

# The Rise of Sprawl

**SUBURBAN**

and the Decline of

**NATION**

the American Dream

"Dissects the physical design of the suburbs brilliantly... [The authors] set forth more clearly than anyone has done in our time the elements of good town planning."

—Paul Goldberger, *The New Yorker*

Andres Duany, Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, and Jeff Speck

# 7

## THE VICTIMS OF SPRAWL

CUL-DE-SAC KIDS; SOCCER MOMS; BORED TEENAGERS;

STRANDED ELDERLY; WEARY COMMUTERS;

BANKRUPT MUNICIPALITIES; THE IMMOBILE POOR

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Surplus wealth enables people to persist in building wasteful, inadequate communities and then compensate for the communities' failings by buying private vehicles and driving all over the metropolitan area in search of what ought to be available close to home.

— PHILIP LANGDON, *A BETTER PLACE TO LIVE* (1994)

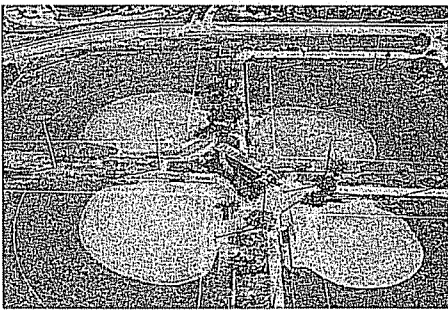
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Aside from the real estate developer, who else is victimized by suburban sprawl? To some degree, almost everyone is. Most obvious are the 80 million Americans who are either too young, too old, or too poor to drive. But it doesn't stop there. Upon investigation, it is difficult to identify a segment of the population that does not suffer in some way from the lifestyle imposed by contemporary suburban development.

## CUL-DE-SAC KIDS

Perhaps most worrisome is the situation facing the children of suburbia. In one of the great ironies of our era, the cul-de-sac suburbs, originally conceived as youth's great playground, are proving to be less than ideal for America's young.

That suburban life may be bad for children comes as a surprise. After all, most families move to the suburbs precisely because they think it will be "good for the children." What do they mean by that? Better suburban schools—a phenomenon peculiar to the United States—are good for children. Big, safe, grassy fields to play on are also good for them. What is not so good for children, however, is the complete loss of autonomy they suffer in suburbia. In this environment where all activities are segregated and distances are measured on the odometer, a child's personal mobility extends no farther than the edge of the subdivision. Even the local softball field often exists beyond the child's independent reach.



*Out of reach: clustered baseball fields that few children can access without parental transport*

The result is a new phenomenon: the "cul-de-sac kid," the child who lives as a prisoner of a thoroughly safe and unchallenging environment. While this state of affairs may be acceptable, even desirable, through about age five, what of the next ten or twelve years? Dependent always on some adult to drive them around, children and adolescents are unable to practice at becoming adults. They cannot run so simple a household errand as picking up a carton of milk. They cannot bicycle to the toy store and spend their money on their own. They cannot drop in on their mother at work. Most cannot walk to school. Even pickup baseball games are a thing of the past, with parents now required to arrange car-pooling with near-military precision, to transport the children at the appointed times.

Children are frozen in a form of infancy, utterly dependent on others, bereft of the ability to introduce variety into their own lives, robbed of the opportunity to make choices and exercise judgment. Typical suburban parents give their children an allowance, in order to empower them and encourage independence. "Feel free to spend it any way you like," they say. The child then says, "Thanks, Mom. When can you drive me to the mall?"

### SOCGER MOMS

Another word for *dependent* is *burden*, and that term better describes these parents' perception of the children who rely upon them for mobility. Mothers often derail their careers so that their children can experience a life beyond the backyard. The role of journalist, banker, or marketing director is exchanged for that of chauffeur, with the vague hope that their career will resume when the last child turns sixteen; thus the term *soccer mom*—a distinctly suburban euphemism. The plight of the suburban housewife was powerfully conveyed in a letter we received in 1990 from a woman living outside of Tulsa:

Dear Architects:

I am a mother of four children who are not able to leave the yard because of our city's design. Ever since we have moved here I have felt like a caged animal only let out for a ride in the car. It is impossible to walk even to the grocery store two blocks away. If our family wants to go for a ride we need to load two cars with four bikes and a baby cart and

drive four miles to the only bike path in this city of over a quarter million people. I cannot exercise unless I drive to a health club that I had to pay \$300 to, and that is four and a half miles away. There is no sense of community here on my street, either, because we all have to drive around in our own little worlds that take us fifty miles a day to every corner of the surrounding five miles.

