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The pursuit of happiness: the shifting narrative of suburbia and the American Dream

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The pursuit of happiness:
The shifting narrative of suburbia and the American Dream

by

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A thesis submitted to the graduate faculty

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degrees of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

MASTER OF COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL PLANNING

Majors: Architecture; Community and Regional Planning

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Iowa State University

Ames, Iowa

2016

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To my inspiration: Thank you to Ms. Kerwin for inspiring me with her love of literature and encouraging me to practice my writing in the first place. Thank you to Doug and Greg for reminding me that you should always shoot for the stars, because life is way too short not to.

To my academic support system: Thank you to Nadia for helping me brainstorm ideas, constructively criticizing my writing, and always having thought-provoking feedback. Thank you to Jane for the weekly meetings, the laughter, being my cheerleader, and helping me overcome the doubt when I thought I couldn't possibly write this thesis. Thank you to Carlton and Jelena for agreeing to be on my committee on top of everything else they do.

To my personal support system: Thank you to my parents, my brothers, my sister, Leah, and my friends for enduring my complaints throughout this process. Thank you to my partner, Clark, for always washing the dishes, sensing when I needed a hug, and making me laugh at myself when I wanted to indulge in self-pity. I love you.

ABSTRACT

Suburbia and the American Dream have long, complex history in the United States. As the visual manifestation of the American Dream since the mid-twenty first century, suburbia has been criticized for being placeless, unhealthy, discriminatory, and wasteful. Alternative development methods have been created to combat the growth of suburban sprawl to create "places worth caring about" (Kunstler, 2007). This research study, through the methodology of oral history, uses in-depth interviews and morphological study to continue the narrative of suburbia and the American Dream as it exists in two alternative developments in Central Iowa: Prairie Trail in Ankeny and Glynn Village in Waukee. Through the research process, the role of these development types within the narrative became clearer: Morphology can create a sense of community and belonging; perceptions are shifting away from false conventional wisdom of the past; nostalgia plays a role in decision-making for the future; and there has been a generational shift from an American Dream that prioritized financial security to an American Dream of the pursuit of happiness.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The American Dream is dead, and suburbia was the executioner. Read through newspapers and magazines from the past decade, and whether stated explicitly or indistinctly, this sentence will appear. This past century has seen the growth of suburbia and homeownership into the American way of life for many across the United States. Today many are questioning whether that American way of life, that American Dream, is still possible to achieve, or whether it should have even been the dream in the first place. The American Dream was built over the course of centuries, constructed from ideals such as freedom, equality, and opportunity. These ideals were manifest in the suburb through detached, single-family housing spread apart on large grassy yards that exist miles from commercial amenities. These ideals became manifest because of the American affinity for privacy, individualism, and the ability to live their lives as they pleased.

Over the decades suburbia has garnered criticism for being placeless, the excessive use of resources and land, a support system for segregation, and a contributor to poor health. The conventional suburban morphology has "no centers, no recognizable borders to shape a sense of geographic identity" (Brooks, 2004). Communities, throughout history, have lived around a "definable place—a tribal ring, an oasis, a river junction, a port, a town square," but this does not exist in the suburbs (Brooks, 2004). Without a place to define the identity of a community, can a sense of community exist? New ideas to combat suburban sprawl have been

created over the last four decades, such as The New Urbanism and conservation development. The principles of these methods are being used in developments across the nation. As suburbia became the manifestation of the American Dream, do these alternative development types continue the narrative or start a new branch? How do the people living within these developments define the American Dream today? This study endeavors to build a better understanding of the relationship between suburbia and the American Dream, as it existed in the past and continues in two suburban neighborhoods in suburbs on the periphery of Des Moines, Iowa.

Methodology

The questions driving this research are:

- What is the existing narrative of the American Dream and suburbia?
- What is the role of New Urbanist and Conservation Communities within that narrative?
- Do the residents of Prairie Trail and Glynn Village have a new understanding of the American Dream?

To understand the relationship between the American Dream and alternative suburban development types, this research study focused on two themes. The first aspect is to understand the motivation behind the homeowners' choice to live in the alternative suburban developments of Prairie Trail in Ankeny, Iowa and Glynn Village in Waukee, Iowa. The second aspect is to understand how the morphology, or form, of the developments contributes to the relationship between the development and the American Dream. The methodology of oral history was used to answer these questions. By understanding the stories of the homeowners and their interpretations of their homes and neighborhoods within the context of the American

Dream, this research continues the historical narrative of suburbanization in the United States.

Oral history

Within an oral history research study, it is important for a researcher to acknowledge the part played by placing herself within the narrative. This role affects and adds to the story, as only half of an oral history study is the telling and collecting of stories. The interviewer has the ability to remain subjective, asking the participant not only what, but how they felt about something (*Introduction to Oral History*, 2014). The other half consists of interpreting and writing the stories in a way that recounts them most accurately; this relationship between the researcher and the subject sets oral history apart from other forms of narrative research. As Portelli says,

> ...oral history shifts between performance-oriented narrative and content-oriented document, between subject-oriented life story and theme-oriented testimony. In practice, oral history stays mostly in between: its role is precisely to connect life to times, uniqueness to representativeness, as well as orality to writing. (1997, p. 6)

Thus it is important that I detail the role I held within this research study.

Struggling to form a concrete idea within the topic of sustainable development for this research study, I was struck by a colossal suburban home being built off the side of Interstate 35 on the northeast side of Ankeny, Iowa. (Figure 1) This house represented everything in opposition to sustainable development; oversized, wasteful, unnecessary, sprawling, an unconcealed display of wealth and prestige, and surrounded by houses of the same caliber with no end in sight. The realization dawned on me that I didn't understand why people wanted to live in a neighborhood or a house such as this one. If I didn't understand why people wanted to live in such

Figure 1: Inspirational house in Ankeny, Iowa

a place, then how could I design an alternative that would appeal to these people? My original intent was one step too far forward. Thus, for this study, I took a step backward to discover why people choose to live in these places and whether the ingrained ideal of the American Dream had a part in this choice.

Oral history consists of gathering personal reflections of events and their causes and effects from one individual or several individuals (Creswell, 2013). A form of narrative research, Oral history has the ability to stir readers "minds, hearts, and souls" by asking questions, listening, recording the answers, organizing, formatting, and writing the stories or histories of others (Creswell, 2013; Plummer, 1983). Narrative research consists of many types, including autobiography, biography, life history, and oral history (Reason, 1981; Seidman, 2013). What sets oral history apart is "the combination of the prevalence of the narrative form on the one hand, and the search for a connection between biography and history, between individual experience and the transformations of society, on the other" (Creswell, 2013). Oral histories express the values and way of life in a community. The Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage states, "They [the stories]

anchor us in a larger whole, connecting us to the past, grounding us firmly in the present, giving us a sense of identity and roots, belonging and purpose" (2003, p. 8).

While the unit of analysis may be a single person, or in the case of this study, a small group of individual, suburban homeowners, the voices of the homeowners are united by being a part of the larger history of suburban America. Their stories are individual and unique, and each provides a depth and richness to the greater narrative of suburban history and the American Dream, creating a new addition to the history of the phenomena. Stories untold or questions left out may be asked to provide greater detail and depth to the overarching narrative. The Baylor University Institute for Oral History states,

> Traditional history courses in high school and college usually touch only on the major events of the past, covering the fundamentals of who, what, when, where, why, and so what. Oral history brings depth to our understanding of the past by carrying us into experience at an individual level. (*Introduction to Oral History*, 2014, p. 2)

To achieve this addition to the history of American suburbia, this study used the methods of interviewing and morphological studies within two suburban neighborhoods in the greater Des Moines metropolitan area: Prairie Trail in Ankeny, Iowa and Glynn Village in Waukee, Iowa.

Prairie Trail and Glynn Village were chosen for this research study, because these types of development are relatively uncommon in the Des Moines area. Construction on each development started within the past ten years, and a local development company is creating each development. One requirement of the study was for interview participants to be current homeowners within the neighborhood. Beyond this requirement, participants were chosen through a process called

snowballing, which will be described in another section of this chapter. One other example of a New Urbanist neighborhood and a half dozen examples of Conservation Communities exist in the Des Moines area. Prairie Trail was chosen for this study, because it was deemed to be the largest and most developed example of New Urbanism in the Des Moines area. Glynn Village was chosen because the same development company created all the other examples in the area, with Glynn Village being the largest.

Methods

Interviews

Purposeful sampling, which is the selection of a sample that will lead to the most discovery, understanding, and insight of the chosen topic, was used to choose participants for this research (Portelli, 1997). Before participants were contacted, approval from the Institutional Review Board at Iowa State University was acquired. The only criterion for choosing participants for this study was ten years or less of homeownership within the chosen suburban neighborhoods listed above.

The creation of a relationship with the development companies for each neighborhood proved to be key to accessing the first potential participants for the interviews as representatives from each company acted as the gatekeeper, which is a key individual who lets the researcher into the group (Merriam, 2009). As both development companies will control the neighborhood associations until the developments are completely built out, representatives from each company have relationships with residents in the respective neighborhoods. Representatives from each company provided a short list of homeowners in the respective neighborhoods

after being furnished with a detailed description of the research project. The homeowners on these short lists were contacted via phone. The interview time and location were scheduled at the homeowner's convenience with many interviews taking place within the homes of the participants. At the end of each interview, participants were asked for a referral to neighbors that may be willing to participate. This type of purposeful sampling is called snowball sampling or snowballing (Creswell, 2013). Through these processes, I was able to conduct 15 interviews with different households.

Participants ranged from 29 to 70 years of age. I interviewed a total of 11 women and eight men. Four couples chose to be interviewed together. One couple chose to be interviewed separately. 18 of the participants identified as white American. One participant identified as Asian American. All homeowners lived in single-family detached homes. Many had moved into their respective neighborhoods from other suburban neighborhoods in the Des Moines area. Three participants had moved from out of state into the Des Moines area. Two participants were first time homeowners. The other 17 participants had owned a home prior to moving into their respective neighborhood. Pseudonyms will be used throughout this document to ensure the identity of the participants remains confidential.

For each interview, a semi-structured protocol was used.[1] A semi-structured protocol includes a list of interview questions that have a structured section but also "a list of questions or issues to be explored, and neither the exact wording nor the order of the questions is determined ahead of time" (Merriam, 2009). Topics within

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[1] See Appendix A.

the protocol included the participants' backgrounds, the decision-making process for purchasing their houses and the neighborhood, personal ideals, and their ideas about the American Dream. The interviews ranged from 40 to 90 minutes in length, with all being audio recorded. Each interview was transcribed with the help of Dragon® for Mac software. After completion of the transcription, the interviews were coded, first by hand and second through NVivo® software. The initial codes were obtained from the literature and categorized into buckets or overall topic areas. Codes were sorted into various buckets, and the themes developed out this sorting process. Examples of early codes include the American Dream, community, safety, and success. The coding process was iterative and unexpected themes surfaced within the data.

<u>Morphological study</u>

While some participants offered to be interviewed within their home, some did not. Thus spending time within the neighborhoods and analyzing the spatial conditions through plans and drawings helped bring a better understanding of the data collected during the interviews. This triangulation of the data, which is a "process that involves corroborating evidence from different sources to shed light on a theme or perspective" (Denzin, 2009), provided visual and spatial characteristics to parallel the stories from the homeowners. Morphological analysis asks the questions:

1. How did or does the built landscape come about?
2. How did or does it function?
3. How has it been adapted, or is it adapting, to changing needs and circumstances? (Anne V. Moudon, 2000)

Moudon says, "As they seek explanations for the processes that affect urban form, urban morphologists turn to traditional social sciences, typically sociology, anthropology, psychology and economics" (2000, p. 40). Analysis within morphological study often compares existing spatial conditions to historic conditions to note the degree of change that has happened over time. To gain a better understanding of not only the ideological changes happening in suburbia today, but also the spatial changes, chapter four is devoted to discussing the morphological history of the conventional suburb.

Fieldwork included documentation of the neighborhood features with photography and drawings to comprehend the quality of the homeowners' experiences on a spatial level through graphic analysis. The use of maps and plans are helpful in analyzing the neighborhoods spatial qualities. The birds-eye view provides an another process to finding patterns that exist within the infrastructure. While maps and plans are helpful, they only stretch so far. An in depth understanding of the spatial characteristics of the neighborhoods and how they function must be obtained from spending time on the ground. Documenting the neighborhoods forced me to explore them on foot, focusing on spatial characteristics that could be easily overlooked by the common observer. These characteristics include circulation patterns through the neighborhoods, the infrastructure to facilitate mobility, variation of space between structures, amenities located within the neighborhoods, and architectural form and details of the buildings. This synthesis of methods creates a stronger argument by comparing the different types of data

against one another for accuracy and providing a greater depth of comprehension of the spatiality of the neighborhood.

Limitations

Limitations exist within every research study. Acknowledging the limitations of a study helps to frame the findings of the study within an accurate worldview without generalizing to the larger population. A limitation within this study includes the lack of diversity within the participant pool. All except for one participant identified as white American. While this may be an accurate representation of the chosen neighborhoods, a more diverse set of participants from diverse races and ethnicities, and possibly other countries, could have provided a different perspective than what was gained from the participants that were interviewed, especially as cultural differences lead to different uses of the home and social interactions within the neighborhood. As with most qualitative research, this study cannot be a generalization of society as a whole. The opinions stated in this study are those of the individuals that reside in the neighborhoods only. While I cannot generalize the experiences of these homeowners to homeowners in other suburbs, the data gathered in this study can build a foundation for current trends of the American Dream and suburbia. Future studies can build upon this foundation.

CHAPTER 2

SUBURBANIZATION AND THE AMERICAN DREAM

The Origins of the American Dream

Freedom, life, liberty, individualism, the opportunity to achieve, equality, and the pursuit of happiness—these are the qualities of those that aspire to achieve the American Dream—the peculiarities of the American identity recognized worldwide. The epoch of the American Dream is long and complex. It is filled with stories of success and community; of people risking extreme peril to make remake their lives; of the ability to come from meager beginnings, work hard to overcome obstacles, and make something of themselves. The narrative of the American Dream contains individual stories of people who worked together for a greater cause. Thoughts of the American Dream create a sense of pride in one's country and bring tears to the eyes of those listening to the national anthem. While the American Dream does all this, it is overshadowed by an additional history of exclusion, discrimination, and segregation. The American Dream is not universal and does not apply to all Americans.

Many attribute the start of the American Dream to the coining of the phrase by James Truslow Adams in his 1931 book about the epoch of the American people, but the ideals that built the American Dream reach farther back to the political and religious climate of England in the mid-1600s and the founding of the United States. This section provides an overview of the construction of the idea of the American Dream through history and the influences that played roles in its creation. In

particular, this chapter traces the origins and changes of the American Dream from the religious and social values of the Puritans to the mid-twenty first century where suburbia became the physical manifestation of the American Dream.

Sailing towards freedom

Sailing from England in the 17th century, John Winthrop stated, "'We must delight in each other, make others' condition our own, rejoice together, mourn together, labor together, and suffer together, always having before our eyes our commission and community in the work, our community as members of the same body" (Cullen, 2004, p. 23). This vision of community would prove necessary as the Puritans set out from England seeking the New World and finding a strange and dangerous place on the other side of the ocean.

Known for their "moral and religious earnestness that informed their whole way of life," (Britannica, 2016) the Puritans were persecuted in England for the moral reform they sought to make, changing the many ways of life in England to match their self-disciplined lifestyle. Several of the oppressed Puritans had wealth and prestige; they chose to leave all behind in search of religious freedom and the making of a community under one religious mindset in the New World. The thought that the world could be reformed through moral action became one of the cornerstones for the American Dream (Cullen, 2004).[2] Thus begun in the seventeenth century, those who would first begin to create the ideal of the American

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[2] Strict Protestant religion and morality was as much a part of everyday life for the Puritans as was eating and sleeping. They believed in a code defined by rigorous discipline, needed in a corrupt world to reform the corruption, continually trying to make the world and oneself better (Cullen, 2004).

Dream set sail on a small group of ships crossing the Atlantic in search of religious freedom and a new life.

The founding of a Nation

In the time leading up to the fight for independence in the United States, the tension between the colonists and the monarchy in Great Britain was at a breaking point. Leadership in Great Britain felt the colonists were behaving childishly, and the colonists felt the British Monarchy was attempting to eradicate their freedom. The writing of the *Declaration of Independence* served as the pivotal point of change as leadership within the United States stated the "unalienable rights" of the people that include "Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness" (Jefferson, 1776). These three words have remained obscure in definition, a source of dissatisfaction among the Founding Fathers. Regardless, they became the foundation of the American Dream (Cullen, 2004). While various manifestations of the American Dream have arisen throughout history, namely that of property or homeownership, the *Declaration of Independence* and these three "truths" are the basis of the identity that so many relate to and would define American culture and way of life (Jefferson, 1776).

