact, one critic of Flint's journalistic style, John Landis, still thought Flint's book provided a useful window into the American mind on sprawl. Landis finds:

When I contrast those voices [of people Flint interviewed] to those of my university colleagues and students, I do start to worry that maybe . . . we in academia . . . are a little out of touch. It was this ability to cause me to question my own beliefs that led me to enjoy reading both books, but especially Flint's.

Despite generally favorable reviews for both works, the panel did note some major gaps. For example, some panelists observed that neither book offered much advice on how to accommodate future growth. Again, this is an insight one would expect from the panel given the future focus among most planners. Panelists also found that neither book really advanced the Ewing versus Gordon/Richardson debate from ten years ago, although they credited Flint

with making an attempt. Finally, though they found both books interesting and useful for other purposes, none seemed willing to assign either of these books as a main graduate text.

Roundtable Discussion

Moderator

Robert E. Lang, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

Participants

Robert Fishman, University of Michigan

Ann Forsyth, University of Minnesota

John Landis, University of California, Berkeley

Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris, University of California, Los Angeles

Arthur C. Nelson, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

Rolf Pendall, Cornell University

Harry Richardson, University of Southern California

Anne Vernez Moudon, University of Washington

The following is an edited version of the panel's discussion.

LANG: Let me state my bias up front—I like both books. And they both were, to me, readable. One [Bruegmann] is obviously more academically oriented than the other [Flint], yet both books had merits. How do you see the plusses and minuses of these two books?

NELSON: What I was surprised about with both books is that they lack a perspective on where we were in 1950 and where we are today. They both did a wonderful job of reflecting on events, nuances, issues, and personalities. But we have to start with where we were in 1950. In 1950, we had 150 million people, about 40 million homes, 50 million jobs, and about 20 billion square feet of nonresidential space. That's where we were. In 2006, we're at 300 million people, twice as many people, and 120 million homes, three times as many as in 1950. We're at 160 million jobs, including part-time jobs. We have 90 billion square feet of nonresidential space, four and a half times the amount of nonresidential space as 1950. Between 1950 and 2006, how could cities meet this explosive growth by themselves? I think that is the context missing from both books. Bruegmann summarizes, "It's amazing we actually did this." That was one of his last paragraphs. "It is amazing we actually pulled this off." Both authors say, "What do we do next?" "Where do we take it from here?" I think they both give us a platform to consider the future in historical context, but they both lack perspective on what is really ahead of us, in my view.

LOUKAITOU-SIDERIS: I definitely agree with you. And I actually put in my notes that while I did very much appreciate the historical comparative context, particularly in the Bruegmann book, he does not really relate the degree or scale of the effect of sprawl.

FISHMAN: Bruegmann does not make 1945 a large divide because he wants to show that sprawl is always with us. He wants to point out that it is a kind of inevitable force that will always be there. To say that we had to expand, that there was no room to accommodate growth without expansion to the suburbs, is to miss the crucial elements of the disinvestment and abandonment of the core cities.

NELSON: You're right about places like Detroit and Cleveland and some other places. But other cities have recently seen a rebound. I think it was more difficult at the time to rebuild and redevelop in central cities than it was to invest in the greenfields. And developers had to meet market demands quickly. Let's face it, people wanted new suburban homes, and builders delivered. But that was all part of meeting growing and changing needs, including the needs of a mass market. I think now is the time to reflect and say, "Okay, what about the next 50 years? Where should we head there?" I'm not sure I got the lessons from these two books on where we should go. They asked the questions, but they didn't really provide suggestions.

LANDIS: Does either book move us forward from the discussion ten years ago? In my view, Bruegmann's book does not. Its view of sprawl as declining density is just too simplistic for this day and age. Others have departed from this mono-dimensional view of sprawl with some subtlety. What I saw in Bruegmann's book was essentially what Colin Clark wrote about 50 years ago: the declining density gradient. The lack of a deeper history in Bruegmann's book was also surprising given that he is an historian.

Flint's book, on the other hand, is a significant contribution. What I liked most about it was how he demonstrated how people and events really matter. This was reflected in the discussion of Measure 37 in Oregon as a backlash against excessive regulation and smart growth. I think this idea, that people and events at the local level help shape national debates, is very important and we often forget it.

FORSYTH: I think Bruegmann is attacking the elite and architectural critiques of sprawl. He is not particularly concerned with environmental or social issues. His book does not have a central question. Rather it offers a proposal; that sprawl isn't so bad, that it has been around a long time, and he suggests that the people who are criticizing it are snobs. I think that is a really valid critique. Flint's book is different. It asks the questions: "How does this smart-growth thing play out? Does it have the tools to really make a difference in urban development? And if you use smart growth, will it be a better place? Will it solve our problems?"

