

# Urban Sprawl

## ❖ What is urban sprawl?

- The excessive and uncontrolled expansion of suburbs into low-density areas
- Widespread development that has occurred without any overall planning

## ❖ What causes urban sprawl?

- Home-buying subsidies from the GI-Bill after World War II
- The postwar baby boom
- Affordability and popularity of the automobile
- Massive road-construction projects

## ❖ What are the effects of urban sprawl?

- Economic
  - Loss of productive agricultural farm land
  - Increased cost of infrastructure...
    - It is expensive to provide roads and utilities to outlying areas.
    - People in the central city help to pay for this in the form of taxes
- Social
  - Less time for family life because of increased commute time
  - Segregation by class
  - Loss of distinctive communities—homogeneity and sameness in suburban areas.
    - Gertrude Stein wrote of Oakland "There is no 'there' there."
  - Loss of community gathering places—strip malls instead
- Political
  - Erosion of tax base as people, businesses, and industries move to the suburbs
  - Need for balancing the needs of far-flung suburbs with those of the urban center
- Environmental
  - Loss of wetlands and wildlife habitat
  - Alteration drainage patterns
    - Rapid runoff increases the probability of flooding
    - Reduction in aquifer recharge
  - Increased air and water pollution from increased auto traffic and runoff
  - Can affect climate (heat island effect)
  - Threats to biodiversity as animal species are forced to compete for survival on smaller areas of land

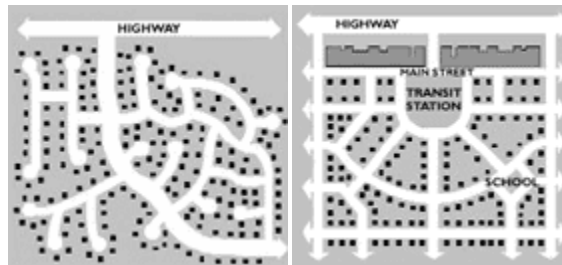
❖ **What is being done to control urban sprawl**

➤ Smart Growth

- Urban boundaries (Portland)
- Infill development promotes redesign and development of underutilized areas within urban boundaries.
- Zoning to encourage higher density development in some areas while setting aside other areas for open space
- Transportation planning (New highway construction encourages sprawl.)

➤ Sustainable communities

- A community where people live and work—fewer car trips, fewer highways, shorter commutes
- Different housing types...apartments, row housing and detached homes occupy the same neighborhood so that a family can move "up" without moving "out."
- "New urbanism" is a movement to develop modern suburbs that resemble older city centers and towns.



Which of the above maps represents the goals of new urbanism?