An understanding of the intellectual climate before and during the time of the American Revolution is necessary to understand the document that forms the United States' national identity. Before the events that spurred the American Revolution, "freedom was not a goal to be gained; it was a cherished possession the colonists wanted to prevent being lost" (Cullen, 2004, p. 44). The monarchy of Great Britain oppressed the colonists in the lead up to the American Revolution. The colonists felt oppression so severe as to refer to it as slavery. The first draft of Jefferson's

Declaration even stated the British monarchy was "captivating and carrying [the colonists] into slavery in another hemisphere" (Cullen, 2004, p. 48). This statement was ultimately edited out of the document for two reasons. The Founding Fathers, the men that would eventually go on to sign the *Declaration of Independence*, thought those in support of the colonists' mission in England would be offended by the term "slavery," and the hypocrisy of the word slavery in a document that would not be ensuring liberty for all people in the colonies was embarrassing to the Founding Fathers (Cullen, 2004).

While the Founding Fathers felt enslaved by the British crown, they chose to leave that particular word out of the *Declaration*, and "a collective agreement was reached that for the moment, at least, 'freedom' was to be a relative and racially limited term" (Cullen, 2004, p. 44). African Americans would not partake in the liberties demanded in the *Declaration of Independence* for another 100 years or more, depending on the chosen definition of liberty, and women would not have the right to vote for another 150 years. Conclusively, Jefferson and his colleagues made it clear that they valued freedom, individuality, the ability to achieve as much success as possible through hard work, and the pursuit of happiness. The definition of each value was different for each individual and none would apply to those Americans that were not white and male. The American Dream was exclusive from the beginning.

The individual frontier

The expansion of the United States after the American Revolution was vast. The Public Land Survey System was devised to divide the country into saleable

parcels.[3] People, looking for a better life, stretched the boundaries of the country, making it to the west coast, en masse, during the California Gold Rush of 1848 to 1855. Large tracts of land, purchased or won by the federal government helped the nation grow, and millions of immigrants started to pour into the country, starting in the 1830s, from Asia, Europe, and the Caribbean, and slaves from Africa. Many white immigrants arrived as indentured servants, eager to work off their debt and make a new life. To accommodate this population growth, the Congress passed the Homestead Act of 1862, which allowed any adult citizen or person intending on becoming a citizen, who had not taken up arms against the United States, the opportunity to claim 160 acres of surveyed government land in the west (*Homestead Act (1862)*, 1862). In return, the homesteaders were required to pay a small registration fee, stay on the land for five years, and "improve" the land by building a dwelling and cultivating it (*Homestead Act (1862)*, 1862).

The bill was a well-intended strategy to attempt to draw people out of poverty, but many couldn't afford the start-up costs of tools and building materials. "The Homestead Act enjoyed its greatest success in the central and upper Midwest, where soil and climate conditions could support family farming" (Cullen, 2004, p. 141), pushing Native American tribes out of the way in the process. Ultimately, of the 500 million acres available through the bill only 80 million went to small homesteaders, as "blacks and whites alike had trouble acquiring the knowledge, materials, and capital necessary" (Cullen, 2004, p. 142). The rest of the land was

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[3] The Land Ordinance of 1785 set forth how the government of the United States would measure, divide and distribute the land it had acquired from Great Britain north and west of the Ohio River at the end of the American Revolution. ("Land Ordinance of 1785," 2016)

disbursed to "speculators, cattlemen, miners, lumbermen, and railroads" (*Homestead Act (1862)*, 1862). During this entire process, Native Americans were moved to reservations by the federal government and battled against, losing their rights and ways of life. The federal government had an ulterior motive with the passing of the Homestead Act and used it for "the determination of peace and war with the Indians, the regulation of Indian trade, the purchase of Indian lands, and the creation and government of new settlements as a security against the Indians" (Turner, 1986).

While the Homestead Act had nominal success, the idea that a person of limited means could acquire land at practically no cost, boosted the ideal of property ownership in the country. As Cullen states, "…if the reality of the independent freeholder left a lot to be desired, the dream of the independent freeholder demonstrated great resilience, one that went to the very heart of American identity" (Cullen, 2004, p. 142). The trek westward, in search of a better life and the subsequent transformation of the wilderness, became very much an American trait (Turner, 1986). The frontier was the meeting point of the wild west and the civilized east, and with the westward movement of the population came the westward movement of the frontier, until finally during the Census of 1890, the frontier had vanished (Turner, 1986).

History discusses the change of the frontier by the people pushing it westward, but perhaps the frontier also changed the American people. As Turner says

> The result is that to the frontier the American intellect owes its striking characteristics. That coarseness and strength combined with acuteness and

inquisitiveness, that practical, inventive turn of mind, quick to find expedients, that masterful grasp of material things, lacking in the artistic but powerful to effect great ends, that restless, nervous energy, that dominant individualism, working for good and for evil, and withal that buoyancy and exuberance which comes with freedom, -- these are traits of the frontier, or traits called out elsewhere because of the existence of the frontier (1986, p. 18).

This push westward changed the American way of life and added a distinct strain of individualism and nationalism to the American identity. Different ethnicities, mixing together on the plains of the United States, becoming "Americanized, liberated and fused into a mixed race," (p. 11) started to shape the diverse, melting pot nation the United States is today (Turner, 1986).

The means to an end

Abraham Lincoln, the president who signed the Homestead Act of 1862 into law, had the obstacle of sustaining the American Dream during a time when the country seemed to be tearing itself in two. The concept of freedom had been a contentious term since the founding of the country, as the Founding Fathers ultimately agreed to leave race out of the *Declaration of Independence* (Cullen, 2004). More Americans started to see the institution of slavery as an embarrassment to the United States and morally wrong. Black Americans, as slaves, had no rights, but free Black Americans could participate in the land grab of the Homestead Act (Cullen, 2004). This was a paradox that Abraham Lincoln and others wanted to change for two reasons. Lincoln did not consider himself an abolitionist. He wanted to eradicate slavery, not for the effect it would have on millions of black American lives, but for the simple fact that slavery was an embarrassment to the Nation whose "spirit…prizes liberty as the heritage of all men, in all lands, everywhere" through the *Declaration of Independence*, for which he had a religious reverence (Cullen, 2004,

p. 87). Lincoln wanted to preserve to Union, the ideals heralded within the *Declaration of Independence*, the ability to better oneself, and consequently, preserve the American Dream (Cullen, 2004).

Beyond freedom, Lincoln valued that Americans had the opportunity to pursue happiness and the best that life could offer. Cullen calls this the dream of upward mobility (2004). Others during this time, such as Andrew Jackson and Ralph Waldo Emerson, embodied the ideal of upward mobility. Jackson was the epitome of upward mobility; born poor, he "forged success largely on his own, by his strength, his iron will, his exertions and convictions" (Cullen, 2004, p. 69). Emerson was resolute that "any successful businessman that applied effort could make one the master of one's own destiny" (Cullen, 2004, pp. 70-71). While Alexis de Tocqueville "invented the word 'individualism' to describe a new sort of secular striving" (Cullen, 2004, p. 69). Tocqueville "saw the freest and most enlightened men placed in the happiest circumstances the world affords" (p. 69) in America (Cullen, 2004). Throughout this era, a man, most likely white, could pull himself out of poverty and attain "the Good Life…enjoying the fruits of their labor but also good in the sense of doing so in a morally legitimate way" (p. 89) through hard work, self-reliance, and the privilege of freedom (Cullen, 2004). Even as Lincoln proclaimed that all Black Americans should be free, he acknowledged that "freedom…was not the same thing as equality" (Cullen, 2004, p. 88).[4]

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[4] While the pronouncement put forth in the *Emancipation Proclamation* depended entirely on the Union army being victorious, the document and speech heralded a new vision for the United States; one that made freedom a reality for everyone (Lincoln, 1863).

From every mountainside, let freedom ring

After the Civil War, Black Americans in the United States were legally free, but while the 13th Amendment constituted the abolition of slavery, Black Americans were denied equal rights to white Americans and were victimized across the country. Almost as soon as the 13th Amendment was passed, Black Americans pursued the more elusive goal of gaining equality. The black American fight for equality was and continues to be long and difficult. To summarize, there were three notable events that changed history in the United States. Homer Plessy, through a staged intervention, ignored segregation laws in 1892. He rode in a train car reserved for white Americans and was arrested (Cullen, 2004). This simple act started the fight for equality in displaying the absurdity of Jim Crow laws in the South, which called for "equal but separate accommodations for the white and colored races" (Cullen, 2004, p. 104) and denied Black Americans equal rights with land ownership. While states determined their own laws, the federal statute of the Fourteenth Amendment stated:

> No State shall make or enforce any law, which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws. (Cullen, 2004, p. 105)

After Plessy lost the initial case in district court with Judge Ferguson presiding, Plessy vs. Ferguson went to the Supreme Court. Plessy lost this case as well, and the act of segregation was upheld.[5] The American judicial system "legitimated a racist state in which African Americans were systematically deprived of political, civil, and social equality for decades to come" (Cullen, 2004, p. 106).

Segregation and discrimination had been a part of black American's lives for almost a century, and the outcome was that "separate but equal" (p. 104) was not equal (Cullen, 2004). Institutional racism existed throughout the United States, preventing the advancement of Black Americans and inhibiting their ability to achieve their American Dream. Then another landmark case for racial equality was presented to the Supreme Court: Brown vs. the Board of Education. The NAACP worked tirelessly, during the first half of the twentieth century, to prove the inequality of "separate but equal" (Cullen, 2004, p. 104).[6] Then in 1954, the Brown vs. the Board of Education ruling overturned the Plessy ruling, prohibiting segregation in public schools across the country and providing equal opportunity for children of all races (Cullen, 2004). This ruling, coupled with Rosa Parks refusing to give up her seat on a Montgomery, Alabama bus nine months later, commenced the Civil Rights Movement during the mid-twentieth century.

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[5] Even though Plessy lost, the case was a landmark for law in the United States as the justices determined the meaning of equality within the Fourteenth Amendment, stating "…the assumption that the enforced separation of the two races stamps the colored race with a badge of inferiority. If this be so, it is not by reason of anything found in the act, but solely because the colored race chooses to put that construction upon it" (Cullen, 2004, p. 106).

[6] In the Sweatt vs. Painter ruling, the NAACP proved that school facilities in Texas failed to meet the Plessy standard (Cullen, 2004).

Doctor Martin Luther King Junior stands out as the identifying face of the modern Civil Rights Movement in the United States, because he "articulated the moral and cultural basis for equality in American life…for all Americans" more than anyone else (Cullen, 2004, p. 110). King, a reverend and scholar living in Montgomery, Alabama, inadvertently became the leader of the movement, stating early on that "freedom defined in terms of inclusion [for all], not one where some benefit at the expense of others" was the goal (Cullen, 2004, p. 121). Black Americans experienced segregation, discrimination, policy brutality and arrests for peaceful demonstration, and injustice at the hands of their peers. Throughout the Civil Rights Movement, King stressed nonviolent battles for equality and steadily made progress in some states more than others.

The culmination of King's work came during his work of oratory genius: the "I have a Dream" speech given on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington DC in 1963. Imitating language from the *Declaration of Independence* and the *Emancipation Proclamation*, King's speech clearly spelled out his American Dream, and the dream for so many others across the country. His poetic speech focused on a future that would "make real the promises of democracy" remaining unsatisfied "until justice rolls down like waters, and righteousness like a mighty stream" (King Jr., 1963). The speech gathered strength and rose powerfully to the climax:

> So even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream. I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal. (King Jr., 1963)

Equality was not solely a Black American dream. The Women's Suffrage Movement began in the 1840s as a part of the Women's Rights Movement. To this point in history, the American Dream was "largely…a male dream" (Cullen, 2004, p. 148). The Women's Rights Movement strove to overcome many inequalities against women in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, for "when the *Declaration of Independence* proclaimed that all men are created equal, the writers of that document really did mean men: not females, not some black- or yellow-skinned 'savage,' but civilized white males" (Cullen, 2004, p. 51). The most notable rights during the Women's Rights Movement were the right for women to make public speeches, the right for women to act without a husband's permission, the right for women to own property and the right for women to vote or women's suffrage. Women's suffrage came to a pivotal point when 14 women, including Susan B. Anthony, voted during the federal election of 1872 (Gordon, 2005). Anthony was arrested and sent to trial versus the United States. Anthony's speech, made in her own defense at the end of her trial, reinvigorated the Women's Suffrage Movement as she quoted "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" as unattainable for women because:

> One-half of the people of this nation to-day are utterly powerless to blot from the statute books an unjust law, or to write there a new and a just one. The women, dissatisfied as they are with this form of government, that enforces taxation without representation,-that compels them to obey laws to which they have never given their consent, -that imprisons and hangs them without a trial by a jury of their peers, that robs them, in marriage, of the custody of their own persons, wages and children,-are this half of the people left wholly at the mercy of the other half, in direct violation of the spirit and letter of the declarations of the framers of this government, every one of which was based on the immutable principle of equal rights to all. (Anthony, 1873)

Anthony was found guilty and sentenced to pay a fine of $100. The persistence of the Women's Suffrage Movement finally paid off as individual states started to grant suffrage rights to women in 1910, and the federal government ratified the nineteenth amendment for women's right to vote in 1920 (*Amendment XIX to the U.S. Constitution: Women's Right to Vote*, 1920). The dream for the right to vote was attained for women across the country. While women and Black Americans gained more equality during this era of history, a paradox existed. To some, the American Dream was equality and inclusion. To others, the Dream was the freedom to be exclusive.

Defining the American Dream

The term the American Dream was coined in 1931, when James Truslow Adams defined it in *The Epic of America* (Adams & Gallagher, 1931). He wrote

> The American Dream is that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement. It is a difficult dream for the European upper classes to interpret adequately, and too many of us ourselves have grown weary and mistrustful of it. It is not a dream of motor cars and high wages merely, but a dream of social order in which each man and each woman shall be able to attain to the fullest stature of which they are innately capable, and be recognized by others for what they are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of birth or position. (p. viii)

This definition drew from the ideals that founded the nation—life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness—defining the primary difference between Europe and the United States. In Europe, landownership was passed from generation to generation. Those outside the social circles of the elite had little chance to have a piece of their own land. Property ownership started the migration west on the frontier, as anyone who could pay the registration fee could have a piece of the wilderness. Frederick

Jackson Turner furthered defined the American Dream as Americans were transforming the wilderness with their can-do attitude and rugged individualism, creating a new product that is American—the American identity (Juchartz, Stolarek, & Rishoi, 2009).

The ability to make something out of nothing, through hard-work ethic and determination, became another strong ideal on which the United States was built. People had the opportunity to achieve. The amount did not matter, so long as there was an opportunity. The opportunity did not exist for everyone, as racism and segregation continued, and still continue, long after the federal government passed laws to make change for equality. But the American Dream subsisted through the fight for the freedom to self-rule, through the expansion of the continent, through the Civil War, and the fight for equality to go through one of the most quickly evolving times in human history, which includes the ascent of suburbia into nationwide popularity and the physical embodiment of the American Dream.

The Suburban Dream

In the twentieth century, suburbanization has become a manifestation of the American Dream within the urban landscape. A distinct shift happened during twentieth-century suburbanization. Americans, collectively, began to associate the idea of the American Dream with homeownership in a suburban neighborhood, adding to the cliché of the nuclear family—a working father, a housewife, two children, a dog, a yard, and a white picket fence. While one cannot generalize that all Americans thought this way, advertising and visual imagery apprehended this generalization and ran with it. Through the efforts of the federal government, the

real estate industry, and mass media the American Dream became associated with single-family homeownership and the higher quality of life that homeownership within the early suburbs initiated.

Tenements

One of the largest motivators for the push for single-family housing at the turn of the century was the state of tenement housing in urban areas at the end of the 19th century and beginning of the twentieth century. Housing in the so-called "urban slums" was plagued with problems ranging from crime to disease. Three separate outbreaks of cholera occurred in the late 19th century, leading government officials to create public health boards. These boards were charged with the task of improving sanitary conditions within cities to keep people from spreading disease. Disease ran rampant in urban housing for multiple reasons. Tenements were crowded with "myriads of inmates of the squalid, distressing tenement-houses, in which morality is as impossible as happiness" (Cullen, 2004, p. 88) much more than multi-family housing today, in that families were larger and multiple extended family members could live together in one dwelling, which could only consist of one or two rooms. The density of urban tenements was much higher at the turn of the century than found today in the United States.

