



CITY OF ATLANTA

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Has ATL's Sprawl Finally Met Its Limits? Some Say 'Yes'

By **Josh Green** | @JoshGreen1234 | Oct 4, 2013, 12:36pm EDT

Has the Sultan Of Sprawl finally reached its limits? According to a must-read piece by *Atlantic Cities* called "[Have We Reached Peak Sprawl?](#)", respected minds in the field of real estate research say **Atlanta's** sprawling days are numbered, if not deceased already. Per the article: "*Metropolitan Atlanta, long a symbol of car-dependent American sprawl, has recently passed a threshold where a majority of its new construction spending is now focused in high-density, 'walkable' parts of town.*" And researchers aren't taking the milestone lightly: They're comparing it to the **1890** declaration by Fredrick Jackson Turner that America's frontier was officially closed, as Census data indicated. While that could be going overboard, the sprawl-is-dead idea is intriguing. And the data showing that metro Atlanta could be focusing inward — as opposed to rampantly building outward — is compelling. Then again, without natural restrictions, isn't sprawl in ATL's DNA?

About the data: The magazine notes that, since **2009**, 60 percent of new office, retail and rental properties in Atlanta have been built in what one researcher calls "walkable urban places" — in other words, neighborhoods with high **Walk Scores** where people tend to park cars and use their feet or bicycle pedals. "This is indicative that we're seeing the end of sprawl," one **George Washington University School of Business** professor told the magazine. "It does not say that everything turns off. There will still be new drivable suburban development. It's just that the majority will be walkable urban, and it will be not just in the redevelopment of our downtowns, but in the urbanization of the suburbs."

Lest we forget that, earlier this year, venerable New York Times columnist Paul Krugman — a Nobel Prize winner considered one of the world's leading economists — explicitly asked "[So what's the matter with Atlanta?](#)" before dissing the Big Peach as "the Sultan of Sprawl" in a Sunday op-ed piece. Krugman acknowledged Atlanta's dizzying growth — on par this century with **Dallas** and **Houston**, without the oil boost. And then this: "? in

one important respect booming Atlanta looks just like **Detroit** gone bust: both are places where the American dream seems to be dying, where the children of the poor have great difficulty climbing the economic ladder." Part of the problem, Krugman and other researchers noted, is that jobs are too far flung in Atlanta.

Other statistics could lend some credibility to the sprawl-is-dead notion. In Atlanta, the number of 25-to 34-year olds with four-year college degrees or higher swelled by **61 percent** between 2000 and 2009. Several thousands apartments are under construction right now. The key, as many have noted before, will be retaining these youthful city dwellers in the future, before the old sprawl beckons.

- [Have We Reached Peak Sprawl?](#) [Atlantic Cities]
- [Will Atlanta's 'Creative Class' Uproot to Suburbs?](#) [Curbed Atlanta]
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