I want to walk somewhere so badly that I could cry. I miss walking! I want the kids to walk to school. I want to walk to the store for a pound of butter. I want to take the kids on a neighborhood stroll or bike. My husband wants to walk to work because it is so close, but none of these things is possible . . . And if you saw my neighborhood, you would think that I had it all according to the great American dream.

#### BORED TEENAGERS

Those who have experienced adolescence in modern suburbia have their own stories of boredom and frustration. Eric Bogosian's play *Suburbia*, set in a 7-Eleven parking lot, depicts the culture that develops in a public realm devoid of decent public gathering places. In an interview, Bogosian noted:

There's nothing wrong with these kids. The landscape around and within their own minds isn't providing them with the tools to get around in the world beyond the suburbs. Meanwhile, T.V. is bombarding them with so much stuff that all they can feel is frustration. No wonder they think there's

no point in doing anything . . . The people who designed the suburbs were married couples with children, who wanted a sedate place to grill burgers in the backyard. Young people didn't have a say in it, and they get into a lot of trouble there because they're bored. Driving around, driving drunk, drowning in frozen ponds. The suburbs can be a dangerous place at a certain age.<sup>1</sup>

It seems odd to say that the suburbs are dangerous, since many families relocate to suburbia precisely to find a safer environment. In terms of crime, this motivation seems justified, but suburbs are hardly free from violent crime, and recent examples of suburban gang activity call the assumption into question. It is fair to say that the suburbs are no more crime-free than their higher-income demographics would suggest.

But there is more to protecting life than avoiding crime, as any parent of a sixteen-year-old driver will attest. Far and away, car crashes are the largest killer of American teenagers, accounting for more than one third of all deaths.<sup>2</sup> Yet all the suburban parents who can afford it will readily buy the additional cars that provide independence for their children, often in order to regain their own freedom.

When they get behind the wheel, teenagers automatically join the most dangerous gang in America. Automobile accidents kill over 45,000 people annually in this country, almost a Vietnam War of casualties every year.<sup>3</sup> A child is twenty times more likely to die from

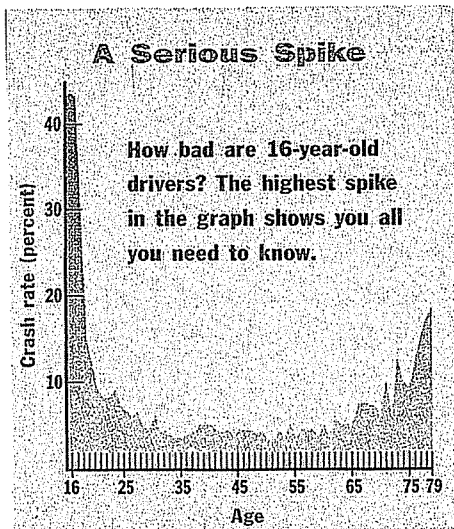
<sup>1</sup> In 1988, 14.8 million accidents involving motor vehicles led to 47,000 deaths and almost 5 million injuries (MacKenzie, Dower, Chen, 19). Taken out of context, the amount of carnage on America's highways is absolutely shocking, as is the degree to which we have come to accept it as a fact of life. Jane Holtz Kay asks, "Where else do we

## Crashes Kill 37 in Texas In Single Day

### Deaths on Highways Are Close to Record

WEATHERFORD, Tex., July 3 (AP) — In one of the deadliest days ever on Texas highways, 37 people died in three crashes today, including 14 people killed when a tractor-trailer hit the back of a family's van. Eleven people, many of them children, died in a collision involving another tractor-trailer near the West Texas town of Snyder, and six were

