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Title

[Exploring the Relationship between Neighborhood Social Interactions and Urban Sprawl in U.S Metropolitan Regions](#)

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Abstract

As a pattern of growth, sprawl is often criticized for its extensive negative impacts. These impacts range from economic costs to health and environmental problems. Critics of sprawl have also emphasized the negative consequences of this type of growth for social neighborhood ties. The physical environment of sprawling areas, characterized by low population density, segregation of land-uses, and lack of public spaces does not provide spaces for social interaction. On the contrary, transit-oriented and mixed-use neighborhoods might encourage interaction among residents because individuals are more likely to walk from place to place which might increase opportunities for informal contact and gather.

Although there is a large body of research that study the impacts of sprawl, there is little empirical research of the impacts of sprawl on social interactions among neighbors. The purpose of this study is to contribute to the understanding of sprawl impacts and to fill this gap in the current literature by exploring the relationship between urban sprawl and neighborhood social interactions at the metropolitan level.

According to my results, while neither an overall index of sprawl, nor individual indicators are observed to have a statistical significant association with different dimensions of neighbor interaction; a statistical significant association was found between the use of public spaces and the type and frequency of neighbor interaction among participants in this research. As such, the use of public parks and plazas, public libraries, and in some cases community centers is positively associated with neighborhood social interaction. These results, obtained while statistically controlling for demographic characteristics, highlight the importance of public spaces on the behavior of participants.

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