



VALENCIA: ATLANTA IN SPAIN

FAST FACTS		Similar To
Urbanized Area* Population	1,175,000	Providence, Sendai, Liverpool, Perth, Prague
Urbanized Land Area: Square Miles	105	Sudbury, Guangzhou, Goteborg, Dublin
Urbanized Land Area: Square Kilometers	270	
Population per Square Mile	11,200	Hague, Toluca, Porto Alegre, Sapporo
Population per Square Kilometer	4,300	
3 rd largest urbanized area in Spain (after Madrid and Barcelona)		
*Continuously built up area		

13 September 2004

Valencia is Spain's third largest urban area. It is located on a broad alluvial plain, just north of where the coastal mountains of the Mediterranean coast end.

Valencia is the northeastern anchor of one of the world's greatest construction booms --- the high-rise and retirement villa building that is going on from the Algarve area of the Portuguese south coast, along the Andalusian coast through Malaga and on to Valencia. Here, however, the new construction is not to house the Scandinavian, British and German retirees attracted to this coast. It is rather to house the increasingly affluent residents of the Valencia area itself.

To the south and west are new exurban communities, well outside the ring road (A-7) that takes traffic around the city. This road, like other toll roads in Spain, does not charge tolls within the urban area.

But the largest expanse of new housing is being built to the northwest of the city, well outside the ring road, along the CV-35 freeway. The developments stretch all the way out to Liria, nearly 20 miles from the urban core. At one freeway off-ramp, there are a number of signs advertising new housing, reminiscent of the Atlanta western suburbs. Liria and other suburbs are sell served by the usual commercial manifestations of suburbanization, large horizontal shopping centers and fast food restaurants.



The historic core is small, little more than one-quarter of a square mile. There are the very narrow streets that are typical of cities of similar history. The core includes the



Cathedral and medieval towering city gates. An attractive railroad station is on the east side of the core. The core itself sits approximately two miles inland from the Mediterranean Sea port and is surrounded by wide boulevards, with landscaped medians. There are a number of new, high rise office buildings and civic structures to the north.

Large apartment buildings make up much of the inner ring of development. Yet, the influence of the sparse suburban development is shown by the fact that Valencia is by far the least dense of Spain's urbanized areas.

A peripheral freeway, the V-30 skirts the banks of the Turia river south of the core, with the eastbound lanes on the southern bank and the westbound lanes on the northern bank, eventually providing access to the A-3, which heads toward Madrid.

To the northwest of the core, but inside the ring road, will be found luxurious newer apartment buildings and newer high-rise office buildings. These buildings are just far enough away from the core that public transport is incapable of competing with automobile commuting for trips for most of the area. The area resembles an American "edge city," with large parking garages attached to the buildings, like in Portland or Atlanta.

Valencia is one of those places that illustrates the inability of public transport to serve more of the modern urban area than the core. With densities that urban planning Nirvana Portland could never achieve in its wildest dreams, densities that are more than double now-abandoned Portland plans, Valencia, total public transport ridership is little over 150 million annually. Based upon trip patterns in similar European urban areas, this would tend to suggest that approximately 85 percent of motorized trips are by automobile, and only 15 percent by public transport.

And, for public transport, things will only get worse. The city itself has begun to lose population, even as the urbanized area continues to gain. Valencia is one of the latest core cities to lose population, largely because the city boundaries include large expanses of rural land that can be developed. What is clear is that most new residential development is occurring outside the city.

There is also considerable commercial development outside the city. The most important may be the Ford assembly plant where the N-430 diverts from the A-7 to provide access to the core. But there are a plethora of additional developments, office and distribution, along the many miles of high-quality arterials in the urbanized area. A rough estimate is that there are more than 200 lane miles of freeway in the Valencia area, a higher ratio per square mile than in any American urban area of more than 1,000,000, and considerably better than either Atlanta or Portland.

Everything here points to prosperity. Valencia looks like the most prosperous urbanized area in Spain. Of course, all of the Iberian peninsula has been making great strides economically, as the integrated European economy has spread the prosperity to Spain and



Portugal that will soon rival that of the northern countries whose recent histories have been more favorable. So, this Atlanta of Spain, where suburban housing spreads westward, will like Atlanta become even less dense in the future, as people purchase larger homes and enjoy the sustainable quality of life that has been available for some time throughout northern Europe, Canada, the United States and Oceania.



Core



Railroad Station



Atlanta in Spain



Housing Construction in Liria



Liria



Liria



Southern Exurbs



Northwest Entry (CV-35)



Northwest (Edge) City



Last of the Mountains, South of Valencia

By Wendell Cox

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