New Urbanism is a planning strategy developed to reduce the negative impacts of urban sprawl—the expansion of the city into outer fringes. Sprawl leads to many environmental and social issues such as increased carbon emissions, resource waste, habitat destruction and loss of community. This sustainable planning method offsets harmful environmental and social effects by establishing a variety of transportation options (including walking and biking), high-density/compact design, and access to green and open spaces. Through these methods New Urbanism reduces driving dependency and supports more efficient use of land. How is New Urbanism being implemented in urban centers to promote sustainability? Cities can learn to apply New Urbanism by looking at urban centers that have already implemented it. Portland, Oregon and Minneapolis, Minnesota are two examples. Viewing the success in these cities’ sustainability models provides ways for other cities to implement them in a way that creates economic, environmental, and communal benefits.

What is New Urbanism?

New Urbanism aims to create vibrant cities centered around sustainability in design that promotes walking and biking, use of public transit, green and open spaces, and efficient use of land through infill or redevelopment while maintaining the health of the community. For New Urbanism designers an ideal community has all amenities located within a 10-minute walk from work and home, so vehicle dependency is at a minimum. There is also a focus on the diversity of the urban center in the forms of people, housing options, and commercial and employment sectors, so as to keep the community thriving economically.

Methods:

Data was gathered through literature reviews of urbanization, suburbanization and New Urbanism, census studies, and supply and demand surveys of New Urbanism methods. Case studies were also evaluated in examples of Portland, OR and Minneapolis, MN. This required analyzing transportation infrastructure (planned and in place), compact design of the city in housing and commercial areas, and creation or preservation of green spaces within the city. Reading local and state documents on implementation plans for sustainability within the city was essential for these case studies. In the case of Minneapolis an interview was conducted with a community development firm, Seward Redesign.

Results and Conclusions:

Models such as New Urbanism seek to reduce the expansion of development of the city as much as possible. It also aims to reduce the dependency of the car, promote access to all the services necessary within walking/biking distance, and the opportunity to have access to communal green space. The sprawl of a city can be limited by creating an urban growth boundary, expanding transportation infrastructure and infill of old development with compact/high-density design or green and open spaces. This can be done through state and local government initiatives, help from non-profits, and interest from the public. By looking at implementation in Portland and Minneapolis, it provides other U.S. cities with a tangible model to inspire sustainable urban areas with economic, environmental and community benefits. Overall demand is relatively low, but when New Urbanism infrastructure has been in place in areas, people generally have adopted the lifestyle. 55% of people have said they would rather walk than drive somewhere, but 74% of people still want the luxury of a home in the suburbs.

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