
research in brief

Fast Growth Areas

This study, based on a survey of 53 counties in which 20% of the total U.S. population increase occurred in the 10-year period 1960-1970, indicates that more new cropland was developed than was lost to urbanization. Though total acreage devoted to *cropland* decreased by three percent in the area studied, urbanization wasn't the major factor. Primary reasons for the decline were abandonment of marginal cropland to pasture, and the diversion of cropland to open idle land as changing technology makes farming of some land uneconomical.

Of the total acreage converted to urban use, 35% was cropland, 4% pasture, 28% forest, and 33% idle open land. In all regions studied, new urban development occurred at a higher density than had prior urban development.

Editor's Note:

Area development *Interchange*, May 15, 1976, says: "The ERS [Economic Research Service] conclusions may provide new ammunition for those opposed to land use planning and regulation. However, its findings . . . may not be encouraging to those also in favor of balanced growth and rural development."

Kathryn A. Zeinetz and others. "Dynamics of Land Use in Fast Growth Areas." E.R.S. Publications, Room 0054-S, USDA, Washington, D.C., AER Report No. 325.

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