Beyond density, tenements were often contained in an older building that had been chopped up into smaller rooms for multiple dwellings. The small spaces coupled with poor design and construction that lacked proper ventilation and light, indoor plumbing, or sewer facilities, made tenements the perfect place for disease to fester and grow. During this time, progressives began to speak out about the terrible

tenement housing conditions stating, "the tenement itself, with its crowds, its lack of privacy, is the greatest destroyer of individuality, of character" (K. T. Jackson, 1985, p. 117). This idea about character, and particularly virtue, continued to be a factor in the rise of single-family homeownership in America.

This focus upon virtue became a war against the city center. New York was particularly demonized during the mid-19th century for "its un-American character and corrupt politics, with its vast population, its wealth and its influence upon the whole country" (Rohe & Watson, 2007, p. 18). Containing a huge influx in population through immigration, New York grew without having a sufficient amount of housing for the many immigrants to inhabit. Immigrants crammed into the small amount of residential space available to them just beyond the industrial areas of the city; "...the first tenement districts of the poor, the recent immigrants, and the unskilled, persons unable to afford even the streetcar fare and forced to compete for housing space where real estate was the most expensive and housing the least desirable" (Mears, 1866; Rosenberg, 1987, p. 181). This population influx along with the poor housing conditions in the tenements, led those able to live outside the urban slums to judge the urban working class and their living situation as morally deficient.

The push for single-family homeownership

America, in the 1920s, became a mass consumption powerhouse. With American factories pumping out "waves of new devices to make life easier and more fun" (K. T. Jackson, 1985, p. 137), consumption of products from washing machines to automobiles began en masse. Particular emphasis can be put on the mass consumption of the single-family house during this time, and while the government

played a role in the reform of tenement housing, Herbert Hoover, as Secretary of Commerce in the 1920s, overhauled the role of the federal government in the push for single-family homeownership. Hoover was confident that every American wanted their own home stating, "the sentiment for home ownership is so embedded in the American heart that millions of people who dwell in tenements, apartments, and rented rooms...have the aspiration for wider opportunity in ownership of their own homes" (K. Ellis & Guettler, 2009). Placing every American family, so long as they were white, into a single-family home became an important project during Hoover's time in the Commerce Department, which continued into his presidency, and ultimately became his legacy.

During his time in Washington DC, Hoover established or supported multiple programs and bills all united in the effort to create a nation of single-family homeowners. Of particular importance was the role he played in the establishment of the Federal Housing Administration. The Federal Housing Administration, created by Congress in 1934, "provides mortgage insurance on loans made by FHA-approved lenders throughout the United States and its territories" (K. T. Jackson, 1985, pp. 193-194).[7] This organization was pivotal in helping people during the Great Depression by providing insurance for the financing to purchase a house.

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[7] The Federal Housing Administration, generally known as "FHA", provides mortgage insurance on loans made by FHA-approved lenders throughout the United States and its territories. FHA insures mortgages on single family and multifamily homes including manufactured homes and hospitals. It is the largest insurer of mortgages in the world, insuring over 34 million properties since its inception in 1934. ("The Federal Housing Administration (FHA)," 2015)

Hoover was also passionately involved in Better Homes in America, Inc., where he donated personal finances and volunteer time. Better Homes was a national campaign, led by The Delineator, a women's magazine, that worked with government departments and other experts "to orchestrate the building and display of model homes in communities around the country" ("The Federal Housing Administration (FHA)," 2015). (Figure 2) Most notably, the Better Homes campaign produced a Better Homes Manual that "praised homeownership as 'both the foundation of a sound economic and social system and a guarantee that our society will continue to develop rationally as changing conditions demand'" (Altman, 1990, p. 287).
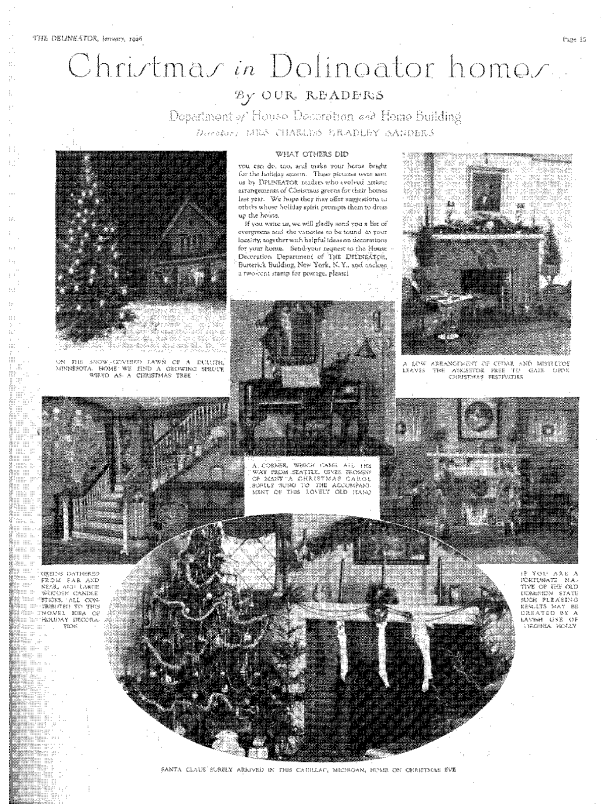
Figure 2: The Delineator magazine from January 1926.
Photo credit: Library of Congress American Memory
Website

In response to the growing number of homeowners and his enthusiasm to continue placing every American family within its own home, Hoover began to create strategies working with big business "to define how the federal government could promote business growth through real estate development" (Rohe & Watson, 2007, p. 24). This partnership with big business led to Hoover's establishment of the Division of Building and Housing within the Department of Commerce, and his subsequent work related to standardizing the building industry. Through standardization of building materials, house and lot sizes, and the introduction of zoning codes, Hoover created a regulated system that was applied across the country "in order to maximize mass consumption" (Hayden, 2003, p. 122). Green fields around the country started to fill up with "one-story frame houses with chain-link fences, white ruffled curtains, and wrought-iron posts holding up small front porches" (Hayden, 2003, p. 121).

Beyond a sound economic and social system, homeownership was touted as putting the "man back in manhood" and a way to become "completely self-reliant and dominant" (K. T. Jackson, 1985, p. 175). This association of homeownership with success, security, and individuality was echoed by the government as the way to becoming a good citizen. During the Red Scare, a nationwide fear of communism which occurred during the decade after World War I, homeownership was deemed "the best guarantee against communism and socialism and the various bad 'isms' of life" (Rohe & Watson, 2007, p. 26). As the idea of homeownership was being tied to patriotism and nationalism, homeowners were being extolled, by the real estate industry, as "building moral muscle" (Rohe & Watson, 2007, p. 20) and representing

the most virtuous of Americans. The real estate industry propaganda praised the redeeming qualities of a family who chose ownership:

> A family that owns its home takes a pride in it, maintains it better, gets more pleasure out of it, and has a more wholesome, healthful, and happy atmosphere in which to bring up children. The homeowner has a constructive aim in life. He works harder outside his home, he spends his leisure more profitably, and he and his family live a finer life and enjoy more of the comforts and cultivating influences of our modern civilization. A husband and wife who own their home are more apt to save. They have an interest in the advancement of a social system that permits the individual to store up the fruits of his labor. As direct taxpayers they [partake] of the finest instincts and the greatest inspirations of our people (Rohe & Watson, 2007, p. 26).

Hoover's hard work during his time as Secretary of Commerce paid off. Owning a home in the 1920s up to the Great Depression began to represent the epitome of American aspiration, especially within the middle and working classes. As government and industry propaganda continued, the single-family home began its assent to becoming the symbol of the American Dream. As mass consumption and homeownership were racing toward the looming Great Depression, Hoover's presidential slogan was: "A chicken in every pot and a car in every garage" (Rohe & Watson, 2007, p. 24).

A new relationship for government and housing

Franklin Delano Roosevelt's presidency was during one of the most challenging times in American history, bookended by the Great Depression and World War II, and filled with major policy shifts and a promise from Roosevelt to make things better for the American people. More than any other president, Roosevelt would reshape the role of the federal government and its relationship to the people of America (Hayden, 2003, pp. 122-123). The most notable work of

Roosevelt's time was the New Deal. These programs started during his first and second terms and were promises to the American people that "declared economic security as an American birthright: the right to a job, the right to a living wage and the right of every family to a decent home" (K. Ellis & Guettler, 2009). His promise was the entitlement of prosperity (K. Ellis & Guettler, 2009) to all Americans, although the practice of New Deal programs overlooked Americans who were not white.

Two policies emerged from the New Deal that proved to be instrumental in turning the blight on homeownership during the Great Depression around and boosting homeownership to new heights after World War II. It was during this time that the Federal Housing Administration (FHA), introduced during Hoover's presidency, was officially passed in Congress and started to make change across the country. The FHA "would protect the small homeowner from foreclosure, relieve him of part of the burden of excessive interest and principle payments incurred during a period of higher values and higher earning power, and declare that it was national policy to protect homeownership" (K. Ellis & Guettler, 2009). Besides the FHA, the New Deal also created the Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC), which created the long-term, self-amortizing mortgage and "refinanced tens of thousands of mortgages in danger of default or foreclosure" (K. T. Jackson, 1985, pp. 195-196).

Just as America began to recover from the Great Depression, the repercussions of World War II battered the country. The construction of housing was still low compared to the bountiful 1920s, and with the millions of young veterans

returning from war to start families in the mid-1940s, Roosevelt promised "'the Four Freedoms that were the birthright of every American: freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want, and freedom from fear" (Fishman, 1987; K. T. Jackson, 1985, p. 196). The latter two provoked contention with the politicians across the aisle from democratic Roosevelt, and yet he pushed forward, passing the second major policy to affect homeownership, the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, also known as the G.I. Bill, which promised financial help for a house and college education to any returning veteran (Cullen, 2004, p. 57).

While Roosevelt's intention to provide housing assistance to veterans was well-intended, the state of housing in the country at the time was abominable. As one historian noted, "People were sleeping in the backs of boxcars. You know, they were shacking up with family members in very small apartments. It was a genuine housing crisis and it was really just a national embarrassment" (K. T. Jackson, 1985). Noting the lack of proper housing for the returning veterans and the impoverished, the federal government would take a new stance and become heavily intertwined in the building of housing across the country over the next two decades. While Hoover insisted that single-family homeownership was the pinnacle of American aspiration, he did little to build the proper foundations to help Americans reach and maintain that aspiration. Where previously "the American dream was where you somehow started poor and through your own boot straps pulled yourself up into upper-middle-class-dom by your own pluck and initiative," the disposition of the country "had changed somewhat in that now the federal government was going

to be on your side in that struggle. ... So suddenly the American dream was sort of a team effort" (K. Ellis & Guettler, 2009).

Housing for the masses

While supporting the effort and propaganda of homeownership, prior to the late 1940s, the federal government had little to do with the actual construction of houses. At the end of the 1940s the United States government did not just acknowledge the lack of decent housing in the country for returning veterans; the government did something about it by subsidizing huge developer-builder companies to expand the existing suburban sprawl. As one FHA official put it, "'Decentralization is taking place. It is not a policy, it is a reality—and it is as impossible for us to change this trend as it is to change the desire of birds to migrate to a more suitable location" (K. Ellis & Guettler, 2009). With the help of the G.I. Bill, almost half of all houses built during the 1950s and 1960s could claim aid from the FHA, giving loans for ten million new houses between 1946 and 1953 alone (K. T. Jackson, 1985, p. 190). Suburbia became the "main beneficiary" of Federal Housing Administration aid in the first four decades of its existence (Hayden, 2003; K. T. Jackson, 1985).

Of the many developer-builder companies that benefitted from FHA financial help, Levitt & Sons became the most famous, creating the "archetypal suburb" (K. T. Jackson, 1985). (Figure 3) A small real estate development company before the end of World War II, Abraham Levitt and sons, William and Alfred, streamlined the process of building a house to 27 steps, with an employee having the ability to assemble the parts for ten houses in one day. The houses of the Levitt's were

limited to one architectural style in the late 1940s, called the Cape Cod; a simple four or five room house with a kitchen, bathroom, living room, and one or two bedrooms. The kits of parts were delivered to the site, rapidly assembled, and sold for just under $7000 dollars (K. Ellis & Guettler, 2009). Every house looked the
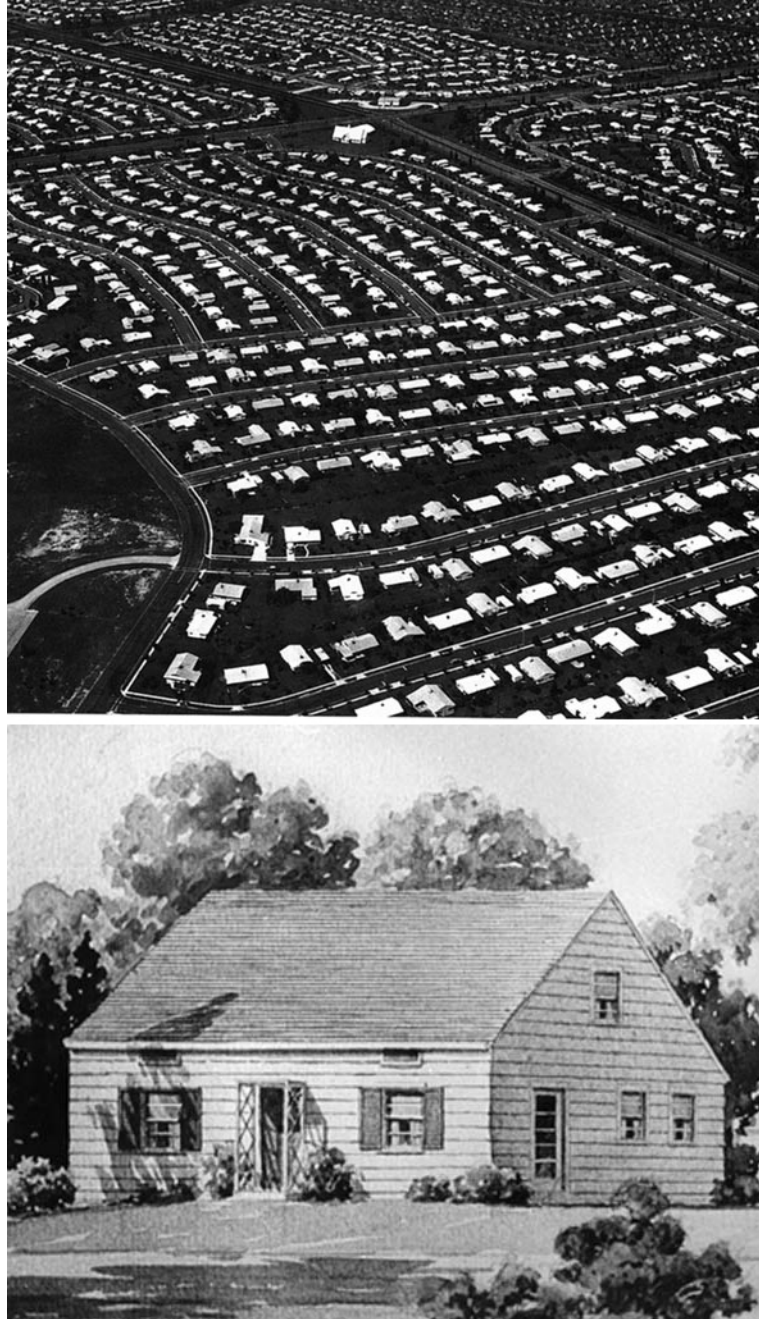
Figure 3: (Top) Levittown, New York. (Bottom) The Levittown Cape Cod house. Photo credit: Wikipedia

Figure 4: 1950s advertisement for suburban living. Photo credit: Wikipedia

same, was outfitted with the newest appliances, and the new homeowner occasionally got to choose whether they wanted six feet of picket or rail fence in the front yard. The Levitts went on to construct four Levittowns in total that were filled with long rows of mass-produced houses built on large tracts of land (Kelly, 1993). Media assessed that the house was "fairly sound…although not an architecturally sophisticated one" (Hayden, 2003; K. T. Jackson, 1985). Young veterans and their new families poured into the development. Author Barbara Kelly says, "Despite their modest size, the four-room Cape Code bungalows would eventually offer the fulfillment of the American Dream of property, privacy, and independence" (1993, p. 21). Coming from overcrowded living conditions with family members or small rented apartments, these families purchased homes of their own, with heavily subsidized federal loans, and these houses came to represent the epitome of the American Dream during the mid-century. (Figure 4)

Levitt & Sons became the most famous postwar developer-builder. First the financial advances for the first Levittown, issued through the FHA, were the largest ever allotted to a private home building company (Hayden, 2003, p. 134). Second,

the Levittown in Nassau County, New York boasted the construction of over 17,000 houses filled with over 80,000 people, becoming the largest private housing development to be built in the United States (K. T. Jackson, 1985). While the Levitts, and other builders like them, made thousands of American Dreams reality, the continuing sprawl at the perimeter was causing the decline of the central cities. As scholar Kenneth Jackson states, "Because FHA and VA terms for new construction were so favorable as to make the suburbs accessible to almost all white, middle-income families, the inner-city housing market was deprived of the purchasers who could perhaps have supplied an appropriate demand for the evacuated neighborhoods" (K. T. Jackson, 1985).

