NumbersUSA
For sensible immigration

Fact Sheet:

Smart Growth

Densification and "smart growth" mitigate sprawl; they do not prevent it.

Local policy makers sincere in trying to mitigate sprawl have a number of policy actions and instruments at their disposal.[1] Beyond the short term, however, local officials supportive of growth control and management can hope only to slow sprawl - not stop it - if the national population continues to increase by some 2 million+ additional residents each year:

- Americans are living more densely, on average, than we were 20 years ago,[2] but sprawl paved over the equivalent of more than *five* Yellowstone National Parks – or roughly 18,000 square miles during the same 2002-2017 period.[3]
- Some of that loss was due to regional differences in land consumption per person, but a majority of the loss - more than two-thirds - was a result of the U.S. population growing by nearly 40 million people.[4]
- Federal immigration policy is projected to drive nearly all future population growth.[5] Thus, the majority of future land conservation is in the hands of federal policy makers.

Our individual impact on sprawl goes far beyond the house or apartment where we live. And when it comes to total impact, the number of feet matter at least as much as the size of each footprint.

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[1] https://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth
[2] Kolankiewicz, Beck, and Ruark. From Sea to Sprawling Sea. Executive Summary. Figure ES-3. https://sprawlusa.com/executivesummary/
[3] 2017 National Resources Inventory, Summary Report, p. 2-6.
[4] Kolankiewicz, L. with Beck, R. and Ruark, E., From Sea to Sprawling Sea: Quantifying the Loss of Open Space in America, NumbersUSA, 2020, p. ES-1. https://sprawlusa.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/NatlSprawl.pdf
[5] Sandra Johnson, A Changing Nation: Population Projections Under Alternative Immigration Scenarios, Current Population Reports, U.S. Census, 2020. https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2020/demo/p25-1146.pdf

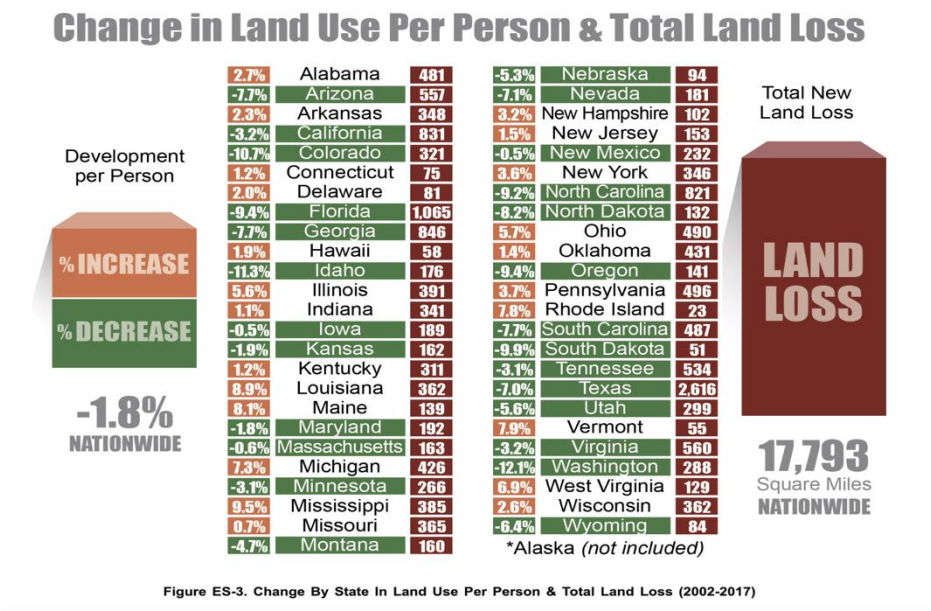

Figure ES-3. Change By State In Land Use Per Person & Total Land Loss (2002-2017)

"Even if we could pack everyone into existing towns and cities — which would be politically difficult, given many Americans' long-standing cultural preferences for single-family homes with yards we'd still need more farmland, fertilizer, and irrigation water to feed all the extra mouths. We'd still need to dam(n) more watercourses and inundate bottomland hardwood and riparian forests to create reservoirs to supply drinking water. We'd still need more factories, power plants, schools, hospitals, wastewater treatment plants, and solar and wind farms plastered over vital habitats and wildland." - Leon Kolankiewicz, environmental scientist and lead author of NumbersUSA's sprawl studies.