PENDALL: I thought it was interesting that Flint went to the Advancing Regional Equity Summit in Philadelphia two years ago. He told the fair growth story that is out there and that really needs to be told. He is concerned about urban reform and that is definitely new and could be explored more, especially the idea of access to opportunity. In the past, civil rights advocates have focused on civil rights laws and enforcement, and people who are interested in social equity have worked on racial and income integration, but most of these advocates weren't really thinking about land use very much. Now there are a lot of scholars who are trying to fuse those two ideas of civil rights and smart growth into a fair growth movement. By highlighting fair growth, Flint picks up on something new and asks us to think about how the stakes of fighting sprawl might differ according to race and class.

Bruegmann, by contrast, treats race entirely dismissively. He says, essentially, race doesn't matter, claiming that whites are suburbanizing, so are blacks. He doesn't talk about the conditions of black suburbanization in the 1960's and early 1970's; these suburbs

were, frankly, of poor quality compared with white suburbs. Even now, whites and blacks operate in housing submarkets that are distinct from one another. This does not seem to make any difference to Bruegmann, because he's viewing the world from such a high remove that he wants sprawl to be the same thing across the United States and, perhaps, throughout history. It is not the same thing throughout the United States. Buffalo, Syracuse, and Rochester are sprawling, in part, because they are hyper-segregated. And they are hyper-segregated, in part, because they are sprawling. So to dismiss race from the picture, I think is one of the clear distinctions between the books. What Flint is noticing, I think, is really very interesting and pleasing. It is a source of new dialogue that will continue.

LOUKAITOU-SIDERIS: Bruegmann says that sprawl is really a free market response that exists because of affluence and that government policies have had no impact. And in doing so, he, in my view, makes some ridiculous arguments, such as that "federal spending today goes more heavily per capita to central cities than to suburbs." On the other hand, I appreciate Flint's points because, essentially, all this is very political. He presents his different groups and the struggle between the two different positions. And I think that is the difference.

FISHMAN: Bruegmann is really the first libertarian whom one can take seriously on the city. He really knows urban history; he knows the way cities work. And he is trying to understand sprawl from that perspective. I think he is asking: What does policy mean? How can we really implement it?

RICHARDSON: I thought both books made good reading. My main problem with Bruegmann was claiming that it is history. He should have presented the evolution of the debate or a pessimistic or optimistic view of the debate. He should have made clear that what he was really doing was making a rhetorical argument and using scraps of historical evidence to back up his research. Bruegmann is more concerned about how he says something than what he says. The problem that I have with Flint's is that it's just too journalistic for my taste.

VERNEZ MOUDON: I have to say that while I enjoyed both books, I would not recommend them as texts in my classes because they seem too incomplete in their treatment of sprawl, and too single-sided. I would, however, recommend them to individual students seeking to understand sprawl, because both books are well crafted within their respective niche. I have a sense that Bruegmann chose sprawl as the subject of his book in order to position himself in urban design and planning. Unfortunately, by trying to argue that sprawl is everywhere, in the history of cities and in the world, he belittles the phenomenon and, at least indirectly, the importance of his own book! I wish he would have explored more seriously the fact that there have been and are many different kinds of sprawl. It seems fair to say that Bruegmann only dwells cogently with British-style sprawl, characterized by comparatively low-density suburban housing and retail. This is much too limited an approach to the history of ubiquitous sprawl. Yesterday I saw a presentation on the growth of Shanghai, which, in terms of the numbers and trends that

Chris Nelson first reported on in this discussion, makes the U.S. urban growth and sprawl problem look like child's play. Shanghai tripled in population over the past 50 years, and has had an average annual growth of 25.7 percent in urban construction over the past decade. Yet our colleagues' presentation yesterday indicated that Shanghai footprint today remains within ten kilometers of its primary center. Ten kilometers, that is 6 miles. How is this the same sprawl as the sprawl we are currently experiencing in the 150-mile Dallas-Ft. Worth region? In this sense, both books, but Bruegmann's especially, because it claims to be a history of sprawl, remain too remote from the reality of "world sprawl."

PENDALL: I think we have learned an awful lot in the past ten years that is not reflected in these books. Bruegmann's book mentions the ideology of sprawl, the cause of sprawl, and the effects of sprawl in its various dimensions. I think a lot of planners are moving beyond just calling it sprawl and thinking about density, continuity, and mixed use, in particular. We are doing much more measuring. And yet whom are we letting write the books? We are letting the journalists and the architectural historians write the books! I need to point the finger back at myself, probably as much as anyone. So to what extent should we look for collaborations, stronger connections, and even co-authorships that will result in the translation of what we do know? That's one question. And the second is, even if we did, would they buy it?