Mid-century suburbs become sprawl

As the Levittown subdivision model grew in popularity, and other builders and developers joined the bandwagon, the suburbs expanded in cities across the United States. Throughout the second half of the twenty-first century, government policy and social conflict would play a role in the expansion of suburbia into sprawl. Hayden discussed the players in the increase of sprawl. She states, "The activities of automobile manufacturers, commercial real estate developers, and the federal government have been far more important in determining patterns of transportation than consumer choice" (Hayden, 2003, pp. 158-159). The Federal Highway Act of 1956, passed into law by President Dwight Eisenhower, expanded the highway system across the country, which allowed for faster and more convenient access to distant places. Paired with the increasing affordability of the automobile, Americans took to the roads to expand their horizons; a trend which also included residential

and commercial development. Cities become more horizontal as development reached the periphery. Krannich stated, "The federal highway program increases access to outlying areas and thus promotes suburban sprawl. The federal government has, in effect, helped subsidize the conversion of millions of acres in farmland over the past fifty years" (2006, pp. 67-68).

With the expansion of the road systems, Black Americans migrated north, looking to escape extreme poverty and discrimination in the south and make better lives for themselves in the manufacturing factories of the rust-belt cities. Fearing for their property values and the social identity of their neighborhoods, white Americans fled the city for the suburbs in what has been called 'white flight.' Black Americans moved into the city centers, which became more impoverished as property values fell leaving a smaller tax base to pay for the maintenance of infrastructure and services. Segregation within the suburbs continued into the 1960s and 1970s, and ingrained racial division can be seen in many large cities with Black Americans on one side of the line and white Americans on the other.

Greenfield expansion of the suburbs into the ecological and agricultural lands at the periphery caused concern among critics that suburbia was seriously degrading the environment. The fossil fuel crisis of the 1970s caused people to line up at gas stations for hours to fuel their automobiles. This paired with growing criticism of sprawl became a collective outcry, starting in the 1960s from scientists, conservationists, designers, and others. The modern environmental movement was born and championed by literary figures such as Rachel Carson, Aldo Leopold, and Ian McHarg. They called for reform, within much of the American way of life, to be

more aligned with nature, particularly the development of the suburbs. While Richard Nixon started the Environmental Protection Agency, little was done by the federal government to reform sprawl. With so little action taken by the government to curb the growth of suburban sprawl, advocates for a higher quality of life began to form new ideas about how to design cities. A few of these ideas will be discussed in chapter five.

The American Dream began to form in a group of ships that crossed the Atlantic Ocean in the mid-1600s. Throughout the last four centuries, the American Dream has been constructed to encompass ideals of freedom, equality, happiness, and individuality. Some would argue that the suburbs are the physical landscape that represents the American identity and the epitome of the American Dream. Countless white Americans have moved to the suburbs in the hope of reaching this dream, leaving minorities to survive in impoverished city centers. While suburbia has been touted as the Suburban Dream, a country comfort, with every modern city convenience, others are concerned about the way the suburb has damaged the environment and the sense of community in neighborhoods across the country because of the American trend of detached, single-family homeownership (K. T. Jackson, 1985). Critics question whether the Suburban Dream is a dangerous dream. Author Steven Millhauser stated, "Others saw in the trend still another instance of a disturbing tendency in the American suburb: the longing for withdrawal, for self-enclosure, for expensive isolation" (2008).

CHAPTER 3

CRITICISM OF SUBURBIA

Fishman sums up criticism of the overwhelming spread of suburbanization in one word, "sprawl" (1987, p. 203). Criticism of suburbs has been circulating since the mid-twentieth century, when the monotony of the neighborhoods and architecture began to display the "shallow conformity of suburban life" (Brooks, 2004, p. 4). As the suburbs grew toward the periphery, the collection of multiple suburban neighborhoods became known as sprawl. As Jackson states, "Sprawl results from the privatization of American life and of the tendency to live in fully detached homes" (K. T. Jackson, 1985, p. 7). As suburban subdivisions and adjacent commercial centers grew during the mid-twentieth century, suburbia developed into sprawl.

One universal definition of sprawl does not exist within the literature. Soule defines sprawl as

> A low density, auto-dependent land development taking place on the edges of urban centers, often 'leapfrogging' away from current denser development nodes, to transform open, undeveloped land into single-family residential subdivisions and campus-style commercial office parks and diffuse retail uses. (Soule, 2006, p. 3)

Additional definitions are similar; sprawl "occurs on the urban fringe in rapidly growing areas" (Chin, 2002, p. 2). The Sierra Club defines sprawl as "low-density development beyond the edge of service and employment" (Ann Brown et al., 1998, p. 1). Hayden negatively defines sprawl as "unregulated growth expressed as careless new use of land and other resources as well as abandonment of older built

areas" (Hayden & Wark, 2004, p. 7). The supersizing of sprawl has drawn criticism from multiple perspectives, which only continue to mount as existing sprawl continues to expand. The following chapter is divided into four sections. Each section discusses a separate critique of sprawl. The critiques claim that the suburbs are placeless, require excessive amounts of land and resources, support class and racial segregation, and contribute to poor health.

Sprawl is Placeless

The critique of suburban morphology revolves around spatial patterning that creates monotony through repetition, uses large amounts of land because of separated land uses, widened roads, larger parking lots, and the space between buildings. "The national automobile slum…of our everyday environment" has such an "immersive ugliness" that it is "entropy made visible. A technosis externality clusterfuck" that has been the "greatest misallocation of resources in the history of the world;" harsh words coming from James Howard Kunstler, a journalist who is a strong proponent of The New Urbanism movement and one of the most vocal critics of suburban sprawl (2004). Architecture critic Ada Louise Huxtable strongly criticized the monotonous visual language of suburbia in 1973, calling them "slurbs." She said, "It is cliché conformity as far as the eye can see, with no stimulation of the spirit through quality of the environment" (Huxtable, 1964).

Headlines for decades have echoed the themes of conformity, boredom, monotony, and dullness. While these first critiques of suburbia are important to note, Kunstler, with succinctly positioned vulgarity, makes a critical argument for the placelessness of suburbia. Long, unbroken tracts of residential land use, occupied

by monotonous architecture, fill gridded street patterns that exist long driving distances away from amenities. Commercial land uses employ morphology of leap-frogging, which is a collection of low-density commercials centers, surrounded by parking lots and connected by fast-moving arterial roadways. This type of land use has "no center, no recognizable borders to shape a sense of geographic identity" (Brooks, 2004, p. 1). Kunstler argues that these types of land uses create places that are not worth caring about (2004). The repetition of these places causes cities to lack identity and individual character. The compounding effect thus generates unidentifiable places across the country.

<div align="center">Sprawl Uses Land and Resources</div>

The degradation of the environment because of sprawl is well-documented. The rows upon rows of "ticky-tacky little boxes," lyrics penned by Reynolds while driving past housing developments in Daly City, California, plays a large role in habitat loss, agricultural land loss, resource consumption, emissions and energy usage, and pollution (1963). Suburban subdivisions were constructed quickly and inexpensively with little thought as to how they would affect the environment. Suburban sprawl has been consuming land at an alarming rate since the 1940s. After the Levitts popularized their Levittowns and subsequent developers followed, the trend has been to build seemingly endless tracts of suburban houses on the perimeter of urban areas consuming "farmland, forest, and undeveloped open space" (Kahn, 2000, p. 575). Beyond a lack of physical identity, this type of land use and morphology promotes numerous negative environmental results.

Today the built environment, of which suburban sprawl plays a large part, produces 70% of the world's greenhouse gas emissions, and many scientists believe this is one of the underlying causes of climate change (Agency, 2008). These emissions are the result of a combination of the excessive amount of driving done by those living in the suburbs and the larger energy-consuming houses built in the majority of the suburbs. As Brown wrote

> Because suburbs sprawl outward for miles, residents drive much more, releasing large amounts of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. And because suburbs offers residents larger homes for less money than in urban centers, suburban residents spend huge amounts of energy heating and powering their larger homes. (E. Brown, 2014, p. 2)

Suburban sprawl also pollutes the Earth, particularly the water and air. Automobiles are, again, the guilty party as "pollutants that originate from cars and trucks, especially nitrogen oxides, hydrocarbons, ozone, and particulate matter, account for a substantial part of the air pollution burden" in the United States (Frumkin, 2002, p. 202). Water runoff "carries with it sources of pollution that include oil, grease, and toxic chemicals from roadways, parking lots, and other surfaces, and sediment from improperly managed construction sites" (Frumkin, 2002, p. 206). These pollutants affect the health and wellbeing of residents both within the suburban subdivisions found on the perimeter, and unequally, the residents of inner-ring suburbs and the urban core through poor water quality.

For the construction of suburbs at the perimeter of urban areas to happen, existing land uses must change. These development patterns "radically, and usually permanently, change undeveloped land to developed land" that happens at "an exhaustible rate that is unsustainable over time" (Soule, 2006, pp. 5-6). The

undeveloped land to which Soule refers is typically agricultural land, forests, or undeveloped open space (Kahn, 2000; Soule, 2006). Its development has two negative consequences. First, the habitat of native plants and animals is lost in the development process as "it is common for developers to remove most vegetation and even topsoil" before construction (McKinney, 2002, p. 886), replacing it with non-native grass or impervious roofs and pavement. While habitat can be reconstructed in suburban neighborhoods, it tends to be in small, disconnected pieces, and many of the native species will not be able to re-inhabit the landscape as non-native, more aggressive species take over (Ewing, 1997). Second, the paving of parking lots, roads, and driveways "removes [land] as habitat for nearly all species" and sends the majority of storm water down the sewer system instead of retaining it on land to nourish the existing ecology (McKinney, 2002, p. 886).

Suburban sprawl requires the use of an automobile as the "land uses are substantially segregated from one another geographically making a personal vehicle necessary" (Soule, 2006, p. 5). The United States continues to be one of the top fossil fuel-using countries in the world. Living within suburban sprawl is very low-density lifestyle. Houses are much larger than those built in Levittown 60 years ago, as the average square footage has tripled since the 1970s (Devlin, 2010). Also a car is required in many cities for mobility as public transportation in suburbia is scarce and commercial developments collect along the arterial roadways for maximum consuming potential. The result is a massive use of resources for both the construction of the oversized houses and ceaseless use of the automobile. All of this

consumption for the daily commutes uses valuable fossil-fuel-created energy and produces emissions that continue to degrade the environment.

Suburban sprawl is also expensive for the cities that must construct and maintain the sprawling infrastructure to support the new and old subdivisions. Through funding from taxpayers, municipalities often pay for the construction of streets, sewers, water, lighting, sidewalks, and landscaping for new subdivisions. While the new development is often seen as a positive to broaden the tax base, the low density subdivisions require much more linear feet of infrastructure than higher density neighborhoods or city centers, and this costs more money (Misra, 2015). The upfront cost to provide infrastructure is only part of the burden on municipalities, as they often are obliged to provide parks, schools, and civic buildings within and around subdivisions because existing facilities are already at capacity (Snyder & Bird, 1998). Snyder and Bird state, "Cities witnessing both rapid suburban growth and urban disinvestment at the same time can have situations where taxpayers are paying for new facilities while other facilities are being underutilized" (1998, p. 11).

Overall, sprawl costs the United States over one trillion dollars per year, because of the increase in per capita land consumption and car use that lead to the need for more infrastructure and maintenance (Misra, 2015). And while local, state, and federal governments are so busy spending money on suburban sprawl, the infrastructure is constructed to support large-lot, low-density residential subdivisions that cannot support a higher density for changes to the land use in the future (Chang, 2011). As Leinberger stated, "Once large-lot, suburban residential landscapes are built, they are hard to unbuild" (Chang, 2011, p. 8). Sprawl continues

to develop on the periphery of the city as greenfield development is less expensive and easier to accomplish that infill development.

Sprawl Supports Class and Racial Segregation

Suburbs became the symbol of success, and at least moderate wealth, starting in the 1840s (K. T. Jackson, 1985). As sprawl increased suburban residents began to represent particular classes and races; one way to control who could live within the neighborhood was the creation of neighborhood covenants. Developers created neighborhood covenants as a way to ensure profitability through the assurance of high property values to potential consumers, along with the perception of safety and the excuse to discriminate (Hayden, 2003; K. T. Jackson, 1985). Even communities without covenants became a place of exclusion, both to the poor and those of color. The issue of income inequality arises when discussing suburban sprawl. As subdivisions became increasingly filled with middle and upper class residents, they "featured considerable economic stratification" that "intensified income inequality across metropolitan areas" (Frumkin, 2002, p. 209).

Suburbia also has a well-documented history of racial discrimination, particularly discrimination against Black Americans. As Levittown became the "archetypal American suburb," Black Americans encountered discrimination from suburban residents, developers, and the federal government in their quest for home ownership in the suburbs (K. Ellis & Guettler, 2009). The Federal Housing Administration (FHA) and the Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC) "red-lined,' or prohibited mortgage loans, in neighborhoods inhabited by people of color. Their highest classifications were reserved for all-white, all-Protestant neighborhoods, and

they refused loans in racially mixed neighborhoods" (Hayden, 2003, p. 125; K. T. Jackson, 1985). Victimized by discrimination from the federal government, Black Americans were refused the ability to purchase a suburban house in Levittown and other developments around the country by both the developers and their potential neighbors. Those that could find a way were often terrorized by white neighbors (Wiese, 2009)After the Myers family, Black Americans, with the help of a white family, purchased a house in Levittown in 1957, a neighbor was quoted as saying, "Well, I just could not live beside them. I don't feel that they should be oppressed. But I moved here because it was a white community. And that's the only place I intend to live. If I have to leave Levittown, I will do so" (K. Ellis & Guettler, 2009). The Myers lived in the community for only a few years.

This chronicle of suburban discrimination is long and deep, affecting the quality of life for Black Americans today. As Black Americans moved north to find good-paying jobs in the rust-belt, white flight, or the self-removal of white people from the inner city, started across the country. This removal of white Americans from the inner city lead to "economic separation of the affluent from the isolated concentrations of the poor" (Soule, 2006, p. 7). With white Americans moving en masse to the suburbs, businesses began the migration as well. A study undertaken by the Brookings Institute, in 2005, found that, "Given the difficulties of reserve commuting to suburbs in many metropolitan areas via public transit, coupled with the fact that high proportions of blacks do not own cars, spatial mismatch may disconnect blacks from many jobs for which they may be suited, thereby increasing their employment difficulties" (Stoll, 2005, p. 2). As sprawl reaches toward the

periphery, the inner-ring suburbs now reflect the poverty of the urban core. Thus discrimination against Black Americans within the suburbs continues.

Even with the high barriers to home ownership due to institutional racism, Black Americans have purchased homes in the suburbs. During the housing boom of the late 1990s and early 2000s many Black Americans that did become suburban homeowners did so through exploitation by lenders. Many were not required to verify income, due to the subprime market, and "lenders deliberately targeted African-Americans and other minorities" (Khimm, 2014, p. 2). Homeowners of color "suffered disproportionate losses" after the foreclosure crisis of 2008 "as predatory lending wiped out what few assets they had" (Khimm, 2014, p. 3). As of 2012, people of color have less opportunity to acquire homeownership loans as the economy is still in flux, and they are "far more likely to be rejected than white and Asian applicants with similar credit scores" (Khimm, 2014, p. 11). Another piece of evidence of ongoing racism with respect to homeownership is that property values have a "statistically significant difference for the exact same house on opposite sides of the suburban color line" (Wells, 2014).

While suburban sprawl has been a breeding ground for racism throughout the past century, classism has become more prevalent as the conventional suburban house becomes less affordable. Suburban sprawl has left many central city cores in poverty, reducing the property tax revenue as property values fall (Frumkin, 2002). Businesses began to move to the fringe, during the 1980s, to take "advantage of tax incentives and to avoid higher land and capital costs in downtown areas" causing vehicle usage to rise for commutes (Snyder & Bird, 1998, p. 5). While a life in the

suburbs seems to appeal to so many, many cannot afford to purchase a house. The capital required to purchase a large suburban home plus the extra costs of property taxes, maintenance, and homeowners insurance leave suburban homeownership out of reach for many. Others acquired substantial mortgages during the housing boom that left many in foreclosure after the housing bust in 2008 and subsequent Recession. The significant number of foreclosures between 2007 and 2011 proved that people were reaching outside their financial means to purchase a house.

