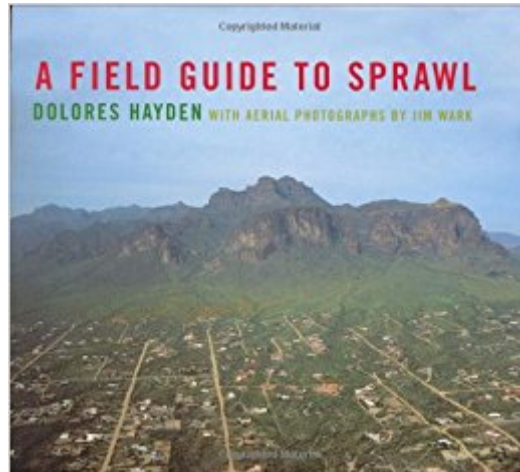


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A Field Guide To Sprawl



Synopsis

A visual lexicon of the colorful slang, from alligator investment to zoomburb, that defines sprawl in America. "May well establish Ms. Hayden as the Roger Tory Peterson of Sprawl." —New York Times Duck, ruburb, tower farm, big box, and pig-in-a-python are among the dozens of zany terms invented by real estate developers and designers today to characterize land-use practices and the physical elements of sprawl. Sprawl in the environment, based on the metaphor of a person spread out, is hard to define. This concise book engages its meaning, explains common building patterns, and illustrates the visual culture of sprawl. Seventy-five stunning color aerial photographs, each paired with a definition, convey the impact of excessive development. This "engagingly organized and splendidly photographed" (Wall Street Journal) book provides the verbal and visual vocabulary needed by professionals, public officials, and citizens to critique uncontrolled growth in the American landscape. 75 color illustrations

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

A mere glance through the pages of this book offers a quick education about the excesses of the recently built environment. By its very nature, sprawl is hard to identify and track, but Hayden, a Yale professor of architecture and American studies, provides a combination of informed but breezy text and 75 large, crisp color images that greatly simplify the task of "decoding everyday American landscapes." Organized alphabetically, with a big two-page spread for each entry, the book moves from "alligator" (an investment that "eats" cash flow, represented here by the vast and ghostly grid

of an unbuilt New Mexico suburb) to "zoomurb" (a suburb on steroids, illustrated here by Arizona's spiraling Sun City). Along the way, the reader comes to the depressing understanding that troubling phenomena one might have thought strictly local or temporary— for instance, houses where the garage is the dominant projecting feature— are common enough to have acquired names, in this case "snout house." But more than a set of colorful terms— all of which, from "ball pork" to "parsley round the pig" are carefully sourced— this book is a concise guide to not only sprawl itself but to the powerful political and financial forces that sustain it. If the book has one problematic aspect, it is that Wark's aerial photographs are often so vividly beautiful that they risk aestheticizing their often grim subjects— but their seductive quality serves to draw the viewer into Hayden's passionately sustained argument. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

— Field guides to plants abound, but where can an amateur (un)naturalist find something to lead him or her through the jungle of terms used in modern land development? A Field Guide to Sprawl provides such a resource. — American Scientist — Hayden argues that, in its vividness, slang fuses description and critique, mobilizing the imagination in a way that expert speech cannot. . . . Once again, Hayden has chosen to look where others had not thought to look, and it is to our benefit. — Armed with more knowledge of what came before us and with what stands before us, we are better prepared to take position within the contested landscape of sprawl. — Jacqueline Tatom, Journal of Architectural Education — Zooming alligators! This is a handy introduction to some curious ways of using the land. — landartnet.org — A flair for words and a collection of stunning photographs. . . Captivating . . . Hayden packs a lot of information and a wealth of clever coinages into a brief, quick-moving text. — The Field Guide will both inform and entertain readers who are disturbed by the wastefulness and disconnection of conventional development. — Philip Langdon, New Urban News — [A] landmark contribution to this literature. — The Nation — A wonderful guide to the terrible things being done to the American landscape. — Eric Schlosser, author of Fast Food Nation

Great coffee table book with humorous anecdotes and good pictures of what our man-made world has become in the last 60 years.