Flint's story, which is about where we are, is almost half the story. It is an interesting story, it is good, and it is fun, but if you read it for a couple of minutes, and then you go away and you come back for a couple more, then you forget it. I would want something much different than that approach for my students. I would want something that has great pictures and that explains everything in vernacular.

LOUKAITOU-SIDERIS: I would definitely agree. And at least for myself, what I found most useful in the last ten years is empirical studies that try to give some specific answers as how to measure sprawl.

FORSYTH: I think it is great to analyze sprawl. But part of what is happening in the sprawl debate is about how to build better suburbs and how to do that in ways that are appropriate. Is the main issue social equity? Is it global warming? Is it habitat loss? Is it all of those things packaged together? And in that case, I thought Bruegmann really did not care about how to build better suburbs in America. Flint is trying a little bit more. He is looking at smart growth groups and the suburbanites. He is not dwelling on the more detailed analysis, but includes a good discussion about values underlying the critiques of sprawl. For example, what are the problems and how do we do it better?

NELSON: What I liked about Flint's book is that he unmasked Randal O'Toole. Bruegmann takes O'Toole's work as on par with our scholarly peer review. But O'Toole's work has never been through the review process, as our work has. Yet, Bruegmann is holding up O'Toole's work on par with our work. Flint, a journalist, unmasked O'Toole. He says there's no foundation for his assertions. But Flint goes one step further. Flint actually says, "O'Toole is a

NIMBY." O'Toole, who lives in Oak Grove, Oregon, was displeased that the Clackamas County Commissioners were going to impose higher density rezoning in his neighborhood. O'Toole said, "No, I like my neighborhood just the way it is, thank you." He became a NIMBY. So O'Toole was stimulated into this whole sprawl/anti-sprawl debate because he is a NIMBY. But he doesn't himself have any solutions for meeting the kinds of needs that are emerging.

FISHMAN: Flint actually goes one step further and talks about O'Toole as part of very well-financed special interest groups.

NELSON: You're right. Flint mentions the funding sources for O'Toole. Flint does something that Bruegmann doesn't do and says, "We're already socially engineered." The policies from the Great Depression forward, from both parties, are socially engineered to a certain outcome. O'Toole does not recognize that we've been socially engineered already through sprawl-inducing federal policies.

LANDIS: One of the things I particularly liked about Flint's book, although I agree that it is quite journalistic, is that it gives us some ideas about alternative futures. As people's incomes rise, I believe most do want a greater degree of privacy and control over their environments, but this doesn't necessarily mean they want sprawl as we produce it in America; there are other models. Flint gets to these other models, but rarely in the depth they deserve.

RICHARDSON: Yes, I agree, in the last 10 or 15 years or more, studies have shown that a very, very high percentage of households want a single-family home and a private yard. However, not everyone does. The strongest housing markets in the Seattle area have been condo markets, both in downtown Seattle, and in Bellevue. The price per square foot was much higher than the single-family homes in the best suburbs. I know that Flint hinted at that. He said that, you know, people are beginning to change and I think that maybe they are beginning to change. I think that preferences may be becoming more heterogeneous. Provided we follow Flint's prescriptions, we can create the conditions under which markets can respond to those heterogeneous preferences and then perhaps we would make progress.

PENDALL: We have different urban trends already happening in the United States. I did not see that Bruegmann discussed them. For example, Phoenix and Las Vegas are becoming denser. Los Angeles, Las Vegas, and Phoenix will become the regions of the future. They will become denser, but they will not expand hugely. They will fill in their cores. Their suburbs will become more urban. The rapid growth of the Latino population is an influence, in particular. We see the gateway cities growing in density, rapidly. However, Houston is low density, but it is holding up pretty well. There is no zoning, and that is almost preferable to places like Atlanta that have a lot of exclusionary zoning.

FISHMAN: I think we should give Bruegmann credit for recognizing the variation in different metropolitan areas. If you look at what we've learned in the ten years since Ewing and Gordon and Richardson were published, I think, first of all, we have learned from the academics about the different kinds of sprawl. But we've also learned from the real world that there are different preferences.

These were the ten years in which the preference for high-density urban living has become a real trend along with suburbanization. And I think the issue that Bruegmann is raising is: Have we, as planners and policymakers, really understood our research, understood the meaning of this variability? Bruegmann's idea is that planners are always caught in a time lag and too simplistic in their recommendations. I think that the real challenge is to try to craft a response to sprawl in all its varieties that really does give policymakers the freedom to respond to these realities.