While paying with credit was popularized in the 1970s, acquiring a mortgage to purchase a house has existed since the FHA began in the 1920s. As early as the 1920s, lower-income families were advised that homeownership was a "grave risk to [their] own economic security" and it was suggested that families

> Should instead satisfy their urge to own by purchasing a radio-phonograph, a television set, or an automobile, since these partial substitutes for the emotional satisfaction of homeownership...are not anchored to the ground and...can go along with the family wherever opportunity or destiny may beckon. (Rohe & Watson, 2007, p. 38)

The message of this early warning to lower-income individuals was that homeownership is something for which only the affluent should strive. With stagnant income for lower-income workers and the high cost to purchase, one study found that while a house in the suburbs in 1974 may have been affordable to the working class, the same house was no longer affordable as early as 1989 (Gyourko & Linneman, 1993).

Sprawl Contributes to Poor Health

While critics claim that suburban sprawl is ugly, environmentally degrading, racist, and expensive, some argue the most disturbing trend is the damaging effects sprawl has on human health. As Americans grow rounder, stouter, and more unhealthy, concerned professionals continue to look at the design of suburban sprawl as a leading cause of the decline of physical activity in the United States (L. E. Jackson, 2002). The Center for Disease Control has "targeted the lack of physical exercise as a critical health issue resulting from urban sprawl" which is lacking "conducive urban design" such as sidewalks and longer driving distances (L. E. Jackson, 2002, p. 195). Two-thirds of adults and one-third of children in the United States are considered to be overweight or obese (Diseases, 2010; Prevention, 2015). Frumkin, among others, states, "Being overweight is itself a well established risk factor for a number of diseases: ischemic heart disease, hypertension, stroke, dyslipidemia, soreoarthritis, gall bladder disease, and some cancers. Overweight people die at as much as 2.5 times the rate of non-obese people" (Frumkin, 2002, p. 205; L. E. Jackson, 2002; McKee, 2003).

Many subdivisions lack sidewalks and open spaces, and the nearest amenities are so far away that a car is necessary. These decisions—such as single-use zoning, which creates large expanses of residential land use separated from commercial and institutional activities and located at intervals based on the car instead of the pedestrian—affect physical activity level, promote sedentary lifestyles, and cause more air pollution, "which may explain findings of significantly higher rates of trouble breathing from emphysema and COPD, and may, in part, explain higher

rate of headaches in more sprawling cities" (Sturm & Cohen, 2004, p. 494; Vandegrift & Yoked, 2004). As Americans spend more time on the road the cases of obesity and diabetes will continue to rise. This dependence on the car has also led to an increase in stress-related disease like depression (McKee, 2003). As McKee states, "The number of prescriptions for antidepressants has increased remarkably...to suggest that although the suburbs were built for convenience, they may also have wrought their share of frustration by placing life's staples a long drive from home" (2003, p. 2). Higher incidences of road rage have also been linked to suburban sprawl. A factor in 56 percent of all fatal crashes, road rage "is highest in areas with sprawl development, where transit is limited or non-existent and reliance on the automobile predominates" (L. E. Jackson, 2002, p. 197). The same study states incidences of road rage are lower in areas of higher density with amenities such as sidewalks and public transit (L. E. Jackson, 2002).

The criticism of sprawl is clear. The visual monotony of the conventional suburbs and morphology that is not conducive to creating social interaction creates places that no one wants to be in (Kunstler, 2004). Sprawl contributes to the degradation of the environment and the excessive use of resources through destroying habitat, changing ecological systems, encouraging consumerism, and filling the landfills. Sprawl is expensive, requiring cities to pay for expansive infrastructure and maintenance. Sprawl continues to support racial and class segregation that has existed in suburbs since the idea of suburbia was first introduced in the United States. Finally, sprawl contributes to poor health through the lack of urban design features that promote recreational activity or walkability. To fully

comprehend these four critiques the next chapter will focus on the visual and spatial characteristics of the conventional suburb.

CHAPTER 4

THE MORPHOLOGY OF THE CONVENTIONAL SUBURB

The ability to recognize and comprehend the various parts and pieces that make up the physical, conventional suburb is important when striving to understand the history of the suburb and the American Dream; this ability is also important to understand why criticism of suburban sprawl exists. Despite the differences in climate and culture, conventional suburban morphology is replicated throughout suburbs across the United States. When driving through a conventional suburban neighborhood, without the help of street signage and Google Maps a sense of delusion may set in as the monotony makes way-finding difficult. This chapter outlines the spatial characteristics and morphological patterns found within the conventional suburb.

Morphology is "the configuration of urban form and space, and the spatial patterns of infrastructure that support it" (Carmona, 2003, p. 77). These patterns "shape settlements over time." Morphological study thus "focuses on the patterns and processes of growth and change" within the built environment. Just as a biologist studies living organisms and a chemist studies the composition of matter, an urban morphologist studies "the city as human habitat" (Anne Vernez Moudon, 1997, p. 3). The city is an accumulation of actions made by humans, whether through formal design or informal occupation of a space. These actions take form in the shape of buildings, gardens, street, parks, and monuments for various cultural reasons (Anne Vernez Moudon, 1997). The combinations of these actions create a

complex city that changes and transforms over time. The suburb has been a large part of the transformation of the city over the last two centuries, with a unique, evolving morphology. The city acts as an ever-progressing laboratory, displaying the characteristics of human life. As Lynch stated, "Outer physical shape has an important role. There are environments, which invite or reject attention, which facilitate or resist organization or differentiation" (1960, p. 136). These environments play a significant role in the history of human development. By studying the spatial characteristics of urban environments, urban morphologists gain a better grasp of the patterns and character of human development. Sprawl defined through language only goes so far, whereas the conventional suburb visualized can paint the picture of sprawl and answer the questions: what does sprawl actually look like and what are the physical characteristics that lead to such strong criticism discussed in chapter three?

Automobiles Shape Space

Conventional suburban morphology has roots in the early twentieth century. As the population of the United States continued to grow, transportation technology evolved, and land on the fringes of the cities was inexpensive to purchase (Lang, LeFurgy, & Nelson, 2006). The push for homeownership from the federal government in the 1920s paired with the dispersion of the automobile to the middle class led to the decline of the high-density streetcar suburb, popular from 1890 to the rise of the low-density, mid-century suburb in 1930 (Lang et al., 2006). (Figure 5) By the end of the 1920s, Henry Ford's Model T had pushed the number of registered drivers to 23 million people ("The Age of the Automobile," 2014). The distribution of

Figure 5: Streetcar suburb (left) and mid-century suburb (right). Photo credit: Google Maps

the automobile led to many changes within the morphology of the city. Increasing mobility brought inexpensive land on the periphery within the scope of potential homeowners and "an ever-widening radius of housing within commuting distance of cities" (Cullen, 2004, p. 149). Once the shift to the fringe started, Carmona argues that the new developments no longer constructed pedestrian-friendly streets, but were only in favor of "circulation and movement" thus the once-social 'streets' became 'roads' (Carmona, 2003, pp. 83-84). The new roads allowed for faster speeds that covered greater distances, changing the morphological patterns of the suburbs (Jacobs, 1993).

While the circulation patterns within cities were fluctuating, the ability of Americans to drive from city to city was expanding. Eisenhower's Interstate Highway Act of 1956 created more than 41,000 miles of roadways across the country, setting the stage for the exhibition of the American values of freedom and individualism through personal mobility and drastically changing the morphology of cities in the process (Bosselmann, 1998; Devlin, 2010). (Figure 6) As Whitaker stated, "Over the course of our history we have immersed ourselves in the road's imagery because it,

Figure 6: Cincinnati before (left) and after (right) the construction of two interstates. Photo credit: Shane Hampton, The Washington Post

more than any other symbol, has meant freedom and renewal" (Whitaker, 1996, p.

25). Suburban homeowners could "gaze out at the world from their miniature

estates" (p. 25) to admire the newly formed 'open road,' while the federal

government "moved toward a transportation policy emphasizing and benefiting the

road, the truck, and the private motorcar" (Devlin, 2010, pp. 5-6; Whitaker, 1996).

<p align="center">Archetypal Suburban Morphology</p>

The pattern of development in the conventional suburb has distinctive

characteristics, both natural and built, that consist of street networks, block

dimensions, street types, lot dimensions, building types, plaza orientation, parks,

rivers, creeks, and ponds (Thadani, 2010). These elements are fabricated through a

series of overlapping patterns traditionally classified in three categories: the street

pattern, the plot pattern, and the building pattern (Carmona, 2003). Because of the

amount of space located at the periphery of cities, the conventional suburb

comprises distinctive low-density, land uses that are very different from the urban

core. A composition of roads, plots, houses, and yards, Frederick Law Olmsted describes the suburb as filled with neighborhoods "where each family abode stands fifty or a hundred feet or more apart from all others, and at some distance from the public road" (1987, p. 231). Land uses besides residential can exist within the conventional subdivision, such as commercial, educational, or industrial, but are typically separate from residential. While cities that employ single-use zoning can also have this characteristic, cities typically mix residential and commercial uses within the same neighborhood, unlike the single-use conventional subdivision.

Aided by the potential of the ample land on the periphery, developers began to change the density, grain, and access of the conventional suburb, making it much different from the streetcar suburb or the urban core where land use was much more mixed and higher density with residential and commercial uses in close proximity due to limited personal transportation options (K. T. Jackson, 1985; Lynch, 1981). In the conventional suburb, land use became more separated as residents had the ability to drive to commercial and civic amenities. In the context of the built environment, density is defined as "how much is in a limited area…that can be experienced intimately, on foot" (Jacobs, 1993, p. 260). The conventional suburb is well-known for low-density development, "overexpanding horizontally" (Krier, Thadani, & Hetzel, 2009, p. 99). The conventional suburb is also well-known for having a coarse grain or the limited mixing "physical elements, activities, or types of persons are mixed in space" (Lynch, 1981, p. 404). Lynch stated that the "ideal community is a 'balanced' one, in which all groups in the general population are present, finely mixed, and are members of one polity" such as a neighborhood near

the city center (1981, p. 405). When describing access, Lynch refers to the ability or lack of ability to come to or leave a suburban subdivision (1981). Suburban sprawl has poor access for anyone without a car, especially those that are elderly or teenagers (Lynch, 1981). These characteristics of suburbia, discussed by Lynch, are categorized into three distinct patterns.

Street pattern
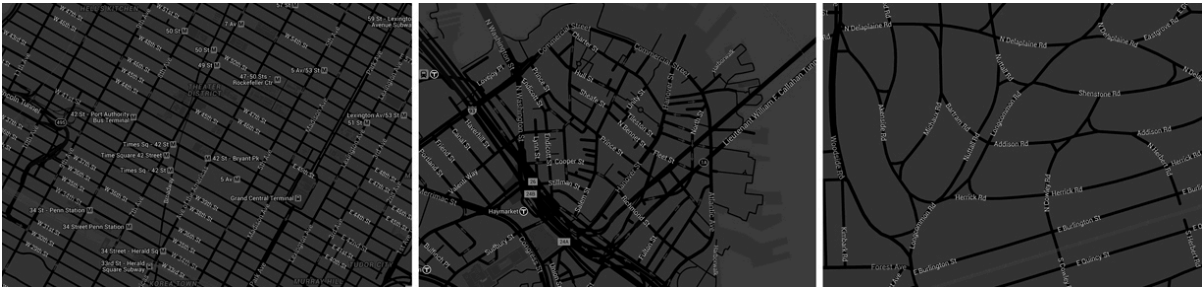
Figure 7: Street Patterns of Manhattan, NY (Left), Boston, MA (Center), and Riverside, IL (Right). Photo Credit: Google Maps

The first, and most permanent, of the three overlapping patterns is the street pattern, also known as the cadastral pattern, which is "the layout of urban blocks and public space and movement channels between those blocks" (Carmona, 2003, p. 80). The most common street pattern that characterizes the urban experience is the gridiron. Cities throughout history have used a form of the grid, which was popularized in the United States for "the equal distribution of land" and "the easy parceling and selling of real estate" (Kostof, 1991, p. 95). There are three kinds of grid patterns: regular, organic, and curvilinear (Carmona, 2003). A regular grid has geometric discipline, which is usually rectangular, and while practical for the real estate market has been often criticized for "wastefulness when all streets are brought to the same standard, for the heedless butchery of terrain and natural features, and for the visual monotony and lack of focus" (Lynch, 1981, p. 379). An

example of a regular grid can be found in Midtown Manhattan in New York City. (Figure 7, Left) The organic grid Is found in the pre-industrial city, having originated naturally and incrementally; they contain irregularities (Carmona, 2003). An example of an organic grid can be found in the oldest part of Boston. (Figure 7, Center) The curvilinear grid is an attempt to create a more topographically sensitive system of curving streets that slow traffic and allow for changing views. It was used in many of the first planned subdivisions such as Riverside in Illinois (Carmona, 2003). (Figure 7, Right) While the curvilinear grid has regained popularity in subdivision design during the last few decades, some argue the "underlying symbolism remains largely
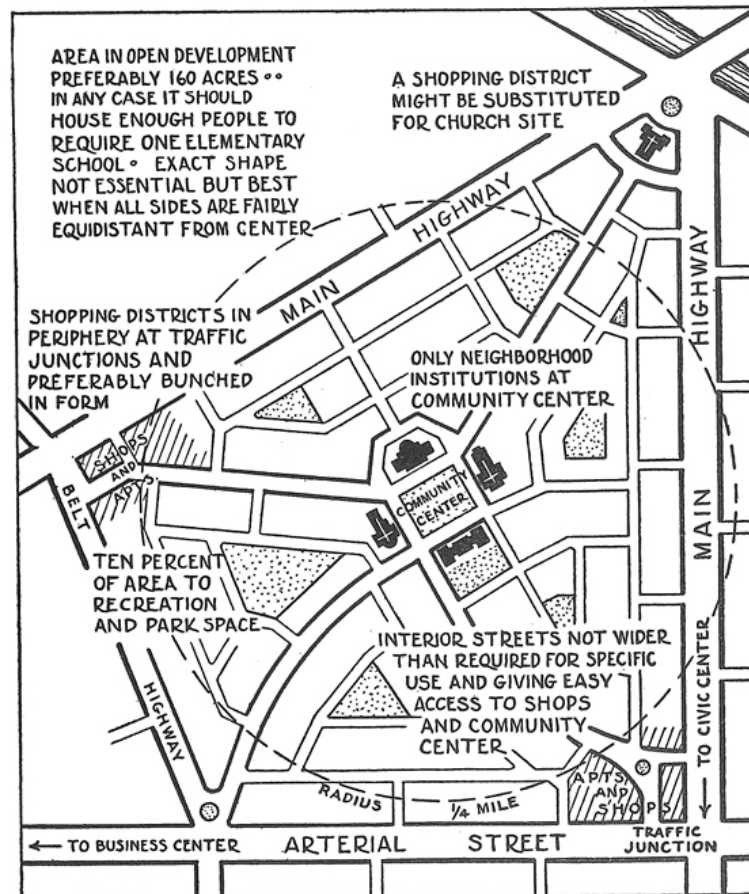
Figure 8: Clarence Perry's neighborhood pod. Image credit: New York Regional Survey, Vol 7. 1929

unchanged from that of the grid" (Whitaker, 1996, p. 19). The roads may be curvilinear, but the pattern continues to function as a regular grid. While regular grids are most often found within suburban subdivisions, curvilinear grids are also used.

The regular grid is often described as a "visual monotony" with "a disregard of topography, difficulties for travel on the diagonal, and the threat of fast traffic on any street" (Lynch, 1981, p. 425). As early as 1930, developers began to shift the morphology of subdivisions from the regular grid to the neighborhood pod. Clarence Perry devised the neighborhood pod, also known as the neighborhood unit, as a way to bring more privacy and safety to suburban subdivisions, keeping through-traffic out (2013). (Figure 8) The neighborhood pod limits vehicular access into the neighborhood by providing fewer entry points. Carmona describes the neighborhood pod as a series of road networks, each type constructed for a particular use and amount of traffic; "the major road network would thus have a relatively coarse grain and would carry the non-local traffic, allowing the streets and roads within each cell of the major road network to carry local traffic only" (2003, p. 88). This morphology is found in commercial land use areas with each use "conceived as a separate element, surrounded by its associated parking and usually with its own individual and exclusive access onto a collector or main distributer road" (Carmona, 2003, p. 90). The shift from the never-ending urban grid was expansive, and most conventional suburban subdivisions use the neighborhood pod morphology instead.