*Highway carnage: an accepted outgrowth of an automobile-dependent society*



The Triple-A rates its drivers

an automobile mishap than from gang activity, as most young drivers are involved in *at least* one serious auto accident between ages sixteen and twenty. In their first year of driving, over 40 percent of teenagers have an accident bad enough to be reported to the police.<sup>3</sup> For this reason, it is more dangerous, statistically, to grow up in the suburbs of Seattle than in that city's most urban neighborhoods.<sup>o</sup>

The second most likely cause of death among teenagers, suicide, is also correlated with the growth of sprawl. Teenage suicide, almost unheard of before 1950, had nearly tripled by 1980 and now accounts for over 12 percent of youth mortalities. Sociologists, who cite "teen isolation and boredom" as a contributing factor, confirm that national rates of teenage suicide are much higher in suburbs than in cities.<sup>4</sup> This "isolation and boredom" is the outcome of an environment that fails to provide teenagers with the ordinary challenges of maturing, developing useful skills, and gaining a sense of self.

Much has been made of recent suburban high school shootings, and even *The New York Times* has suggested that suburban design

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accept some 120 deaths a day so offhandedly? Imagine a plane crash each afternoon . . . An engineer recorded it in military terms: during the same forty days of the Persian Gulf War in which 146 men and women were lost fighting to keep the world safe for petroleum, 4,900 died with equal violence on our country's highways" (Kay, *Asphalt Nation*, 103). By 1994, car crashes had killed over three million Americans in total (Andrew Kimbrell, "Steering Toward Ecological Disaster," *The Green Lifestyle Handbook*, 35). Internationally, car crashes cause an estimated 250,000 deaths and 3,000,000 injuries annually (Wolfgang Zuckermann, *The End of the Road*, 64).

<sup>o</sup> James Gerstenzang, "Cars Make Suburbs Riskier Than Cities, Study Says," A20. A study of the Pacific Northwest by Alan Thein Durning found that 1.6 percent of city residents were likely to be killed or injured by traffic accidents or crime, versus 1.9 percent of suburban residents. "Tragically, people often flee crime-ridden cities for the perceived safety of the suburbs—only to increase the risks they expose themselves to," Mr. Durning notes.

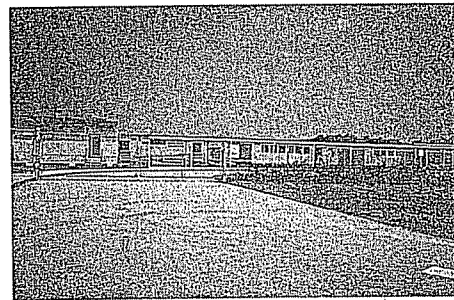
may be to blame.<sup>5</sup> It is unwarranted, however, to automatically presume a causal relationship. Since suburbia houses most of America's teenagers, it is bound to have its share of violent ones. Yet it is easy to imagine how a homogeneous and unstimulating environment might lead thrill-seeking teenagers to inhabit an alternative reality, whether it be computer games or psychosis. And one might speculate that the sterility of the suburbs—their very *unreality*—could make the leap to fantasy more possible.

There are other ways in which suburban sprawl victimizes America's youth. The building pictured here is not, as it may appear, a refugee relocation center or a storage depot, although it could be considered a storage depot of sorts: it's the place where we store our children while earning the money to pay for their cars. The reason that so many new schools look as dismal as this one is that there is not enough money left over after the road-building budgets are allocated. Even while we fret about the sorry state of our schools, our government spends the greater part of our public wealth on horizontal infrastructure: asphalt surfaces for cars.