With Superstition Mountain on the cover and the gridded area of NW Albuquerque on page 19 (the second photo in the book), this book shows my home sweet home. The western US shows well in

this book, with the beautiful aerial photos spread out as examples. While I realize the entire point of the book is to highlight the author's scorn, venom, and derision, the reader can't help but look at the photographs with wonder and amazement at the creative ways humans have solved their problems in America. Now personally, I love inexpensive parking. It happens to be the bugaboo in this book - oh no! Parking lots! - but it's easy to see why so many people choose to drive out for a week or a month's worth of supplies, load up at Costco, and come home. It frees up the schedule day to day, and the community at Costco is so welcoming and sympathetic. Everyone just gets along. It's cozy. Here's a shocking piece of information that I learned in this book: in 1956, the federal highway system built a nationwide road network that covered the equivalent area of the state of Delaware. Isn't that amazing? Such a tiny bit of paving brought so many benefits to so many people. I think I've driven most of those highways, almost end to end. We're a road trip family with far-flung relatives and a bit of wanderlust. The federal highway system is a national treasure. It wouldn't hurt to add a third lane each way to all the federal highways, especially if it can be done at such a tiny expense of land. Only the size of Delaware! Extraordinary. Anyway, as we saw during Hurricane Rita, it would be very smart to build highways big enough to evacuate American cities. This has been allowed to lapse. Then there is the excellent photography in this book! Look at that gorgeous interchange on page 53 - someone designed that and it works perfectly. Humans are so creative. Look at how a fast food place is instantly recognizable, page 60 - predictable experience inside. It's perfect. Look at that beautiful neighborhood on page 63 - enticing with its gracious lawns, hospitable setting, privacy, and neighborliness. On the next page, look at that scientific area - well designed to meet a specific need. Page 107 shows an interesting building lying fallow, waiting to be converted into an art gallery or microbrewery or some other amazing usage that people dream up. The entire book is a pleasure to look at. Ignore the snobby text, and look how creative people are.

It is a shame that producing a text like this may have relegated Hayden from "scholarly" to "popular" thinker, as I love this kind of work. Her "Power of Place" remains a hugely influential and inspiring book to place/space-centric artists, planners, writers, etc. This is clearly a different kind of project: a field guide playing a bit of a game with the notion of ontology, typology, and empiricism in general. It is smart and engaging in a very different way than her prior texts. But academia is what it is and fun (or, all too often, creativity) is not its primary objective, eh? Well, 'A Field Guide to Sprawl' is smart, creative, and fun (or as fun as looking at typologies of concrete, steel, plastic, and other materials stretched across the landscape can be). Another text that I share with students as we examine "media ecologies," "naturecultures," "first" and "second nature," and so forth. Hayden deserves her

place in the history of "place."

Small coffee-table format picture book. There is a 10-page introduction, which is excellent, then 51 vocabulary terms. Each vocab term is 2 pages - one page is an aerial example picture, the facing page is text describing the term. The terms are mostly pejorative (slang) and are critical of certain types of development. This is not "new" stuff many of these terms and criticisms go back to the 1940s. While some of the terms are obvious (strip malls, McMansions) much of it is not obvious and opens a whole new way of seeing why certain things are laid out the way they are. More so, it helps to predict how future development will happen based on current development patterns. This book is a layman's guide to development criticism. Should be required reading for all who live in a developing community.

The numerous color aerial photos in this book do a wonderful job of putting US development patterns into a whole new perspective. This isn't intended to be the end all be all of commentary about sprawl. For that, there are plenty of other great books that emphasize analysis and critique rather than a visual approach (A Better Way to Live is an example of a terrific book in the former category). This book is a great introduction to the different kinds of sprawl and what they look like. Sure, Dolores Hayden puts a fairly cynical touch on what commentary there is, but when you see the pictures of how developers have ruined our open spaces, you'll understand why. In short, a great little book that achieves its purpose very well.

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