



Sprawl, Justice, and Citizenship: The Civic Costs of the American Way of Life

Thad Williamson

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Must the strip mall and the eight-lane highway define 21st century American life? That is a central question posed by critics of suburban and exurban living in America. Yet despite the ubiquity of the critique, it never sticks-Americans by the scores of millions have willingly moved into sprawling developments over the past few decades. Americans find many of the more substantial criticisms of sprawl easy to ignore because they often come across as snobbish in tone. Yet as Thad Williamson explains, sprawl does create real, measurable social problems. Utilizing a landmark 30,000-person survey, he shows that sprawl fosters civic disengagement, accentuates inequality, and negatively impacts the environment. Yet, while he highlights the deleterious effects of sprawl on civic life in America, he is also evenhanded. He does not dismiss the pastoral, homeowning ideal that is at the root of sprawl, and is sympathetic to the vast numbers of Americans who very clearly prefer it. *Sprawl, Justice, and Citizenship* is not only be the most comprehensive work in print on the subject, it will be the first to offer an empirically rigorous critique of the most popular form of living in America today.

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