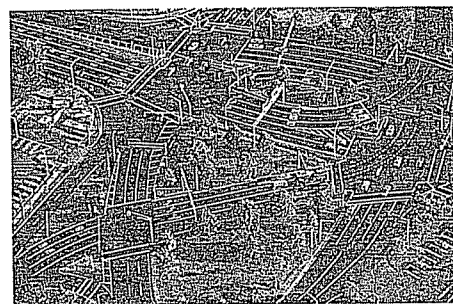
It is true that the United States has the most luxurious road system in the world. We build magnificent new highways at a cost of \$30 million per mile,<sup>6</sup> and every cloverleaf is more generous than the last. We happily spend twice as much per capita on transportation as do other developed nations.<sup>7</sup> Nothing seems too good for our

<sup>5</sup> Tri-State Transportation Campaign conference, "Beyond the Open Road," at New York University. In addition, the cost of operating and maintaining the United States' primary highway system has been estimated at \$500,000 per mile per year (Wolfgang Zuckermann, *The End of the Road*, 86).

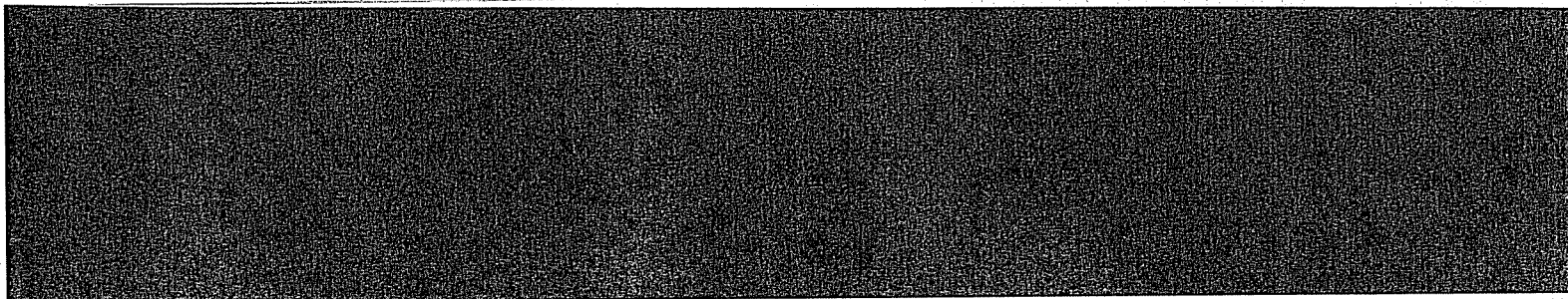
<sup>6</sup> Michael Repogle, *Transportation Conformity and Demand Management*, 22. While the Japanese spend 9 percent of their gross national product on transportation, Americans spend 15 to 18 percent. Our excessive family expenditure on automobiles is matched by tremendous corporate spending on parking lots and garages.




*At the bottom of the public funding hierarchy: our schools*



*At the top of the public funding hierarchy: our roadways*







cars. Meanwhile, more and more of our children attend school in fields of prefabricated portable barracks with air-conditioning backpacks, surrounded by chain-link fencing. It is difficult to be encouraged by what this says about our national priorities.

It would clarify matters if Americans would think about schools, town halls, libraries, and other civic buildings as *vertical infrastructure*, to be financed out of the same purse as our horizontal infrastructure. Such buildings are not mere luxuries but investments in community-making that evoke identity, pride, and participation in public life. A society's civic buildings are ultimately as important as its roads, and we should not use the table scraps of public funding to construct them. Most Americans would tolerate aging asphalt and fewer new lanes if they knew that their children would not be educated in the equivalent of trailer parks. Unfortunately, this choice is not offered.

### STRANDED ELDERLY

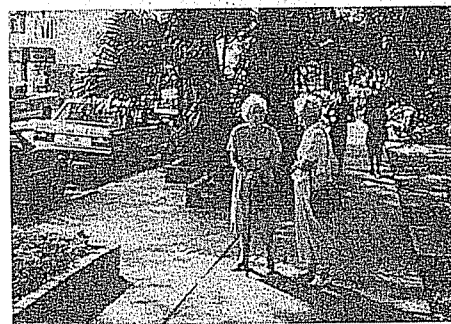
Whether or not the suburbs work as promised for children, they are intended to benefit families, especially young ones. As families age and disperse, however, parents begin to find themselves in an environment that is no longer organized to serve their needs. As driving skills diminish with age, parents become increasingly dependent upon others for mobility, just as their children were once dependent upon them. This situation may represent some form of divine justice, but hardly a satisfying one, since being forced to drive and being forced to ride are equally unpleasant.

