

GLOBAL FORUM ON URBAN & REGIONAL RESILIENCE

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**** RECEPTION TO FOLLOW ****

Taking Sustainability Seriously in the Piedmont Sprawl Belt?

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Recent USGS 'scenarios analysis' suggest that, left unchecked, suburban sprawl in the Piedmont bioregion will grow by 192% by 2060. Research in 'megapolitan political ecology' equates such growth with severe detrimental socio-ecological consequences. The Piedmont bioregion is expected to experience some of the greatest sprawl growth and most severe consequences. Mobilized by such findings, this paper first uses Kent Portney's 38-point index of "cities taking sustainability seriously" (CTSS) as a starting point to examine (113) local governments that make up the 13 Piedmont Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSA). Portney identifies five variables that influence how "seriously" the 55 largest US cities "take sustainability" (positive rank on the CTSS index): "% of workers employed in manufacturing"; "contact with environmental groups"; "contact with labor unions"; "perceived level of commitment to sustainability by public officials" and "presence of Creative Class". Indexing suggests that local governments in the 13 Piedmont MSAs do not take sustainability seriously (median CTSS score 6.5/38 against Portney's 25.3/38). Of the five variables exerting independent influence on Portney's highest ranking cities, only "presence of Creative Class" seems to matter to the Piedmont outliers that do rank highly. The paper sought to identify further reasons as to why some local governments in the 13 Piedmont MSAs lag so far behind others. Examined is the possibility that the presence of "sprawl" itself (pop. weighted density by distance from city hall) may be an important factor in determining a low CTSS score. Given that "sprawl" seems almost intractable in the region, the paper concludes by asking what might effective strategies for minimizing sprawl, or at least minimizing its negative impacts, may look like.

LOCATION: *Global Forum Conference Room, Suite 312, Kent Square*

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