Five main street types make up the cadastral pattern within the neighborhood pod, which are highway, arterial, collector, local, and cul-de-sac (Carmona, 2003; Thadani, 2010). (Figure 9) Giving structure to the city, these five street types are

Figure 9: Diagram of street types. Arterial streets (orange), collector streets (blue), local streets (yellow), and cul-de-sacs (greens). Photo credit: dailymail.co.uk. Annotations by the author.

used to restrict the amount of traffic on residential-only streets to just those that live there, while transporting commuters through the area quickly (Bosselmann, 1998). The highway acts as a fast-paced regional circulation route, connecting cities and suburbs to each other and allowing commuters to quickly go where they need to. Access is completely removed from other streets with the exception of exit and entrance ramps. The arterial street (orange) functions as the connection between the highway, other arterial streets, and collector streets (blue), accommodating "speeds of 30 mph or greater, has four or more travel lanes, serves higher-density and higher intensity land uses adjacent to the street" (Thadani, 2010, p. 45). The collector connects the arterial streets to the neighborhoods and the amenities within them, such as commercial centers, schools, and parks (Thadani, 2010). Local streets (yellow) are the main type of street within the residential land use of the subdivision, connecting driveways to the outside world. Finally, cul-de-sacs (green)

hold the least amount of traffic, being a dead end, and essentially, an extension of the driveway. Creating a "hierarchal tree-like pattern," cul-de-sacs are thought to "retain the aesthetics of curvilinear layouts while mitigating the nuisances and dangers of cars and other traffic," (p. 83) effectively generating the perception of exclusion for anyone that does not live on that street (Carmona, 2003). Busier streets, such as arterial or collector streets also create boundaries for neighborhood "pods," which have a limited number of entry points into the neighborhood. This creates a neighborhood identity, while also reducing traffic speeds.

Plot pattern

The second pattern found in the conventional subdivision is the plot pattern. (Figure 10) Bounded by the streets, the plot pattern is, essentially, the urban block, subdivided into parcels, which can be changed over time (Carmona, 2003). There are three different types of plots: the square, elongated, and cluster. All plot configurations depend upon the street pattern. The square plot, simply put, is a

Figure 10: Suburban plot pattern. Photo credit: dwell.com

square. Often with less square footage than the other types, the square plot creates a positive environment for walkability (Thadani, 2010). The elongated plot running at a north-south orientation allows for equal sun exposure on the front and back yards of all parcels, while the east-west orientation deprives half the front and back yards of exposure (Thadani, 2010). The cluster plot, which "Groups new homes onto a portion of a development parcel so that the remaining land is preserved as open space," is uncommon in the conventional suburb (Thadani, 2010, p. 169). Each plot is subdivided into parcels. Parcel types include through and back-to-back (Carmona, 2003). A through parcel would have frontage on both sides of the plot, while the back-to-back parcel has frontage on just one side (Carmona, 2003). The back-to-back parcel is the most common type used in the conventional suburb, and the conventional suburban plot has trended toward gigantism in the twentieth century (Jacobs, 1993).

The most notable elements of the plot pattern are the built structures and the open space of the yards (Carmona, 2003). This relationship between the built and un-built space, drawn as a figure-ground, displays the arrangement of the buildings within the plots, the urban tissue (Carmona, 2003). The urban tissue in the urban core is fine-grained, and the figure ground displays much more built structure than open space. Because of its rarity in the high-density urban core, open space is typically highly designed for particular uses, such as parks, plazas, urban gardens, or outdoor commercial uses like a café patio. Within the conventional suburb, the urban tissue is coarse-grained, and with the popularity of freestanding buildings the open space becomes "more amorphous," less defined, and more ambiguous. While

parks and recreational open spaces are planned in some subdivisions, most open spaces in the conventional suburb, generally yards, are often "residual, accidental and merely occupied by objects standing within that space" (Carmona, 2003, p. 85). Pipkin et. Al. describe the conventional suburb open space as "semipublic" with "little concern for belongingness [to a community]…rather, belonging to a status group and maintaining an image of a 'good' neighborhood is paramount" (Pipkin, La Gory, & Blau, 1983, p. 37).

While row houses, situated on back-to-back parcels with alleys in the rear, and the Berlin block, a ring of buildings around the perimeter of the block with a courtyard in the middle, had been the popular architectural style of cities in the nineteenth century, by 1870, detached, single-family houses with yards became the morphology of choice for the new suburbanites (K. T. Jackson, 1985). Coming from the urban core, people relied upon parks and cemeteries for open space as what green space was available around city residences, was typically an interior courtyard behind the residences, which had little access to light and fresh air, along with poor sanitary conditions (K. T. Jackson, 1985). The shift from recreating in urban public space to the necessity of a private yard was gradual (K. T. Jackson, 1985). Much of the open space in the conventional suburb is devoted to the grass yard. Derived from the romantic garden suburbs of the mid-nineteenth century, such as Riverside, Illinois, critics state the yard dissolved into a

> Mockery…given over to automobiles, their boundaries measured by garage doors, the foliage picked to be maintenance-free, the front yards codified to a numbing neutrality while the back yards, where they exist in any size, remain an remnants of private initiative – pockets where sufficient imagination may still civilize a few, but which offer little scope for improving the public domain. (Lyndon & Moore, 1994)

The yard marks a turning point as the focus of the family and use of the open space shifted from the street to the back yard, deemed more private and safe (Wentling, 1994). While the residents use the back yard the front yard is given over to the driveway and garage, becoming eerily quiet and "which often serve only to give the owner exercise with a lawn mower"(Moore, Allen, & Lyndon, 2000, p. 199). This marked a shift in the idea of the street as public space. As the use of the plot turned inward from the attached garage and backyard, the lack of sidewalks and inhabited front yard caused the suburban street to be largely for vehicular use only. Places for public interaction were lost.

Building pattern

The pattern most susceptible to change over time, within the conventional suburb, is the building pattern. The building pattern is a distinctive pattern of freestanding buildings that "was fuelled by the desire for buildings to stand out or otherwise be distinctive as a consequence of real estate interests" (Carmona, 2003, p. 85). As the conventional suburb is largely residential, most of the building pattern is made up of houses. The location of the house on the parcel is called disposition. Most conventional suburban houses are subject to a regulated setback from the street and side yards, with the main façade of the house facing the street. Since local streets and cul-de-sacs discourage through-traffic, the relationship between the residents of the house and street becomes one of first impressions and image, with the façade displaying the personality of those within. While the façade plays this role, the architecture of the suburbs has been criticized as dull and monotonous (Lynch, 1981). As far as the architectural style of the house, each may only have the

setback and side yards as similarities, with an arbitrary, watered-down version of a style on the façade and overall form (Whitaker, 1996).

The freestanding house is a distinctive characteristic of the suburb as the design of the house reflected a new need for privacy as returning World War II veterans moved out of their cramped, familial houses and into a house of their own. By creating complex floor plans, each space was designated for a separate purpose (K. T. Jackson, 1985). As Carmona stated, "Designed from the inside out, responding to their functional requirements…buildings became objects-in-space, whereby the exterior form—and, hence its relationship to public space—was merely a byproduct of its internal planning" (Carmona, 2003, p. 85). Architects and landscape architects, such as Andrew Jackson Downing, designed subdivisions based on the 'ideal' American way of life, with houses that would be the most appropriate and satisfactory for Americans (K. T. Jackson, 1985). Architectural pattern books rose in popularity during the late 19th century, and contributed to the evolution of the suburban house (Downing, 1969, p. vii). Life within the conventional suburban subdivision became the representation for success within the middle class, and the suburban house "came to represent the individual himself" (K. T. Jackson, 1985, p. 52). Fishman argues that the early suburbanites were not only seeking refuge from the city by creating a home in a suburban neighborhood, but were also seeking refuge from each other and finding it within the confines of their suburban house, front-loading garage, and yard (Fishman, 1987, p. 4).

Before the conventional suburb, the garage was situated off the alley, behind the house. A resident would park the car and walk across the back yard to bring

groceries into the house (Whitaker, 1996). This idea became antiquated, and a feeling of inconvenience caused the demise of both the alley and the detached garage as homeowners were drawn to the attached single-car garage in the 1950s that eventually grew, with the overall square footage of the house, to the standard of an attached three-car garage in the 1990s (Whitaker, 1996). Critics state, "The private garage…represents all that is undesirable about suburbia" (pp. 185-186) as it continues to break the pre-conventional suburban relationship with the street acting as public space (Bosselmann, 1998).

<u>Typologies</u>

There are three notable typologies within the conventional suburban building pattern: the mass-produced house, the Neo-Historic house, and the McMansion. These typologies represent the majority of suburban housing from the late-1930s to today. Builders such as William Levitt and Joseph Eichler popularized the mass-produced house during the 1940s to the 1960s (K. T. Jackson, 1985). Houses were not the only mass-produced item during this period of history as the appeal of modern living and the rise of consumerism bolstered demand for modern appliances, packaged foods, and even greater access to the personal automobile. As sprawl spread across the United States, the Neo-Historic house became commonplace. This was a generic, form-driven typology that lacked architectural detail. Most suburban houses built in the conventional suburb today are Neo-Historic. The third typology is the McMansion, an oversized, often very stylized, house.

The mass-produced house used an assembly-line method of construction at low cost, which allowed the Levitts to build up to 24 houses a day. (Figure 11, Top) The Levitts created a series of house models with names like the Cape Cod, the Levittowner, the Rancher, the Jubilee, or the Country Clubber (K. T. Jackson, 1985). Usually a single story or a story and a half, each model had a series of four or five styles that could be changed depending on the style chosen by the homeowner. A new model with slight variations from past models was released each year. Variations of the models included the placement of the garage or carport to the

Figure 11: Levittown house (Top) and Eichler house (Bottom). Photo credits: wirednewyork.com, nhpr.org

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simple act of mirroring the structure. Another person recognized for mass-produced houses was developer, Joseph Eichler, who was located in California. (Figure 11, Bottom) Famous for the "open spaces, floor-to-ceiling glass walls and clean, serene lines," Eichler built single-story houses during the 1950s and 1960s (Stamberg, 2015). The houses featured distinct pitched rooflines, post and beam construction, and open courtyards in the center. Both builders included open floor plans between the living spaces and the kitchen, modern appliances for a modern kitchen, small bedrooms, and a bathroom. The first mass-produced houses were small, but during the late-1960s and 1970s, the size of suburban houses grew and new styles were added.

The second typology is the Neo-Historic house. (Figure 12) There is a lack of formal literature about the conventional suburban house from the 1970s to today. The term Neo-Historic was created for this thesis to give a formal title to this

Figure 12: Neo-Historic house. Photo credit: Google Maps

typology. While the majority of the mass-produced houses from the 1940s to the 1960s were single-story, the Neo-Historic house still included the ranch, but also the two-story and the split-level. The styles that the Levitts and Eichler applied to their mass-produced houses started to take on a watered-down appearance, putting historic architectural details on the front façades. While generic, the houses were labeled Colonial or European Romantic based on slight differences in the overall form of the houses and the details adhered or built into the front façade. The term Neo-Historic reflects this use of simple architectural detail on the front façade while maintaining an open floor plan and attached garage. The square footage of the houses grew. The open floor plan remained the core of the house as accessory rooms such as a formal living or dining room were added to the periphery of the building. The generic stylized exteriors on the front of the houses began to form monotonous suburban neighborhoods, where each house resembled the house next to it. While in the ranch-style house the private sleeping space and public living space were typically separated on one side of the house or the other, the two-story and split-level houses separated spatial function by level; bedrooms and a bathroom on the second story or upper level, and the kitchen and living space on the first story or lower level. During this time period, builder began to solely construct attached garages, instead of the detached garages that had existed in suburbs during the previous decades.

Figure 13: McMansion. Photo credit: Sonya Etchison/Shutterstock

The third typology is the McMansion, which grew in popularity starting in the 1990s. (Figure 13) McMansions are defined as "a very large house, offers little variety within the context of its neighbors, and often sits on a plot of land where all the original vegetation has been cut" (Devlin, 2010, pp. 3-4). This typology was developed alongside the Neo-Historic house in the late-1980s and early-1990s, as a larger version of the Neo-Historic house for homeowners able to purchase the extra space and prestige. Critics refer to McMansions as "fortress like," being "built on a large and imposing scale, but regarded as ostentatious and lacking architectural integrity" (Devlin, 2010, p. 55). Even during the early twentieth century, the suburban house "came to be a personal bastion against society, a place of refuge, free from outside control" (K. T. Jackson, 1985, p. 47). The McMansion fits the visual image of a bastion more than the mid-century house, as the average single-family house in 1950 was 983 square feet and had ballooned to 2,434 by 2005 (Devlin, 2010).

As the car came to be seen as a convenience that was accessible to more people and land use became more separated, the morphology of the conventional

suburb created sprawl. The combination of the design of the conventional suburb, as discussed in this chapter, and the excessive use of resources by sprawl contributed to the many critiques considered in chapter 3. Concern mounted, caused by the massive use of land, the destruction of the environment, and the placelessness and lack of community and cultural identity. Sprawling suburbia was wasting resources. The poor design was beginning a downward spiral of the United States becoming one of the unhealthiest countries in the world. Exclusion of minorities from the suburbs was still rife as legal mechanisms and outright discrimination kept people from purchasing houses. Overall, the sense of community suffered. During the era of the Neo-Historic house, various parties took up the cause to respond to sprawl by creating design strategies for a better suburb.

CHAPTER 5

RESPONSES TO SUBURBIA:

THE NEW URBANISM AND CONSERVATION DEVELOPMENT

Multiple alternative development strategies have gained popularity in the past few decades in response to suburban sprawl. These include smart growth, cluster development, golf course development, traditional neighborhood development, New Ruralism, low-impact development, sustainable development, conservation development, and The New Urbanism (McMahon, 2010). The implementation of these strategies have been spearheaded by non-profit organizations advocating for high-density development, for-profit mission-driven developers who see the value in the preservation of the environment, and designers who strive to recreate a sense of community. Each strategy has a slightly different focus; all have the overarching goal of reducing the impacts of sprawl through new design approaches for development and redevelopment. The following two sections will focus on the strategies of The New Urbanism and conservation development.

The New Urbanism

In 1979, Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk became the designers for the ocean-side development that came to be known as Seaside, Florida. The developer, Robert Davis, wanted to create a development that was different from the conventional subdivision, opting for the aesthetic and functionality of an old-fashioned beach town (Gause, 2002). One of the designers' greatest concerns was control over the aesthetic of the development. They were unwilling to accept

Frederick Law Olmsted's conventional wisdom that "we cannot judiciously attempt to control the form of the houses which men shall build, we can only, at most, take care that if they build very ugly inappropriate houses, they shall not be allowed to force them disagreeably upon our attention" (Gause, 2002, p. 23). Davis, Duany, and Plater-Zyberk traveled the southern coastline in search of inspiration for the development, creating an alternative method based upon traditional neighborhood development. This started the movement known as The New Urbanism, a "direct reaction to the perceived failings of the modern American city" (Zimmerman, 2001, p. 253). Officially formed in 1993, the Congress for New Urbanism seeks to "restore the existing urban centers and towns within coherent metropolitan regions, reconfigure the sprawling suburbs into communities of real neighborhoods and diverse districts, conserve natural environments, and preserve our built legacy" (Urbanism, 2016). Duany, Plater-Zyberk, and Jeff Speck later wrote one of the most well known texts on the idea of New Urbanism, *Suburban Nation: The Rise of Sprawl and the Decline of the American Dream* (2000), to display the negative effects of suburban sprawl and offer design strategies based on traditional neighborhood development as alternatives.

Duany et. al. felt "the many wonderful older places that still exist" were the ideal places to inspire the principles of The New Urbanism (2000, p. 183). The principles consider the regional structure of a place, natural context, land use, public buildings and spaces, the thoroughfare network, street design, public streetscape, private streetscape, parking, housing, privacy, and architectural syntax (Duany et al., 2000). These principles are derived from traditional neighborhood development,

which is the polar opposite of suburban sprawl (Duany et al., 2000). For New Urbanists, sprawl is "destructive," "bankrupting the country or destroying the countryside" as it grows, whereas traditional neighborhoods are "mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly communities of varied population, either standing free as villages or grouped into towns and cities" (Duany et al., 2000, p. 4). As Kunstler says, "Suburbia fails us in large part because it is so abstract. It's an idea of place rather than a place" (Kunstler, 1996, p. 17). New Urbanists advocate for the proper implementation of the principles to create places worth caring about (Duany et al., 2000; Kunstler, 1996).