Many seniors choose to retire to a house in the suburbs, especially in the Sun Belt—at least, they *think* that's what they're doing.

But they would be mistaken, because, as soon as they lose their driver's licenses, the location of that house puts them out of reach of their physical and social needs. They become, in effect, nonviable members of society. Unless they are wealthy enough to have a chauffeur, or are willing to burden a relative, they have no choice but to *re-retire* into a specialized home for the elderly. Then, having left a second community behind, they spend the rest of their days quarantined with their fellow nonviable members of society. The retirement community is really just a way station for the assisted-care facility.

Most elderly are neither infirm nor senile; they are healthy and able citizens who simply can no longer operate two tons of heavy machinery. The phenomenon of suburban auto dependency is not just a theory for these people. It is the reason why we see otherwise reasonable men and women falsifying eye exams and terrorizing their fellow motorists. They know that the minute they lose their license, they will revert from adulthood to infancy and be warehoused in an institution where their only source of freedom is the van that takes them to the mall on Monday and Thursday afternoons.

It should not be surprising that contemporary suburbia, with its strict separation of land uses, has inadvertently segregated the elderly from the rest of society. Prior to 1950, there were few if any retirement communities in the United States; they did not exist, because they were not needed. The elderly would almost always stay in their old neighborhoods after retiring. Once they lost their ability to drive, they could still maintain a viable lifestyle by walking, even if slowly. The ladies pictured here have the good fortune of living in Winter Park, Florida, a small city built in the late nineteenth century. In such a place, where housing and shopping are in



*Winter Park, Florida, a NORC (Naturally Occurring Retirement Community): senior citizens can remain self-sufficient when their environment does not force them to drive*

close pedestrian proximity, they can remain independent until they become infirm. This option is simply not available in today's suburbs.

Acknowledging the conveniences that traditional urbanism offers the elderly, sociologists have recently identified what they call a NORC: a Naturally Occurring Retirement Community. Amateur observers have another name for it: a neighborhood full of older people. Winter Park, Florida, is one such community, as is the Upper East Side of Manhattan. Many American cities have their NORCs, where a disproportionate number of the better-off elderly have moved in order to realize the benefits of retiring in a mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly environment. One hopes that this sort of self-sufficiency does not become the exclusive privilege of the upper classes.

### WEARY COMMUTERS



*How Americans must spend their free time*

Suburbia clearly is not an empowering environment for that third of the population that cannot drive. What of the two thirds that can, and the lucky minority that can afford multiple cars—has their lot improved? For people who do not particularly enjoy driving in traffic, the answer is probably no.

The largest segment of the population inconvenienced by sprawl is undoubtedly the middle-class commuter. Here, the degradation may not be as severe as it is with the young or the elderly, but the statistics can be quite unsettling. Say you live an hour's drive from your job. You would be spending a minimum of 500 hours per year in

your car, the equivalent of twelve work weeks. In a society that provides its citizens only two to three weeks' annual vacation, that is a dismaying figure.

Early in the twentieth century, the labor movement secured for Americans the eight-hour day, an idea that was embraced as a powerful contribution to the quality of life of the average citizen. What the eight-hour day accomplished, essentially, was to liberate about two hours daily for the pursuit of happiness. These hours meant different things to different people. Some spent them on family or community activity, others at sport or in a café, others reading, or in recent years—for better or for worse—watching television. In any case, these two hours provided middle-class workers with the opportunity to experience leisure on a daily basis.

Now, largely because of suburban land-use patterns, the eight-hour day has once again become the ten-hour day. These two hours, once the most interesting, varied, socially productive hours of the day, have become some of the most stressful and unpleasant. They were not so bad when spent on a commuter train—at least it was possible to sleep, read the news, or do the crossword—but these activities are not possible behind the wheel. Some people insist that they enjoy their hour-long drive, and they may be telling the truth. But wouldn't they rather, if given the chance, take those twelve work weeks, take the \$6,000 annual cost of an inexpensive second car, and spend it all on a magnificent vacation?

