

# Urban sprawl the growing generation will face with

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In today's world, urbanization is a pressing issue for coming generations. The issue of where the growing population will live must be addressed. With wildlife, the areas in which they can live are being reduced and restricted.

Urban sprawl is an issue that my generation will be responsible to deal with.

In Texas, growth of urban areas is extremely relevant because they have grown 12.6%, since 2010, which is double that of California. Houston is the 4th largest city in the United States and as the 5th largest metropolitan area, it seems that its growth has expanded past its boundaries into other communities. This growth will only get faster and faster in years to come. A University of Houston study shows that Houston metropolitan area will reach 14.6 million people by 2050. This growth is expected all over the state with the state population to grow to 40.5 million by 2050. The study also showed that three out of every four people will live in a metropolitan area.

My generation is faced with finding a solution to help wildlife stay abundant while urban areas enclose them. Education of landowners is probably the easiest way to help keep land for wildlife to thrive. With 95% of Texas being privately owned, 83% of this land is rural, 86% of the Texas population lives in urban areas. According to a report by Gary Joiner, the United States loses two million acres of land a year to urban development. Education of landowners to keep their land and create wildlife habitat areas, which give places for wildlife to live and go as land around them develop instead of selling the land to developers to create suburban communities, that expand further and further away from the cities themselves, is vital. Texas Parks and Wildlife Department has created a program to help influence landowners to use their lands for agriculture related reasons. This easement system helps make it

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more economical to keep land natural. Along with the easement system, TPWD also has a Landowner Incentive Program to help fund projects to improve the wildlife management on private lands in Texas. Hopefully, this will encourage rural landowners to keep their land and make it even more suitable for wildlife instead of selling it to developers to destruct more habitat.

As we can discourage people from selling land to developers and improve it for wildlife, we can not stop people from moving to urban metropolitan areas. However, this does not address the issue of too many people in an area and not enough places for these people to live. Consequently, large cities should try and grow up and not out to prevent the loss of more prime wildlife habitat. However, more and more high rises may not be the answer. Some researchers say that the way to gain this space is to reuse land that has been run down or has the potential to be revamped to allow for more people to move there and grow in a more developed community that is already existing. This will keep from using up land that wildlife roam as well as solve the issues of places for people to live in a growing metropolitan area.

We can not stop all of the outward development of these areas, and as we continue to destroy these native areas and change them to suburban areas, we are faced with the issue of wildlife becoming a nuisance to the public as they become overly abundant in what is now not adequate for that species. The hardest part of this is people do not realize that they are in an area that the animal is native to, and they do not react well in an urban area. It comes

back to educating the public on the importance of not feeding wildlife in close proximity to houses or urban areas because those animals can be unpredictable. There has been many cases where a animal that may look docile can turn aggressive and defend itself, or its young, causing injury to someone who thought they were helping the animal. There will also need to be some planning when expanding some suburban communities to allow for wildlife to have an opportunity to relocate and not be pushed into other suburban areas. Wildlife needs to be taken care of, and we must be conscious about where we expand our urban areas to prevent them from being pushed into places that can cause harm to people or the animal itself.

As the United States continues to grow and people continue to move to the urban metropolitan areas, it is my generation's job to find the solutions and speak for the wildlife, that do not have a voice to speak for themself. We must conserve our most valuable natural resource and make it possible for our children and our grandchildren to be able to see wildlife as we see it today if not better. I believe we can do this with a little bit of thinking and education of the public so that everyone is aware of the issues of urbanization."