Sprawl! The Amount and Pattern of Development
Typical Features of Sprawl
(Michigan Society of Planning Officials 1995)

- Very low-density, new residential development
- Auto dependent
- Uneconomical for utility expansion/extension of public services
- Scattered rural subdivisions
- Strip residential development along county roads
- Diminished rural character and small-town atmosphere
- Suburbanization of landscape
Typical Features of Sprawl

- Loss of community character
- Reduces shopping opportunities downtown
- Strip commercial development at the edges of town
- Land consumption
- Inefficient energy use
- High ratio of road surface to development served
Post WWII Development Patterns

- National statistics (Landes 1995)
  - Land consumption = 2 * household formation
  - Auto use growing twice as fast as the population
  - Prime agricultural land, forests, and fragile natural systems being consumed at comparable rates
Development Patterns in Central Indiana (44 county BEA region)
Population Growth Rates (1990-2000)

Central Indiana +11.4%
(Indiana +9.7%)

- 6 counties less than 0%
- 10 counties 0-5%
- 14 counties 5-10%
- 5 counties 10-15%
- 3 counties 15-20%
- 6 counties >20%
Growth in Urban Cover
### Population vs. Urban Cover

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hamilton</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
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<td>Hendricks</td>
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<td>Johnson</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fayette</td>
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<td>Miami</td>
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<td>1.4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Central Indiana</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
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</tbody>
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Land Cover Types Converted to Developed 1985 – 2000

- Agriculture: 0.01%
- Forest: 0.27%
- Excavations: 0.82%
- Wetlands: 79.71%
- Water: 19.19%
What is Smart Growth?
Components of Smart Growth (Maryland Office of Planning 1997)

- Development is concentrated in suitable areas
- Sensitive areas are protected
- In rural areas, growth is directed to existing population centers and resource areas protected
- Resource conservation is practiced
- Economic growth is encouraged and regulatory mechanisms are streamlined
Forces Against Change

- Short-term benefits accrue to households; long-term costs accrue to society
- “Prairie” philosophy: land is unlimited and meant to be developed
- Cost of development are not made explicit (build now, pay later)
- Value the free use of land; property rights
- Plan commissions, builders, and consumers reinforce historic patterns (3-legged stool)
General Public Favors Sprawl

- Dilutes congestion while accommodating unlimited use of the automobile
- Distances new development from the fiscal and social problems of older core areas
- Provides heterogeneous economic mix
- Fosters neighborhoods in which housing will appreciate
- Fosters neighborhoods in which schools provide both education and appropriate socialization of youth
- Requires lower property taxes to pay for local and school district operating expenses
Forestlands and Community Planning
Planning vs. No Planning

- Summer 2009
  - 82 counties with plan commissions
  - 10 counties without plan commissions, mostly in SW Indiana
Values

- Have not generally convinced the public of the value of having and protecting a number of natural resources, including forestlands
- This is reflected in the way that most communities manage (or don’t manage) natural resources
Comprehensive Plans

- Create the vision for land use in communities
- Non-binding but necessary to have land use regulation
- Typically natural resources get only cursory attention
- Collect information on floodplains, steep slopes, soil suitability for septics, and wetlands
Comprehensive Plans

• Over the last few years, there has been more focus on farmland. Forestland typically is lumped in.
• Seldom are there specific goals and objectives related to managing and preserving forestlands and other natural resources.
Land Use Regulations

• Forestlands typically are not treated separately from agricultural land with respect to establishing zones.
• Forest and agricultural land still treated as holding zones for development. Scattered housing allowed in these zones.
Land Use Regulations

- Combination of amount of land zoned for residential development and the realities of subdivision regulation leave much too much land with an green light for sprawling residential development.
- Elected officials and plan commissions often thwart good regulations by rezoning or providing variances.
Other Factors

- Invasives
- Private ownership
- High cost of ownership/low incentives to retain
- Changing property tax system
- No compensation for eco-system services
- Ownership fragmentation
  - Farm succession
Glimmers of Hope

- Smart growth efforts in NW Indiana
- Planning in SW Indiana (I-69 Community Planning Program)
- Natural resources were a major focus of comp plan discussions in Johnson Co.
- Tippecanoe County forest preservation
- Starke County efforts
Glimmers of Hope

- TNC and land trust activity
- Break in development pressures provide a unique opportunity to talk about better planning and resource management.