The tragedy of this situation is that these hours were time that parents used to spend productively with their children. Instead, the parents are stuck in their cars, and the children are warehoused in front of the television, since they don't have independent access to

much else. Our locus of civic activity has become the highway, and theirs has become the TV.<sup>o</sup>

Of course, time squandered in traffic extends well beyond the wasteful commute. Eighty percent of all suburban automobile trips have nothing to do with work at all,<sup>6</sup> but are short drives to places that used to be accessible on foot, such as shops, schools, parks, and friends' houses. With the disappearance of that once common activity, the useful walk, the weight of the average American adult has risen eight pounds in ten years. Nearly 60 percent of Americans are overweight.<sup>7</sup>

Suburbia victimizes the middle-class commuter not only in terms of time and health but also economically. The typical American family spends four times as much on transportation as its European counterpart, even though gasoline costs four times as much in Europe. The economic plight of the suburban American family was summed up in a note from Peter Brown of Houston:

There are five of us in our family, and I am sad to say that we own five cars. This costs us over \$27,000 a year. I have a car

<sup>o</sup> In considering a move to suburbia, parents must ask themselves such fundamental questions as how much television they want their children to watch. A study comparing ten-year-olds in suburban California and small-town Vermont found that the Vermont children had three times the mobility—independent access to desired destinations—while the Orange County children watched four times as much television (Peter Calthorpe, *The Next American Metropolis*, 9). No wonder Philip Langdon feels compelled to say that "A modern subdivision is an instrument for making people stupid" (Langdon, *A Better Place to Live*, 49). Some have even argued that a modern subdivision is a place for making people unhappy. In ultra-suburban Santa Clara County, California, there were more divorces in the early eighties than marriages (Langdon Winner, "Silicon Valley Mystery House," 46).

<sup>6</sup> "Most Americans Are Overweight," *The New York Times*, October 16, 1996, C9. According to the Centers for Disease Control, 22 percent of American children are obese, twice the level of ten years ago (Kilborn, A21).

for business and pleasure. My ex-wife works; she has a car. Our son, away at college in Fort Worth, has a car; our eldest daughter has to have a car for college and her part-time job. Our youngest daughter recently got her driver's license and has a car to drive to school and to her music lessons. Cars are essential to my children's social lives. Neither I nor my ex-wife can afford to take time off from work to chauffeur the children, which they don't want or expect anyway. Even more horrifying, we can't afford to buy collision insurance for our children's cars. So if one has a wreck and is at fault, the repair bills will be astronomical; if a car is totaled, it will need to be replaced somehow.

Recognizing the tremendous cost of the auto-dependent lifestyle, the author Philip Langdon has proposed a new national holiday: "Automobile Independence Day." It would take place on that date each year by which we have earned one quarter of our salaries, the amount that it takes to support our cars.<sup>7</sup> How appropriate that it is April Fool's Day.

### BANKRUPT MUNICIPALITIES

Other victims of sprawl include the organizations that suffer economically from the inherent inefficiency of an automobile-oriented environment. The most obvious of these are the local suburban municipalities that must provide services to distant houses, houses that do not begin to pay for themselves with their taxes. One such municipality, the city of Franklin, a Milwaukee suburb of 25,000,

conducted a careful cost analysis in 1992. It found that a new single-family home pays less than \$5,000 in property taxes but costs the city more than \$10,000 to service.<sup>8</sup> The inefficiency of new sprawling development had to be covered by a general tax hike paid by all residents, even those in more efficient older neighborhoods.