Figure 14: Example of New Urbanist development, Celebration, FL. The commercial town center (light brown) is surrounded by parkland, educational facilities, and housing. All are connected by pedestrian and automobile thoroughfares. Photo credit: Gause, 2002

While each New Urbanist development varies, its morphology revolves around six design characteristics:

1. Every development should have a focus, or a center, where residents go to engage in social, commercial, and recreational activities;
2. Whatever a resident needs, on a daily basis, should be accessed within a five-minute walk;
3. The street network should form a continuous web, with multiple routes to the same place and small block sizes;
4. Streets should be narrow, no wider than two lanes, to slow traffic down and allow for parallel parking and pleasant pedestrian spaces alongside;
5. Buildings should be mixed-use right along the sidewalk with parking located in the back; and
6. Developments should "devote unique sites to civic buildings, those structures that represent the collective identity and aspirations of the community" (Duany et al., 2000, pp. 15-17). (Figure 14)

New Urbanism promotes placemaking through quality design and spaces that encourage interaction, such as sidewalks, with the ultimate outcome of building a sense of community. With these guiding values some New Urbanist developments across the United States have been successful while others have failed. Cliff Ellis discusses whether the New Urbanism is just a simple "exercise in nostalgia," instead of a revolution for suburban sprawl (2002, p. 266). Others question whether or not New Urbanist principles can really be considered new, as much of the New Urbanism is the modernization of design elements found in small town America. Critics describe The New Urbanism as a caricature of the past and a "failure to confront reality," ignoring the social and economic actualities of the modern world (C. Ellis, 2002, p. 266). Ellis claims much of the criticism of The New Urbanism "displays characteristic flaws" such as "the use of caricature, inadequate sampling of projects, decent understanding of New Urbanist principles and practices, premature judgments, unrealistic expectations and ideological bias" (2002, p. 283). While

proponents and critics hold fast to held opinions, the creation of New Urbanist communities continues, providing direction for future research.

An example: Celebration, Florida

One of the largest New Urbanist developments is Celebration, Florida. (Figure 15) A 10,000-acre town outside of Orlando, Florida, Celebration was the ambitious dream of Walt Disney in the 1960s, envisioned as an Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow (EPCOT) (Gause, 2002). While Disney died long before construction of Celebration started in the early 1990s, the character of and nostalgia for the Disney legacy is a core component of the identity of Celebration. According to the official website for the community, Celebration "was formed with the concept of building a better place and a better way to live" ("Official Website of the Community of Celebration," 2011). The community currently boasts approximately 6000 housing units and over two million square feet of commercial space built upon peninsulas and islands "surrounded by conservation areas and connected by landscaped boulevards, parkways, and trails" (Gause, 2002).

The major goals of the master plan were to place 5,000 acres of land aside for conservation of the natural habitat and to create a sense of place within the community. Road infrastructure and an office park were the first pieces to be established. Phase two included the construction of the traditional town center and the adjacent residential community known as Celebration Village. New Urbanist techniques used to achieve a sense of place were the creation of mixed-use buildings within the town center, which surrounds a central town square and park as the focal points. Retail buildings meet the sidewalk. Parking options include parallel

Figure 15: Celebration, FL. Photo credits: Allday.com, Communityexplore.com, Orlandoholidayinfo.com

on-street parking and lots behind the retail buildings. Businesses have quaint names

like *Grandpa's Woodshop* or *S. Todd Barbershop*. Every house within Celebration

Village can reach the town center in 10 minutes of walking or less (Gause, 2002).

The houses within the entire development abide by a strict set of rules laid out in

three pattern books – community, architectural, and landscape (Gause, 2002).

Residents have the option of six styles – Victorian, Colonial Revival, Coastal,

Mediterranean, Classical, and French, which "impart the feeling of a traditional

hometown" (Gause, 2002, p. 59). The narrow, curving tree-lined streets are laid out

in a curvilinear grid and "punctuated by parks" (Gause, 2002, p. 53). Other amenities

include a golf course, other residential villages, a health center, a school, and

highway-oriented large-scale retail development (Gause, 2002). Open space, parklands, and trails surround the entire development.

While the community is clean, family-oriented, and walkable with a reasonably diverse mix of housing types and costs ranging from $160,000 to over $2 million, critics find Celebration to be eerily similar to the movie *The Truman Show* where Jim Carey "plays a man trapped inside an invisible urban bubble" (Gause, 2002; Pilkington, 2010). The minimum cost to purchase a house in Celebration is high, and despite the choice of six architectural styles, the housing all looks the same, reminiscent of the ticky tacky conformity of conventional suburbia (Reynolds, 1963). (Figure 16) Despite the similarities, Frantz and Collins wrote, "The promise of Celebration was to create a world so distinct from the contemporary suburb that it was a fantasy itself" (2000, p. 28). The similarity stems from the covenant requirements to use particular materials and styles that create a harmonizing neighborhood atmosphere. The neighborhood design and quaint town center create a nonrealistic atmosphere of fantasy, similar to the goals of the Disney theme parks. As Pilkington wrote, "Celebration speaks to one of the central paradoxes of modern American life. For a country that prides itself so fiercely on its untrammelled individualism and freedom, it has a strong streak of conformism" (2010).

Figure 16: Houses in Celebration, FL. While variation in the architectural details is required, houses tend to look similar to one another. Photo credit: Daviddorman.com

Celebration has certainly become a memorable place, but whether or not the development has achieved all that the New Urbanism strives for is debatable. While Celebration preserves open space, much of it is used for golf courses. Whether this addresses the environmental concerns of The New Urbanism is questionable because of the highly manicured state and extreme use of chemicals most golf courses require. The New Urbanism is also an advocate for mixed-income and property value neighborhoods, but the cost to purchase in Celebration is higher than many can afford. The New Urbanism has its own set of critics, just as the suburban sprawl does, and while many have found reason to criticize the New Urbanism, it is notably one of the first detailed, alternative development ideas to combat the sprawling city.

Conservation Development

A conservation development is defined as one where "half or more of the buildable land area is designated as undivided, permanent open space" (Arendt, 1996, p. 6). While conservation development has gained popularity as an alternative method for sprawl alongside the New Urbanism, its roots reach back to the reemergence of the modern conservation movement with the publishing of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* in 1962. Carson warned that the path the country was traveling was "deceptively easy, a smooth superhighway on which we progress at great speed, but at its end lies disaster" (Carson, 1962). By this she meant that the United States was consuming more resources at a faster rate than ever before with unknown consequences for the future. Others voicing similar concern for the environment include Aldo Leopold, who advocated for a new land ethic, which

affirmed the environment's "right to continued existence…in a natural state" (Leopold & Schwartz, 1970, p. 171). Theodore S. Geisel (aka. Dr. Seuss) wove messages of environmentalism into children's books, writing, "Now that you're here, the word of the Lorax seems perfectly clear. Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not" (Seuss, 1971).

In *Design with Nature*, written in 1969, landscape architect Ian McHarg called for a better method for developing cities (1992). He declared that values "must be transformed if we are to reap the bounty and create that fine visage for the home of the brave and the land of the free" (McHarg, 1992, p. 5). In his book, McHarg

Figure 17: Example of conservation development, Prairie Crossing, IL. The houses (orange) are clustered near each other to leave ample open space on the periphery. Photo credit: Franko et. al., 2007

provides step-by-step instructions for future designers about how to plan cities and neighborhoods, recommending a careful analysis of the ecological system before creating a design that prioritizes nature, which has become "beleaguered in the country and too scarce in the city" (McHarg, 1992, p. 5). Woven from these strands of ecology, conservation, and land ethic, conservation development, as an alternative development method, was expanded by landscape designer Randall Arendt. Arendt noticed the destruction of the natural landscape from the boom of suburban sprawl during the mid-century. He hoped conservation development would provide an alternative "as suburban lawns and streets [were] carved out of the farmland that had previously been carved out of the forests, meadows, and plains that had existed for hundreds of thousands of years" (Arendt, 1996, p. xviii).

The goal of conservation development is to develop land "while concurrently protecting a landscape's essential natural and environmental values" (McMahon, 2010, p. 8). The main principles of the method are

1. To preserve, restore, and maintain ecologically and culturally valuable lands, while recognizing that each site will have different priorities;
2. Design the development so that people have access to the land and open space;
3. Use the open space for functional purposes such as storm water management, flood mitigation, and recreation;
4. Maintain a light footprint with buildings; and
5. Minimize paving and eliminate unnecessary infrastructure (McMahon, 2010). (Figure 17)

Existing projects have included the preservation of 50 percent of the total site area for open space, agriculture, wildlife habitat, and cultural resources protection (McMahon, 2010). While conservation development prioritizes the natural landscape for ecological or agricultural reasons, "culturally or historically significant land, such

as stone walls, burial grounds, archaeological sites, and battlefields" have also been protected (McMahon, 2010, p. 8).

Similar to some of the morphology found within New Urbanist developments, the smaller lots and narrower single-family homes found within traditional neighborhoods and small towns are advocated in conservation development (Arendt, 1996). Conservation development differs from conventional suburban development in many ways. Most notably conservation development focuses on both the built environment and the open space when considering uses on a site (McMahon, 2010). As protection of the natural environment is the top priority within conservation development, project costs are often higher, leading to higher purchasing values for houses. Critics claim conservation development can encourage sprawl in rural areas and often be unaffordable for those in the working class, creating communities that lack economic and social diversity. Zimmerman states, "green environments have been articulated almost exclusively with the private lifestyle needs of the middle-classes in mind" (Zimmerman, 2001, p. 263). Proponents claim conservation development is the best suburban development option for local governments, developers wishing to make a profit while maintaining an environmental ethic, and healthy residents with high quality lifestyles (McMahon, 2010).

An example: Prairie Crossing, Illinois

One of the most well-known conservation developments in the United States is Prairie Crossing in Grayslake, Illinois. (Figure 18) A 678-acre site, Prairie Crossing was conceived in the 1990s as a retired businessman and a handful of families

teamed up to purchase land 40 miles north of downtown Chicago. Their goal was to create a place for "a way of life that respects the environment and enables residents to experience a strong connection between community and the land" ("Prairie Crossing," 2016). The community contains 395 units that include single-family houses and condominiums, a 70-acre working organic farm, a self sustaining community center in a 150 year old restored barn, ten miles of trails, two Metra stations surrounded by mixed-use development, and 70 percent land preserved for restored prairies, lakes, pastures, and farm fields (Franko et al., 2007).

In the beginning, the development team created ten principles, each of which were considered for every decision made during the planning process. The principles include environmental protection and enhancement, a healthy lifestyle, a sense of place, a sense of community, economic and racial diversity, convenient and efficient transportation, energy conservation, lifelong learning and education, aesthetic design and high-quality construction, and economic viability (Franko et al., 2007). The development was built in three phases. Unlike many developments, all infrastructure and recreational and community amenities – the organic farm, community center, and school – were constructed before any housing had been constructed in an effort to display the entire concept of the community and to convince the first potential buyers to purchase. After the infrastructure was in place, the construction of housing began. Station Village, a cluster of mixed-use development around one of the Metra stations, was the second phase, and Station Square with 36 condominiums, retail, and underground parking was developed last.

During construction, the development met and overcame multiple obstacles, such as a nearby landfill expansion and the construction of a power plant and six-lane toll road, that threatened property values (Franko et al., 2007). Housing was clustered onto smaller lots with communally-owned open space, and conservation easements were put into place to protect the open land (Franko et al., 2007). Multiple architects were hired to create a group of 20 house plans that focused on "Midwestern vernacular architecture and energy efficiency" with the expectation that all houses meet the guidelines of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Building America program (Franko et al., 2007). The condominiums in Station Village and Station Square attained the highest rank in the EPA Energy Star program, and two buildings within the school complex are Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certified (Franko et al., 2007). The Prairie Crossing development team used strategic marketing techniques, such as advertisement in venues and publications for the conservation-minded. Development homeowners began to act as hosts and tour guides for potential buyers (Franko et al., 2007). Houses sold, on average, at 30 percent higher cost than the surrounding conventional suburban developments.

While the development takes pride in serving as a model of alternative methods to surrounding communities and others, they also acknowledge the lack of racial and economic diversity through annual resident surveys, despite a pointed effort to advertise to diverse homeowners (Franko et al., 2007). Critics claim a low density, conservation development was not the best choice for a site with two commuter train stations and that it would have been wise to "introduce higher

Figure 18: Prairie Crossing, IL. Photo credits: Onearth.org, Modernfarmer.com, Civileats.com

densities and even more mixed housing options so that a much larger and more diverse group of people would have access to non-automobile transportation options" (Zimmerman, 2001, p. 262). Even as the development acknowledges the lack of diversity, the design may be to blame. Zimmerman claims the development's "aesthetic codes are explicitly drawn from a very singular vision of the Midwestern settlement frontier and thus are culturally

biased in favor of the dominant classes" and should be "understood as a language of exclusion and entitlement" (Zimmerman, 2001, p. 263). Creating a strong visual identity was important for the development team. They were successful, and Prairie Crossing has won numerous awards in the past two decades. Whether Prairie Crossing is the ideal conservation development or whether it "conserves the essence of suburban life, the inward-looking, secluded, and tranquil community on the edge of the city, where the possibilities of the unknown and of experiencing real social difference and the problems of the larger society" remains to be seen (Zimmerman, 2001, p. 264).

These alternative development methods are just two of many that are used across the United States. Each has its pros and cons, and through implementation, the strengths and weaknesses of The New Urbanism and conservation development can be seen. Regardless these methods give an alternative to the conventional suburb, which requires a huge amount of resources to construct and maintain, while the The New Urbanism and conservation development provide design alternatives to achieve a sense of space without spreading the housing apart. Each provides the preservation of land for uses that can be shared by all residents that live in the development, and each contains strategies for the use of less resources and energy, whether that is through building design, storm water management, or district energy. These methods prioritize ecology, clustered development parcels, and mixed land use. Critics continue to argue against these new methods, and while these methods may not be perfect, they begin to provide new strategies to combat sprawl and redesign suburbia.

Neighborhoods of this Research Study

Suburbanization started around the Des Moines area in the 1860s with the municipality of Sevastopol (Page, 1997). As the city grew and annexed the surrounding land, suburban municipalities continued to grow. It wasn't until the late twentieth century that the city boundary of Des Moines became indistinguishable from the many municipalities that surrounded it. These municipalities, which started as small towns "a day's car ride away from Des Moines" (Scott & Scott, 2015) became the suburbs of the greater metropolitan area of Des Moines. Among these municipalities are Ankeny and Waukee, Iowa. (Figure 19) Each has seen considerable growth in the past decade, with their populations jumping from 27,117 to 45,582 for Ankeny and 5,126 to 13,790 for Waukee between 2000 and 2010 (Page & Walroth, 1995). With this significant population growth, the cities have seen new development opportunities made reality. Much of the suburban growth, within
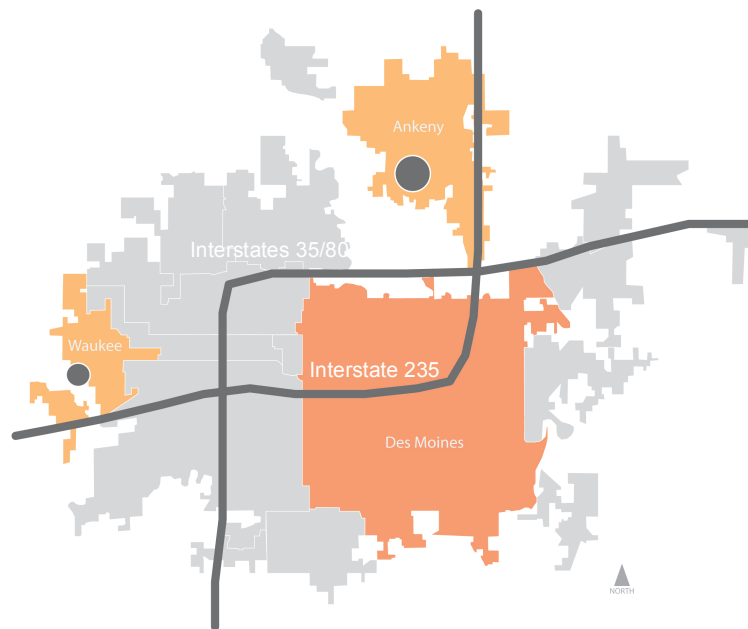
Figure 19: Waukee is located on the west side of Des Moines. Ankeny is located on the north side.

Ankeny and Waukee, remains indistinguishable from conventional suburban morphology, but a smattering of neighborhoods stand out from the rest. The methods undertaken for this research study were conducted in two of these specific neighborhoods: Prairie Trail in Ankeny, designed as a New Urbanist neighborhood and Glynn Village in Waukee, designed as a Conservation Community.

Prairie Trail

Prairie Trail is a 1,031 acre New Urbanist development in Ankeny, Iowa that claims "urban sophistication and small-town charm" (Properties, 2015). (Figure 20) After acquiring the land, previously a dairy farm, from Iowa State University the City of Ankeny named DRA Properties the master developer in 2005, and Urban Design Associates of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, were chosen to complete the master plan (Properties, 2015). The developer broke ground in May of 2007 for the construction of the fire station. Over the next eight years, the neighborhood added a police

Figure 20: Current development of Prairie Trail

station, two commercial centers, three educational facilities, parks, homes, and an aquatic center.

