

**Development at the Urban Fringe and Beyond: Impacts on Agriculture and Rural Land.** By Ralph E. Heimlich and William D. Anderson. Economic Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture. Agricultural Economic Report No. 803.

## Abstract

Land development in the United States is following two routes: expansion of urban areas and large-lot development (greater than 1 acre per house) in rural areas. Urban expansion claimed more than 1 million acres per year between 1960 and 1990, yet is not seen as a threat to most farming, although it may reduce production of some high-value or specialty crops. The consequences of continued large-lot development may be less sanguine, since it consumes much more land per unit of housing than the typical suburb. Controlling growth and planning for it are the domains of State and local governments. The Federal Government may be able to help them in such areas as building capacity to plan and control growth, providing financial incentives for channeling growth in desirable directions, or coordinating local, regional, and State efforts.

**Keywords:** land development, sprawl, large-lot housing, land zoning, population growth, housing, specialty agriculture, high-value agriculture, rural amenities, smart growth

## Contributors

Charles Barnard—Wrote sections on costs of use value assessment and purchase of development rights, the effect of technology on employment location, and metropolitan agriculture.

John Cromartie—Wrote sections on population and household trends, and technology and employment.

Richard Reeder—Wrote the sections on local responses to growth, impacts on community and quality of life, and planning capacity.

Peter Feather—Wrote the section on nonmarket benefits from preserving farmland, including water quality impacts from reducing erosion from construction sites.

Cindy Nickerson—Wrote the section on State responses to growth and “smart growth.”

Robert Hoppe and Penni Korb—Wrote the section on metropolitan agriculture and transitions between metro farm types.

Marlow Vesterby and William Quinby—Wrote sections on trends in land use and housing development as a driving force.

Daniel Mullarkey—Wrote the section on rural amenities and the WTO agreements.

## Dedication

This report is dedicated to the memory of Robert Otte, who died November 6, 2000. As Chief of the Land Resources Branch of the Economic Research Service's Natural Resource Economics Division in the late 1960's, Dr. Otte pioneered early research on the urbanization of agricultural land. He authored *Farming in the City's Shadow* in 1974, and was co-author of ERS's first study of land use change in urbanizing areas, *Dynamics of Land Use in Fast Growth Areas* in 1976. Dr. Otte was a gentleman, a generous colleague, and a mentor to many land economics researchers, in ERS and other institutions, who followed in his footsteps.

William D. Anderson

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