

2000-2001 PRESIDENT'S AWARD FOR RESEARCH AND CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

Robert William Wassmer, Professor, Graduate Program in Public Policy & Administration, is the recipient of the 2000-2001 President's Award for Research and Creative Activity. A member of the CSUS faculty since 1995, he received his Ph.D. in Economics from Michigan State University in 1989. His B.S. degree, also in Economics, is from Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan. His M.A. is from the State University of New York, Binghamton. Prior to joining the CSUS faculty, he taught at Eastern Michigan University and at Wayne State University. In addition to his teaching at CSUS, he serves as Coordinator, California State University Faculty Fellows Program and is a Consultant to the California Senate Office of Research.

Professor Wassmer is the co-author of *Bidding for Business: The Efficacy of Local Economic Development Incentives* published by the Upjohn Institute and is the editor of *Readings in Urban Economics: Issues and Public Policy* published by Blackwell Publishers. He has a chapter on "Commuter Taxes" in the *Encyclopedia of Taxation and Tax Policy*. In addition he has published fourteen articles in refereed journals and has made fourteen presentations at national and international conferences. He has also made more than a dozen presentations at regional conferences or seminars. In 1996, he prepared a report, "CSUS and Us: The Economic Impact of California State University, Sacramento on the Surrounding Region." Currently, under a grant from the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, he is doing research for a project, "The Nexus Between Local Fiscal Choices and Urban Sprawl in California and the United States."

The President's Award was established in 1989 and is given each year to recognize extraordinary research and creative activity over the past five years by a member of the CSUS faculty. Nominees for the award must be in their first ten years of service at CSUS. Dr. Wassmer is the eleventh recipient of this award.

AN ECONOMIST'S PERSPECTIVE ON URBAN SPRAWL IN CALIFORNIA

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For more than forty years, urban planners, environmentalists, and other social engineers have used the pejorative catch phrase of “urban sprawl” to categorize much of what Americans dislike about metropolitan life in the United States. Given this history, it is hard to find an individual or policymaker in the United States who, at least publicly, favors urban sprawl. At the same time, it is equally difficult to find someone who can concisely define what urban sprawl is and how to best measure the degree to which it has occurred in a region. It is not hard to find a individual concerned about the negative outcomes that are widely attributed to urban sprawl: loss of open space, traffic congestion, air pollution, a greater percentage of the poor living in the inner-city, central city blight, etc. To accurately assess the causal connection between urban sprawl and these negative outcomes, ways are needed to measure the degree that urban sprawl has occurred in a metropolitan area. Once these ways of measurement are chosen, factors cited as causes of urban sprawl can be tested for validity, and if appropriate, these tests form the basis for public policies designed to reduce sprawl and the negative urban outcomes attributed to it. In this paper, I take the opening step toward this broad research agenda. First, I survey the previous urban, economic, planning, and popular literature to derive a consensus on the best possible ways to measure the degree of urban sprawl in a metropolitan area given the available data. I provide values for these measures for all metropolitan regions in California and for comparison purposes, metropolitan regions in other Western states. A statistical analysis of causes of retail decentralization in Western metropolitan areas, and how California differs, is also offered. I conclude with a discussion on the need for further research, and a few suggestions on how to go about it.