

Report: Fresno near average for sprawl

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Fresno's not the greatest example of how to keep sprawl contained, but it's not the worst either, a new report showed.

The report, [Measuring Sprawl 2014](#), was released by Washington D.C.-based Smart Growth America, an organization that advocates for policies and research that lead to safer, more vibrant communities. In the report, 221 larger metropolitan areas and 994 counties in the U.S. were measured on how connected residents and businesses were to their urban cores or else spread out in suburban areas where jobs and services are harder to reach.

Drawing from data from in 2010, four factors were used to evaluate sprawl in the communities, including development density, land use mix, activity centering and street accessibility.

The Fresno metropolitan area came in at No. 9 with an overall composite score of 92.24. Scores higher than 100 tend to be more compact and connected while areas with scores lower than 100 are considered more sprawling.

Bringing down Fresno's score was a lack of nearby activities measured by the proportion of people and businesses located near each other and how quickly population density declines from the center of the metropolitan's center.

With a score of 95.56 in that category, the Fresno area also scored 101.58 in terms of density, 126.18 for land use mix—measured by the balance of jobs to total population—and 82.42 for street accessibility like the average length of a street blocks and percentage of four-way or more intersections.

That's a far cry from the top ranked New York metro with a total composite score of 203.36, including 384.29 for density, 159.34 for land use mix, 213.49 for activity centering and 193.8 for street connectivity.

However, the Fresno area was still pretty high up from the bottom of the list, reserved for Hickory-Lenoir-Morganton, N.C., which achieved a composite score of just 24.86, including 78.64 for density, 40.46 for land use mix, 67 for activity centering and 56.95 for street connectivity.

Among counties, Fresno County received a composite score of 109.31. Kings County managed a score of 105.04, followed by Tulare County with 104.49 and Madera County with 94.12.

According to research cited in the report, residents in more compact, connected metros tend to have greater economic opportunities and transportation options available to them.

They also spend less of their income in housing and transportation and are generally safer and healthier than those in more sprawling metro areas.

Smarth Growth America listed several examples of cities that have encouraged urban growth by allowing multi-use zoning, investing in transit infrastructure, adopting community improvement plans and launching homebuyer assistance programs in their downtown areas.