Fearful of red ink, governments respond to the costs of sprawl in a variety of ways, many of them shortsighted. Rather than insisting upon dense, efficient development patterns that pay for themselves, beleaguered municipalities embark upon stopgap measures such as prohibiting new development that houses schoolchildren, or simply refusing to enlarge their sewage facilities—a strategy that typically leads to land-hungry septic-tank sprawl. Some municipalities, and even some states, require that developers pay up front for the anticipated cost of servicing their subdivisions, which passes these costs on to the new-home consumer. This solves the municipal cash shortfall but does nothing to remedy the fundamental wastefulness of a sprawling development pattern. It also aggravates income-based segregation, as houses in suburban subdivisions become too expensive for all but the rich.

Another organization that has had difficulty coping with sprawl is the U.S. Postal Service. An ex-Postmaster General once explained to us where most of the postage money goes: to those little Jeeps and vans delivering mail on the suburban fringe. These vehicles are the main reason why the post office is perennially hiking its rates, and why aluminum gang mailboxes at subdivision entries have replaced door-to-door delivery on foot. The main-street post office as social center has also become an endangered species, as large-scale vehicle-storage requirements lead toward the consolidation of services into regional mega-offices on the suburban fringe.

Crime prevention has suffered as well. The most successful technique in reducing crime has proven to be community policing: getting the police officers out of anonymous patrol cars and onto the street, where they become part of the neighborhood. But, like the walking letter carrier, the community policeman is only effective at certain densities, and it is hard to imagine the community officer marching in and out of the cul-de-sacs of a modern subdivision. Even patrol cars have difficulty doing their job in suburbia, with its long distances and single-entry subdivisions. The response time in some suburban municipalities is often twenty minutes or more.

Subdivision residents are already aware of the ineffectiveness of suburban policing, which is why many of them pay substantial sums to employ their own security forces. Indeed, such private security is often necessary, as the suburbs have begun to experience the same social pathologies—crime, vandalism, drugs, and gangs—that helped trigger the flight to the suburbs in the first place. Unlike the real police, whose primary duty is to maintain law and order, these guns-for-hire are not public servants and need only enforce the objectives of their employers. Sadly, these objectives often lead to the harassment of visitors who fail to match the proper socioeconomic or racial profile—unless they are carrying mops or pushing lawn mowers.

### THE IMMOBILE POOR

Suburbia's most helpless victims do not live in the suburbs at all. They are left behind in the cities, on the bottom tier of our increasingly polarized society. The exclusion of the poor from the gated



enclaves of the wealthy may be the most obvious inequity of suburbia, but it is hardly the most significant. The rich have often contrived to separate themselves from those less fortunate, and the new suburbs are remarkable only for the thoroughness with which they accomplish this task. Far more troubling, though, is the concentrated poverty that remains in our inner cities. While this radical segregation of haves and have-nots seems natural to most American observers, it was by no means an inevitable outcome of our national evolution. Government policy might have prevented it, but it didn't try. To the contrary, our suburban expansion was largely government-driven, and completely lacking in incentives to integrate different housing types or incomes among the new construction. In a sense, our government did half its job: it provided the means of escape from the city—highways and cheap home loans—while neglecting to allocate those means fairly. The resulting social stratification of suburban development—compounded by racially based white flight—continues today.

Inevitable or not, the fact remains that the inner city is now where America's least privileged are most concentrated, a condition exacerbated by sprawl. Two aspects of suburbanization contribute dramatically to the plight of the urban poor: government investment in suburb-serving highways has left many inner-city neighborhoods sundered by high-speed traffic, and disinvestment by fleeing corporations robs city residents of adequate access to jobs.

The new highways of the sixties and seventies, designed to provide suburbanites with better access to downtown, were located on the cheapest land available, land usually confiscated from poor neighborhoods. The devastation wrought by such inner-city highways was, in retrospect, so extreme that one cannot rule out a nefar-

ious social intention. Less obvious, but almost as damaging, are the many streets in low-income neighborhoods that were widened and relieved of on-street parking to facilitate through traffic to distant destinations. While the era of the community-killing highway may be over, such roadway widenings continue unchecked. These regular investments in automotive infrastructure—too small to be noticed by anti-highway protesters—can subject a community to a death by a thousand cuts. Previously pedestrian- and business-friendly streets in almost every large city continue to expand at the expense of their host communities, primarily so that suburban commuters can get through them more quickly. Bringing suburbanites into the city is a worthwhile goal, but not when it means turning local streets into dangerous speedways.

