

VALUES, ETHICS, AND SUSTAINABILITY

David Thompson: May 14–18, 2012

Faculty of Extension: EL 21

University of Alberta

April 30 – May 18, 2012

10:25 am – 11:35 am Monday-Friday

Location: Education South, Room 165

May 16: Sprawl Causes

- First...
 - two slides on health impacts, as requested (for reference)
 - two slides on trends as noted in May 15 class
- Causes discussion
- Implications

Health impacts (for reference)

- Sprawl associated with at >4 categories of population health risks (AHS, 2009):
 - Physical inactivity, reduced air quality, increased vehicle collisions, mental health issues
- Example outcomes (Johnson and Marko, 2007):
 - Heart disease, diabetes, colon cancer, osteoporosis, respiratory disorders, heart disease, cancers, fatal injuries, other injuries, mental health issues
- More impacts: Bray, Vakil and Elliott, 2005

Health impact sources (for reference)

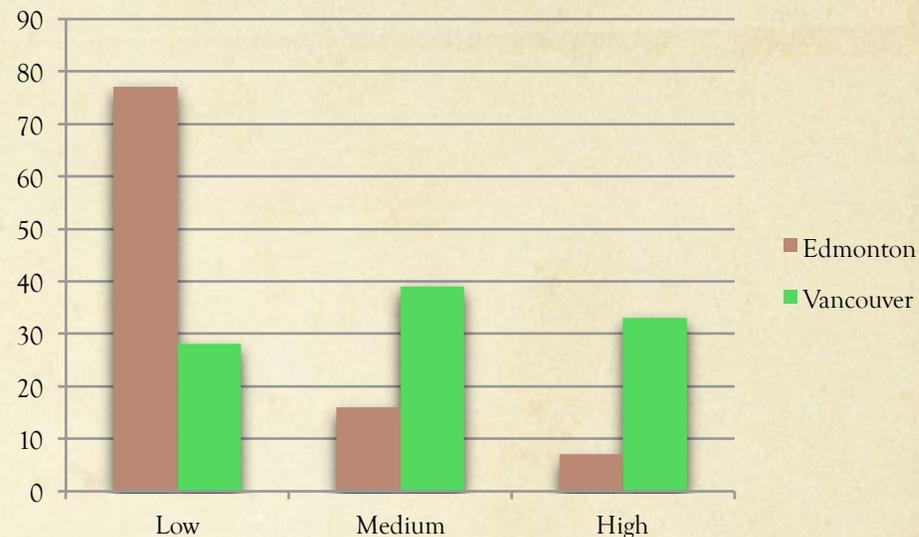
- Alberta Health Services, “Urban Sprawl and Health” (April 2009)
<http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/poph/hi-poph-hpp-info-urban-sprawl.pdf>
- Johnson and Marko, “Designing healthy places: Land use planning and public health” (Capital Health, 2007)
<http://www.capitalhealth.ca/NR/rdonlyres/eh4qelt76mejmxogexsmbh5qrs32flyyiknqr3z6jn6xcfgyjqbeqip3xrsztvr27joqqj2bd2pyr7myh74cnflib/DesigningHealthyPlaceslandusePublication.pdf>.
- More: Bray, Vakil, Elliott, “Report on Public Health and Urban Sprawl in Ontario – a Review of the Pertinant Literature” (Ont College of Family Physicians, Jan 2005)
<http://www.ocfp.on.ca/local/files/Communications/Current%20Issues/Urban%20Sprawl-Jan-05.pdf>

Trends

- Planning goals:
 - Most cities' goals include more compact, sustainable growth
- However, cities in Canada and elsewhere are still sprawling
 - Edmonton MDP target: 25% of new housing infill (75% sprawl)

Exceptions (it can be done)

- Vancouver
 - Density of housing created 1991-2001
- Kitchener-Waterloo



- Places to Grow Act target 200 people or jobs / ha.
- So LRT and rapid transit can be supported
- On track to reach target

What causes sprawl?

- Is it consumer preference, i.e. personal choice?
 - Of course! (Or, as my 8-year old says: D'uh!)
 - Sprawl exists because there is market demand: many people want to buy houses in suburbia
- But is that the end of the inquiry?
 - No.
 - The real question is: what drives those preferences?
 - D'uh!

What drives (some) consumers to prefer sprawl?

- Nicer surroundings?
 - Glenora is very nice...
- Larger houses?
 - Many large houses in Glenora...
- New houses?
 - Many new houses in Glenora...



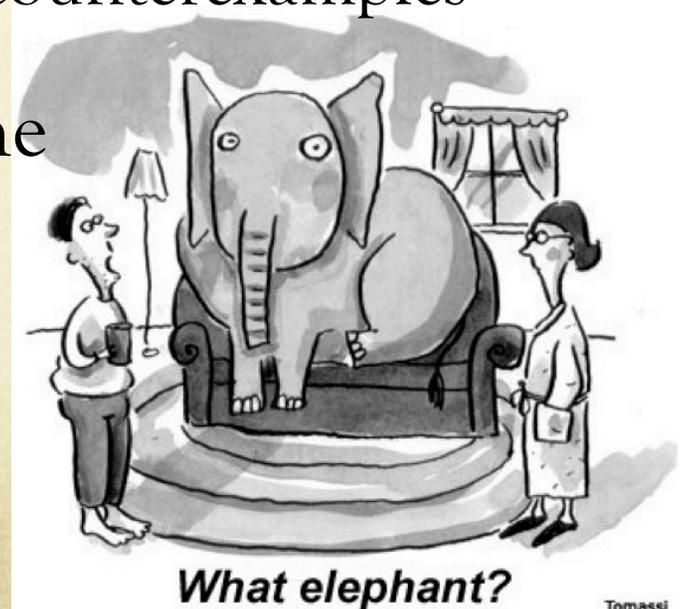
What drives (some) consumers to prefer sprawl? ... cont'd

- Preference for lower density development?
 - Glenora is actually less dense than most new neighbourhoods...
- Better schools?
 - Good schools in Glenora...
- Larger lots?
 - Lots quite large in Glenora...



What drives (some) consumers to prefer sprawl? ... cont'd

- Developers and apologists claim consumer preference (the D'uh position)
- They sometimes go to the attributes.
 - The ones with the Glenora counterexamples
- Both arguments overlook the elephant in the living room...



The Elephant: Cost

- Developing an hypothesis:
 - Any positive housing attribute you can buy in suburban sprawl, you can get in town.
 - It's just more expensive.



Implications

- If the choice does boil down to price for many sprawl-dwellers...
 - (“Drive ‘til you qualify”)
- ... then the implication is: if we want to rein in sprawl, correct the prices
- Prices are a powerful driver of decisions
 - If they work against you, you lose.
 - Change them so they work for you, and win.