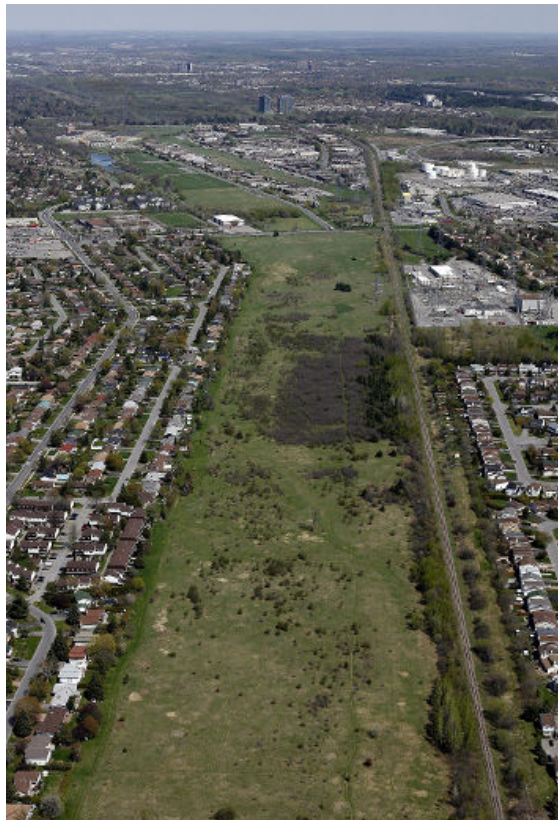


Urban sprawl costs taxpayers

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FIRST POSTED: MONDAY, OCTOBER 28, 2013 12:35 PM EDT | UPDATED: MONDAY, OCTOBER 28, 2013 06:13 PM EDT



SUN+ wants to hear ideas on how to green up the Sir John A MacDonald Parkway. (File photo)

Slowing new development in the suburbs, while encouraging high-density development in the core, will save taxpayers money and improve people's quality of life, a new study suggests.

The Cost of Sprawl report released Monday by Sustainable Prosperity argues that developers have largely been undercharged for building in the outer areas, leading to sprawl and greater infrastructure burdens placed on municipal governments.

Almost all of cities' scourges are linked to suburban sprawl, according to the study.

Heavier traffic, more car crashes, higher taxes, increasing obesity and louder traffic noise are all the result of building more homes outside of the urban cores, the study says.

The study says suburbs are growing 160% faster than city centres with people looking for cheaper homes outside the cores.

Half of residents in Canadian cities live in suburbs.

The study cites Kitchener, Ont. as the gold standard for making developers pay higher costs — 74% more — for building in the suburban area compared to the core.

But Ottawa also receives a nod for charging higher development fees outside the greenbelt.

For example, a single-family home built inside Ottawa's greenbelt today costs \$16,891 in development fees, where the same home outside the greenbelt costs developers \$25,315 in fees.

The city predicts most of Ottawa's growth will continue to happen in the suburbs. One of the new planning policies in the updated official plan involves concentrating on the town centres of the suburbs and preserve the potential for more density to promote non-vehicle travel in the areas.

In the urban area, planners are focusing heavily on intensification around the future LRT stations.

Sustainable Prosperity is a "green economy" think tank based at the University of Ottawa.

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