Of greater concern to the urban poor has been the gradual disappearance of many of the jobs that the working classes rely upon for survival. Corporate flight to the metropolitan fringe would be less damaging if adequate public transportation existed to bring the urban poor to and from exurban jobs. Unfortunately, most new jobs in the suburbs are accessible only to people with cars, and automobile ownership is a hurdle that the would-be working poor are often unable to surmount.

While waiting for a taxi recently in the outskirts of Washington, we saw a black hotel worker likewise trying to hail a cab. After watching several pass him by, we hailed the next taxi, invited him to ride along, and then learned that he spends \$25 a day on the only form of transit available to his suburban minimum-wage job. The inaccessibility of suburban work has become such a dominant factor in the cycle of poverty that it was recognized as a key policy issue in the Clinton Administration's welfare reform proposals, which

asked Congress for \$600 million to fund welfare-related transport programs.

One oft-suggested solution to this predicament is government-supplied job-chasing vans, but these have inflexible schedules and often involve multiple-hour commutes, since the suburban employers are too dispersed to be reached by mass transit. It might be more effective simply to give free jalopies to the poor, as several philanthropic organizations are now doing. Once again, it is clear that the fundamental inefficiency of the suburban model—its organization around the automobile—is its most ruthless quality, victimizing those who can't drive even more than those who can.<sup>13</sup>

A final problem emanating from the separation of rich and poor exists at the level of municipal government: there are now rich cities and poor cities. The rich cities have good infrastructure, good services, good schools, and good management, all supported by ample taxes from high-end commercial and residential real estate. The poor cities have a deteriorating physical environment, woefully inadequate services, and a severely limited tax base, compounded by an inability to attract jobs, commerce, or real estate investment. The federal government's largesse in subsidized housing and other forms of assisted development—halfway houses, rehabilitation centers, homeless shelters—congregates the needy in needy places, further institutionalizing their character of poverty.

<sup>13</sup> Michael Phillips, "Welfare's Urban Poor Need a Lift—to Suburban Jobs," B1. According to a U.S. Congress study, two thirds of all new jobs are in the suburbs, while three quarters of welfare recipients live in the center city or rural areas. In addition, 95 percent of welfare recipients do not own cars (Hank Dittmar, "Congressional Findings in Tea-21," 10):

<sup>14</sup> A better policy would be to require that new workplaces be located within walking distance of transit. This solution is within the power of local zoning ordinances, but could be further encouraged by making it a precondition to federal transit funding.

This situation is exacerbated by the costs of sprawl. Everyone's taxes—from rich and poor cities alike—fund the construction of new far-flung infrastructure. Minnesota State Representative Myron Orfield has effectively demonstrated how the poor in deteriorating cities subsidize the new suburban enclaves of the wealthy. In Minneapolis–St. Paul, the central city pays \$6 million more in annual sewer fees than it incurs in costs, so that the Metropolitan Council can finance the expansion of sewer lines in the shrinking farm belt.<sup>o</sup> It seems fundamentally unjust that these struggling communities are forced to help build the very suburbs that rob them of their population, jobs, and vitality.

The American tendency toward building ever anew is most damaging to the poor because it is inextricably linked to the abandonment of the old. As we neglect our older neighborhoods, we also neglect their residents. Those who can leave the deteriorating city behind are quick to do so; those who can't are stuck, without the support or inspiration of success around them, doomed to the generational cycle of poverty. The disposable city will thus continue to dispose of its citizens until we embrace a healthier form of growth, one that treasures existing places more than imagined ones.

<sup>o</sup> Myron Orfield, *Metropolitica*, 71. Moreover, inner-city households pay subsidies 50 percent higher than the regional average. To add insult to injury, this infrastructure is unnecessary, as nearly one quarter of the Minneapolis–St. Paul urban area served by sewers remains undeveloped (72). Why, then, were these new sewers built? The answer is complicated, but is likely to include the fact that they made privately owned farmland much more valuable.