FORSYTH: Bruegmann explains that Los Angeles is a lot denser than a lot of other places and I appreciated that he said it is maybe not so bad. Bruegmann is concerned, more than Flint, about the differing patterns of urban development, the shape of those density patterns, and the character of the urban form.

LANDIS: I think it is quite interesting that while Bruegmann casts himself in the libertarian role, it is Flint who comes up with the more amazing conclusion, which is to completely get rid of zoning. He says that there is nothing good in zoning that we should just get rid of it, and leave it to the market to come up with more diverse and creative solutions. Flint is hardly the first person to say this, but he makes the key point that it is our institutions that are getting in the way of the public interest.

NELSON: I started by saying neither author gave us perspectives on how we have to meet certain needs. I will now say neither author looks to the future to sort of say what is going to happen, and at least ask the question: "How are we going to deal with this?" In 2006, we will add half a million people over 65. In 2025 that number will grow to nearly 2 million people for that year alone. I don't believe for a minute that we are preparing ourselves for the needs of a growing senior population. On top of that, 35% of the households will be single-person households. The single person probably has very different preferences. We really don't know where we need to start envisioning this kind of future. Flint, with his journalistic orientation, had a chance to say: "Okay, here is where we're headed and here is where we are and let's abandon zoning and let's replace it with something else."

PENDALL: One of Bruegmann's subsections . . . is called "Converging Cities." He looks at Europe. He looks at the United States. His story is about convergence. There is a slight inconsistency, though, when he talks about exurbia. Because he says that exurbia is the real problem, or maybe it is and maybe it isn't. But he is using data that completely overlook exurbia, because that is entirely outside of Census-defined urbanized areas. So if exurbia is a problem, and if exurbia varies across metropolitan areas, which it does, then he is absolutely wrong about convergence. He may be noticing the current differences, but his view of the future is a view of convergence, not one of a divergence among these urban forms. And I think divergence is every bit as likely as, if not more likely than, the convergence scenario he paints.

FISHMAN: Your argument is one that would improve his book strongly. His whole philosophy is a really greater flexibility for planning.

PENDALL: One of Bruegmann's arguments is there is very little that we can do. Human agency does not matter. That, to me, is the most dangerous subtext in these books, for us. We can't just throw up our hands.

LANDIS: Both of these authors come to essentially the same conclusion, which is to let builders build and let the market work. I want to ask this group whether they think this is a good prescription.

LOUKAITOU-SIDERIS: I think that we do need to look into what the market wants, but I certainly believe that planners should not only rely on market factors. I felt that the Bruegmann book opposes planning and unfairly blames planners.

FORSYTH: I've actually never been great fan of zoning. But zoning isn't the whole toolbox of planning. I believe in visioning about the future and being able to think through the possible effects of urban development and problems that could occur.

NELSON: Let's not confuse zoning with planning. I think we need to go back to planning and rethink the role of zoning and rethink other organizational tools. If we're going to add another one million people to the metropolitan area in Washington D.C. in the next ten years, where are we going to put the water and sewage investments to accommodate them? We have to have some idea where that demand is going to be and its configuration. So we have to plan ahead to invest in the infrastructure to accommodate growth. If we don't, worse things could happen. The question is: How do we plan, and what do we plan for? I don't think zoning is the solution; zoning is the problem. I don't think either of the authors came to that conclusion.

VERNEZ MOUDON: Those are important comments. Yet, knowing that everyone around this table is no fool, I have to ask: do we really think that there is the "market" on one side and urban "planning" on the other? We know the market is planned (interest rates, taxes, etc., are not established naturally). And we know that urban planning responds, more or less, to market trends, with or without zoning. By concluding that we should let the market work, I think neither of the authors wants to take a clear position on the future. Their position is not controversial, and perhaps they don't want to be controversial.

LANG: I think Bruegmann might want to be controversial.

VERNEZ MOUDON: He wasn't very effective then!

LANDIS: I agree, it is not controversial to us; but to the average reader, maybe.

VERNEZ MOUDON: Back to making recommendations about these books, I would recommend Bruegmann's book not as a textbook, but as a reference to the study of advances in urban history. As with Flint's book, I think it might be the book to recommend to those of our neighbors interested in finding out about the world of urban planning and about what planners do. I suspect Flint's book should be effective for a lay audience and should be recommended as such.

