

Area ranks 10th in urban sprawl, report says

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WASHINGTON — The Fort Worth-Arlington area made a

top 10 list Thursday, but ranking 10th among metropolitan areas with the worst urban sprawl won't necessarily make for bragging rights, even if Dallas came in 13th.

SPRAWL The Fort Worth-Arlington region is considered among the worst areas in the nation for urban sprawl.

transit systems.

National Association of Homebuilders President Gary Garczynski said the study "com-

pletely ignores the significant impact housing affordability and choice have on the quality of life for working Americans. Planning for growth requires a careful balance of all needs."

House Majority Leader Dick Armey, R-Flower Mound, has been very critical of "managed growth" and in 1999 put out a memo to GOP members titled, "Advancing a Suburban Agenda."

"We need to promote choice in housing, and making all those choices more 'livable,' whether people want to live in the city, in the suburbs, or in rural areas," he said. "People don't need a one-size-fits-all housing style designed by Washington planners."

The Council of Governments has been addressing sprawl for the past few years, prompted by pressure from the federal government about the region's air pollution. COG has spent \$100 million in highway funding to encourage mass transit and higher-density development.

But, Arlington Planning Director Theresa O'Donnell said: "We're not finished yet. We're young cities as compared to those East Coasters." ONLINE: www.smartgrowthamerica.org

The report, "Measuring Sprawl and Its Impact," was written by Smart Growth America, a coalition of groups interested in planned development. It evaluated 83 metropolitan areas based on four factors — residential density; neighborhood mix of homes, jobs and services; strength of activity centers and downtowns; and the accessibility of the street network. The four were combined to calculate a "sprawl index."

"For the first time we are able to define sprawl objectively so we can see how it measures up," Executive Director Don Chen said. "What this study tells us is that sprawl has a direct and negative impact on our everyday lives."

Local planners said the Southwest and West haven't had time to develop the transit systems that the East Coast has. And the report also ignores important issues such as affordability.

"Usually what happens [in sprawl rankings] is, San Francisco, New York, Boston, Chicago and Washington, D.C., are on the list," said Michael Morris, transportation director for the North Central Texas Council of Governments, a regional planning group. "They also don't have a lot of accessibility for new housing, and therefore the prices are through the roof."

In North Texas, "People have jobs because of the vibrant economy, and people also have relatively low residential housing costs," he said.

The index average for all the cities was 100, with the lower scores signifying more sprawl. Riverside, Calif., scored 14 while Fort Worth-Arlington scored 77. Dallas scored 78.

"People living in more sprawling regions tend to drive greater distances, own more cars, breathe more polluted air, face a greater risk of traffic fatalities, and walk and use transit less," the report says.

Fort Worth-Arlington scored worst on its lack of city centers and activities. The metropolitan area that received the highest overall score was New York City, followed by Jersey City, N.J.; Providence, R.I.; San Francisco; and Honolulu.

The three-year research project conducted by Reid Ewing, a professor at Rutgers University, and Rolf Pendall, a professor at Cornell University, is sure to be controversial.

The report's recommendations are for local governments and communities to focus on dilapidated areas and to provide

Urban sprawl

The 15 most sprawling metropolitan areas in the country, according to an analysis of 83 metro areas by Smart Growth America. Ranked from worst to best:

1. Riverside-San Bernardino, Calif.
 2. Greensboro-Winston Salem-High Point, N.C.
 3. Raleigh-Durham, N.C.
 4. Atlanta
 5. Greenville-Spartanburg, S.C.
 6. West Palm Beach-Boca Raton-Delray Beach, Fla.
 7. Bridgeport-Stamford-Norwalk-Danbury, Conn.
 8. Knoxville, Tenn.
 9. Oxnard-Ventura, Calif.
 10. Fort Worth-Arlington
 11. Gary-Hammond, Ind.
 12. Rochester, N.Y.
 13. Dallas
 14. Vallejo-Fairfield-Napa, Calif.
 15. Detroit
- Other Texas cities**
32. Houston
 54. San Antonio
 59. Austin

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