PENDALL: [Regarding] the last question that you posed, "Where is the debate over sprawl going next?" I think there are multiple directions, because we now have these multiple indicators. We are going to be thinking about multiple indicators and their multiple impacts. I think one interesting direction is in thinking about access to opportunity. How do these patterns privilege or remove privilege from people, systemically, on the basis of race, class, or national origin? And instead of calling it sprawl, can we say development patterns? It is also an interesting direction because people are looking at it from a variety of professions now. We have sociologists, political scientists, planners and geographers looking at sprawl through different lenses. All of them are currently interested in mapping out and understanding both the variety and the consequences of different arrangements of opportunities and space. Do our low-income kids have access to good schools? Do our laborers have access to affordable housing near the jobs that they are going to be working at? Do the education systems work well together? All these are underdefined in planning.

FORSYTH: I think that Flint and Bruegmann are obviously onto something when they talk about market preferences and that people are making decisions in relation to their individual lives. I think that in the future people may well focus on biological issues that are both individual and collective, such as health impacts and ecological damage.

LOUKAITOU-SIDERIS: I would like to go back to this issue of the need to plan. I live in a city that is expected to grow significantly in the next decade. We have to accommodate growth. And I don't see, with notable exceptions, how planners are going to accommodate growth. We really need to make some critical decisions on this. We have to contribute as educators as well. It is also the tremendous responsibility of municipal departments. There may be some exceptions of cities and states trying to develop roadmaps of how and where to accommodate new growth, but these are few and far between.

VERNEZ MOUDON: It is interesting that initiatives to limit zoning powers and to retroactively compensate property owners for development rights impeded by zoning have been on the ballots recently. Flint discusses Oregon's Measure 37, which passed. But a similar proposition, 933, did not pass in Washington. This indicates that voters understand the powers and the need for land regulations.

LANG: Similar measures did not pass in Idaho or California either. But one did pass in Arizona.

FISHMAN: One of two things coming out of these books is that we have been over-regulating things that we probably shouldn't be regulating at all. Secondly, we are not doing enough on the fundamental issues of infrastructure, especially, which are at the heart of planning. Those are two, to me, very important parts of the discussion. I also want to close on a theme we didn't really raise, which is urban design. I don't know if other people around the table felt this, and Flint's book doesn't talk much about this at all. We really haven't gotten very far beyond Seaside and Kentlands on alternatives to conventional suburban design.

RICHARDSON: The market created sprawl and the market could eliminate sprawl. There are price-driven trends towards smaller lots. The concerns about low density will die away.

LANDIS: I'll come back to the two books for my conclusion. Whenever I read books like this, I always compare them to what I think is the gold standard for this type of work, *A Better Place to Live* by Phillip Langdon, published in 1994. Neither Bruegmann nor Flint is as good as that, but after listening to all of you, I would consider using both of these in an undergraduate land use policy or planning course. At the graduate level, I could see Flint's book replacing my second choice which is, David Brooks' *Bobos In Paradise: The New Upper Class and How They Got There*. I hardly ever agree with David Brooks, but what I liked about *Bobos in Paradise* was that it included the voices of middle class suburbanites. Flint's book includes an even broader variety of voices and perspectives of real people with real concerns. When I contrast those voices to those of my university colleagues and students, I do start to worry that maybe . . . we in academia . . . are a little out of touch. It was this ability to cause me to question my own beliefs that led me to enjoy reading both books, but especially Flint's.

LANG: Okay. We have reached the end of the session. Thank you all for participating.

Demographic and Spatial Analysis

OLDER AMERICANS
VITAL COMMUNITIES
A Bold Vision for Societal Aging



Older Americans, Vital Communities: A Bold Vision for Societal Aging

W. Andrew Achenbaum. The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 2005. 224 pages. \$40.

If you are a member of the baby boom generation, you are already well aware of the aging American population. The looming problems with Social Security and Medicare reform may interest you more this year than last. In *Older Americans, Vital Communities*, Achenbaum considers the social consequences of an aging population, speaking with authority as an historian who has spent most of his career directing the University of Michigan's Institute of Gerontology. He has also served on the National Council of Aging, as a delegate to two White House Conferences on Aging, and as a board member of the Carnegie Corporation's Aging Society Project.

Achenbaum acknowledges the negative stereotypes now associated with old age and cites their costs to the larger society. His central argument is that Americans must envision "how basic societal institutions can generate new structural incentives, enabling people to contribute throughout their lives" (p. xx).

The institutions to which the author refers are health care, education, the labor force, religion, and politics. He asserts that they have all failed to adapt to the physical and economic implications of longer life expectancies. Instead, institutions still reflect the "three boxes of life:" education for the young, work and family for the middle-aged, and retirement and leisure for the elderly. Conforming

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