The neighborhood is bisected by Southwest State Street, a four-lane road with a boulevard and a 35-mile per hour speed limit. On both sides of Southwest State Street, the land has been developed into various types of dwellings, including single-family houses, shared-wall houses, and apartments. The street pattern of the development is a regular grid, with different sections of residential areas split into neighborhood pods. Many streets in the development are one-way streets and much narrower than the conventional suburban street. They also contain dedicated spaces for parallel parking on the street. There are not any cul-de-sacs in the current development. The plot pattern is back-to-back, but alleyways bisect many of the blocks. These alleyways hold the garages and back entrances of many of the houses in the development. They also separate the back yards of the residents from their neighbors. Other houses have the garages off the street. Sidewalks are abundant, as well as recreational trails for walking and biking.

One commercial center, The District, is located on the east side of Southwest

Figure 21: The District (left), a Main Street commercial center, and another commercial area (right) that includes a large box store and parking lot (unpictured) in Prairie Trail

Figure 22: Houses in Prairie Trail. European Romantic (top left), Arts and Crafts (top right), Colonial Revival (bottom left), and Victorian (bottom right). Photo credit: prairietrail.com

State Street. This center is in the process of construction, with a fitness center, office space, and a barbeque restaurant already in place. The center was designed to be similar to a Main Street commercial street, with large sidewalks for pedestrians, parking along the sidewalks, and retail stores adjacent to the sidewalks. The second commercial center is located on the south side of the neighborhood and includes a large grocery store, gas station, carwash, office space, and retail. (Figure 21) This commercial center is a combination of a Main Street commercial center on the west side of the site and a box grocery store with a large parking lot in the front on the southeast side of the site.

Prairie Trail has strict architectural covenants that all residents must abide by. Before construction can begin, residents must have all house designs approved by the Architectural Review Board. Residents are allowed to choose from four

architectural styles, which are European Romantic, Arts and Crafts, Colonial Revival, and Victorian. (Figure 22) Beyond styles, the Prairie Trail Pattern Book states the allowed color palettes, general form and characteristics, and architectural details for each style. Only three houses of each style can be built on the same block. No house can look exactly the same as the houses next to it. These houses can be described as Neo-Historic, with the same traits as the conventional suburban house typology discussed in Chapter four.

Neighborhood parks are interspersed among the blocks within the residential sections of the development. Precedence Park is a walking park with a gazebo for events situated in the middle. Paths stretch along the edges of the parcel and curve between planted areas and grass. Dean Park is located near the school, surrounded by houses. This park contains a children's jungle gym, a park shelter for events, a small splash pad, and a large open grassy area. Parallel parking is located on the streets surrounding both parks. (Figure 23, 3, 6, and 7)

Figure 23: (1) Typical street within Prairie Trail showing parallel parking area. (2) Alleyway. (4,5) Street of houses with an alleyway and garage in the back. Many houses have front porches. (3,6,7) Precedence and Dean Park.

Glynn Village

Glynn Village is a conservation development, developed by Hubbell Realty Company, that offers 134 acres of open public space, including prairie restoration areas that are meant to manage storm water (Management, 2015). (Figure 24) Located south of Waukee High School and Centennial Park, Waukee's largest city park, Glynn Village "features open public parklands, walking and biking trails, play areas, a community clubhouse with pool, and habitat for birds, butterflies and other wildlife" (Management, 2015). The development started approximately eight years ago after Hubbell Realty Company purchased the land from a local

Figure 24: Current development of Glynn Village

Figure 25: A typical street in Glynn Village looks similar to the conventional suburban street. The garages front the street, and many houses have similar architectural form and details, if not the exact same house plan only mirrored.

farmer. Hubbell has since developed a half dozen other Conservation Communities around the Des Moines area. Some of these Conservation Communities also include tall grass prairie for storm water retention.

The street pattern within Glynn Village is a curvilinear grid. The principle street within the development, Warrior Lane, is a boulevard. All other streets within the development are similar to the conventional suburban street in width. (Figure 25) Glynn Village does have cul-de-sacs. The plot pattern is back-to-back, and the backyards of many houses abut the tall grass prairie strips found throughout the neighborhood. Recreational trails can also be found within the tall grass prairie sections. (Figure 27) While a couple streets of alley-loading houses exist, the majority of the houses have garages that front the street. Residents in Glynn Village must also abide by architectural covenants, which seem to be much more lenient than Prairie Trail as many houses are recognizably the similar. Some houses in Glynn Village appear to be exactly the same, while others appear to have a mirrored

floor plan. (Figure 26) Many of the houses are located next to each other and where built by the same building company. These houses can be described as Neo-Historic, the same as typology two found in Chapter four. The houses have minimal architectural detail on the front façade only.

Figure 26: Mirrored houses in Glynn Village. Photo credit: Hubbellhomes.com

Figure 27: (1,2,4) Alley-loading houses with garages in the back and front porches along the streets. (3,5,6) Tall grass prairie and recreational walking and biking trails in Glynn Village.

CHAPTER 6

CONTINUING THE NARRATIVE OF SUBURBIA:

DRAWING FROM EXPERIENCE

The existing narrative between the American Dream and suburbia is clear. What is less clear is what role the alternative development types of The New Urbanism and conservation development play within this narrative, and if there were to be a continued narrative of suburbia, what would it say? These development types are relatively new, in comparison with the conventional suburb, which has existed for decades, and are few and far between in the Des Moines metropolitan area. Thus this section provides a detailed response to the questions: What is the role of New Urbanist and Conservation Communities within that narrative? Do the New Urbanist and Conservation Communities change the definition of the American Dream for the residents that live there?

Childhood Experience[8]

All participants were asked to describe the place or places where they grew up. The responses were a mixture of rural, small town, and suburban conditions, and each affected the participants' future decisions about the kind of living experience they wanted for themselves and their families. When remembering their childhoods, most expressed a sense of nostalgia, longing for the characteristics or the overall feel of the place they grew up. The following three sections—Rural, Small Town, and Suburban—are written to let the narratives speak for themselves. These sections

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[8] Some participants chose to share more of their experiences than others. Max, Hilary, and Jordan did not share their childhood living experiences, and their narratives are not included.

represent the context of the participants' childhood experiences. Participants grew up in a rural area, a small town, or a suburb. No participants discussed growing up in an urban area. Of the eight participants that had a rural childhood, five ended up moving to Glynn Village. Whereas, eight out of eleven participants that grew up in a small town or suburb chose to live in Prairie Trail. This sense of nostalgia plays a direct role in the participants' decisions to live in Prairie Trail or Glynn Village.

Rural

Adam[9]

Waukee has changed drastically since Adam was a child. All the places he used to walk beans or pick sweet corn as a child are now " just houses on top houses with curvy little roads and funky street names like Peachtree and Crabapple." His family has "farmed in Waukee since Waukee has existed," and Adam grew up in a three-bedroom farmhouse over a mile from his nearest neighbor. On the property there was a timber with a tree house, and "the city kids would come out and be like, 'Let's go play in [the] forest.'" There were miscellaneous buildings, grain bins, and farm equipment, and Adam's childhood friends thought living on the farm "was the coolest thing in the world." Adam just wanted to move to the city, so he could "talk to some other people and learn some stuff and go play video games and stay inside." While yearning for an urban lifestyle, he was spoiled by all the space he had to play; a soccer field, a basketball court, tons of grass, and huge trees. Wanting to connect with his peers so much, he convinced his parents to let him bicycle over three miles into Waukee. He spent years bicycling, over a mile and

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[9] All quotations in this sub-section use this citation: Brown, A. (2015) *Glynn Village Interview 1/Interviewer: K. Greteman*.

a half on gravel, then to a regional bike trail, to attend school, events, and friends' houses to socialize. The feeling of freedom and responsibility is a memory he will always have.

Jacob and Regina[10]

Descending from families of farmers, Jacob and Regina both grew up on farms, surrounded by large families that prioritized family time. Growing up in traditional farmhouses, Regina recalled changes around the age of six. "They closed up the back staircase so [her] mother could have some storage and a laundry room. An old living room, piano room, a den, big old kitchen, porch, screened in porch on the back side and concrete porch on the front. It was fun. Those are the days you had to be called…dragged inside in the summer time. Great memories." Jacob's family "raised cattle, hogs, chickens…had a lot of chickens…sold eggs to a hatchery, and then had corn and alfalfa and oats." Regina's father "was in the cattle and horse business—mainly the horse business the last few years—had a stable outside of Kansas City." Each had different memories of their rural childhood. Jacob "rode a country bus to a one-room schoolhouse. [He] had great memories growing up, and [his] mom…boy she was a great cook." Regina's family

> Were always shipping' out cattle. When there would be a drought in Texas, [her] cousins down in Texas would send their cattle up to [her family's] farm. And they'd all get to go out and check cattle…to count cattle everyday 'cause there were a lot of cattle on [their] farm [they] had to keep count of. [She] remembers playing hide and seek, sheep in the pen, chasing after fireflies, lightning bugs—they called 'em lightning bugs—playing workup…just and the horses, the smell of the horses and the tack.

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[10] All quotations in this sub-section use this citation: Hacket, J., & Hacket, R. (2015) *Glynn Village Interview 4/Interviewer: K. Greteman*.

Both vividly remember that time was often spent with family and a respect for the environment. Every Sunday, Jacob's sisters would come over for a family dinner. "Even the farm work was centered around family." His mother would cook for others, making homemade bread that smelled delicious in the oven. They had unbelievable gardens. Out in the country, Regina remembers the work and the difference between herself and the "city kids." Her grandparents impressed upon her not to waste anything, that respecting the land was important. "They loved the land," and "family was the highest priority." Jacob said, "Today, you know, we hauled our kids around playing soccer all over the country versus playing soccer in the backyard wasn't enough. We put softball in the backyard. Regina responded, "Well you had a team almost. It makes a difference."

Kayla[11]

Also from a family of farmers, Kayla grew up next to a town with the population of 150. While her family was very involved in farming, Kayla never grew to love it as they did. They lived in a small, two-story farmhouse. Nothing fancy, but her parents made an addition to the living room and the garage when she was in the eighth grade to accommodate their growing family. She vividly recalls always being outside, because there wasn't anything else to do. They didn't have nearby amenities or the internet, so playing outside with her siblings became the daily activity. They were located in "the middle of nowhere," so friends coming to visit often could not find the house. As a stay-at-home-mom, she and her mother were always outside together. Her family was "very handy," and always building very tree

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[11] All quotations in this sub-section use this citation: Benson, K. (2015) *Glynn Village Interview 5/Interviewer: K. Greteman*.

houses, swing sets, and sandboxes. She was constantly occupied. Because they lived in the country, anytime a neighbor or grandparent would visit, "it was always a big deal."

Sarah[12]

Sarah has lived in the country for her entire childhood, growing up on a farm and moving to an acreage when she was eleven. Her family raised horses, cats, and dogs. Her mother was known to take in the small animals she found around the property, such as baby raccoons. They would raise these as pets. She remembers a feeling of community. Friends and neighbors stopping by, and even if they lived ten miles away, they were still considered a neighbor.

Andrea[13]

Andrea graduated from high school in a class of 70 people, coming from four small towns and local farms. She grew up on her grandparent's farm in a ranch style home with one bathroom that also acted as the laundry room. She shared the small space with her four siblings and her parents. The bathroom was large, but "getting all of [them] together, [they] had quite the schedule growing up." She would shower at night so everyone else had time to use the bathroom in the morning. Luckily she had her own bedroom, and they all fit into the house in some way or another. Her parents were social people, having get-togethers and parties on the weekends. Andrea remembers how loud the parties would get with everyone talking and her

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[12] All quotations in this sub-section use this citation: Hicks, S. (2015) *Glynn Village Interview 7/Interviewer: K. Greteman*.

[13] All quotations in this sub-section use this citation: King, A., & King, J. (2015) *Prairie Trail Interview 2/Interviewer: K. Greteman*.

bedroom falling next to the living room. She would eventually fall asleep, but chose to build a two-story house in Prairie Trail, so her children wouldn't have to deal with the same unpleasantness. Her family raised beef cattle and hogs, and farmed corn and soybeans. She was in charge of raising the chickens, which she showed in 4-H every year. She "had to pick eggs from those laying hens, and they did not like you to take their eggs." She loved her childhood dearly, but "likes having [her] Target® nearby."

Nancy[14]

Nancy grew up on a large piece of property outside of a small urban area in Central Iowa. She remembers a lack of rules while growing up. They "had golf carts and mopeds. No matter what age you were you jumped on all that stuff and drove cars around there just because it was open land." Over time, her father, a contractor, and his business partner, owner of an asphalt company, "just thought the land was pretty so they just wanted to live out there." They started to develop and sell the property around them to others wanting to build their house in the country. "Then pretty soon it just started getting filled in because people liked it. A lot of the doctors actually ended up building houses out there, because it was maybe five minutes from the hospital. It just started filling up with bigger, nicer homes in a rural area, because the average house price in the city is maybe $80,000. The average lot there was probably an acre and a half to two acres."

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[14] All quotations in this sub-section use this citation: Clague, N. (2015) *Prairie Trail Interview 8/Interviewer: K. Greteman*.

Morgan[15]

Even though he was "stuck out on a farm all summer and didn't have any friends," Morgan "had a nice time growing up as a kid," and he "didn't want for anything." He grew up on a dairy farm near a small town of 600 in a traditional farmhouse with "a lot of place for a kid to grow up." He remembers "getting up early in the morning and hearing all the animals and birds." He enjoyed "walking out in the field to get the cattle home and making hay." His family went to a lot of state and national fairs, showing cattle. "As a kid growing up farming was a lot of fun. It [was] a lot of work. It [was] a business." He would "come into town on a Saturday; the church was there, the park, a little square park like this one [Dean Park in Prairie Trail]." He "had an aunt here [pointing as if standing in the park] and two aunts over there. And had another aunt over there and [he'd run] around the park and visit and [he'd] run over there and visit." Life was much "simpler;" each house had "the porches in the front." The farm crisis in the 1980s changed everything. The town nearby has become a ghost town, a shadow of what it was when Morgan was a child. The pace of life moved more slowly, and "the small little towns were just trying to pull together." The house he grew up in was 157 years old, but recently, he drove past and "the whole farmstead was gone…tore it down, trees, everything is gone. It's like it never existed." The small town, the local high school just "evaporated." "Place upon place upon place is disappearing like that."

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[15] All quotations in this sub-section use this citation: Kirby, M., & Kirby, M. (2015) *Prairie Trail Interview 7/Interviewer: K. Greteman*.

Small town

Jackie[16]

Jackie and her spouse both grew up in small towns, with populations of 300 and 900 people, where they had the ability to walk to whatever they needed. She related the feeling to Prairie Trail; "if [it was] picked up and moved out all by itself, it has the same feel as a small town." The town had everything her family needed, and Prairie Trail is a "reflection of what [she] was used to growing up." Her parents designed and built a house when she was in high school. It was a split-level that "looked like a ranch from the front, but the side of it was half a level up and half a level down for the bedrooms, so the master bedroom was on a level of its own." "On the other side so with a screened in porch that looked out to the golf course." She had "a library close and [her] grade school and park were a block away." "Everything was right there." The school was "in the middle. The park was in the middle of where all [her] friends lived, so it was this central spot." She "didn't really have a lot of friends right in [her] neighborhood but a bike ride away easily." "It was just really simple."

Mary[17]

As a kid, Mary "had a central park, similar to Dean Park in Prairie Trail, and could walk across and visit [her] neighbors. The town was just two blocks, and everything that [she] needed was right in that little four or five block area." Mary grew

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[16] All quotations in this sub-section use this citation: Broadhurst, J. (2015) *Prairie Trail Interview 6/Interviewer: K. Greteman*.

[17] All quotations in this sub-section use this citation: Kirby, M., & Kirby, M. (2015) *Prairie Trail Interview 7/Interviewer: K. Greteman*.

up in a town of 3500 people. She and her friends "rode [their] bikes all over town. If [they] wanted to go somewhere, [they] got on [their] bikes and went." She remembers her family having a lot of parties. Her "mom and dad knew a lot of people." Her "mom was in bridge club and they belonged to golf course, so always had a lot of people coming and going." She "could walk down the street and say, 'Hello.' People knew who [she] was so [she] had to stay out of trouble. In small towns everybody talks about everybody. They all know who you are." News traveled by word of mouth. Her town had "square blocks with an alley way down the middle, and everybody had their garages coming in from the back." But her hometown has changed; "there is not a lot to do in those towns. There's bars, there's a movie place, there is… that's it." She's "sure people get together and do stuff but…there is less and less of them." She "used to be able to walk up and down the streets, and [she] could buy clothes. There were dress shops." When Mary and Morgan were visiting "last winter, one whole side of the street is empty. There is just no businesses there." Now she "needs something [she] grew up with even though its in a larger city, it's a small community [Prairie Trail]." As Mary said, "This feels more like home to me, almost more than where I grew up in; this house and this area. It just feels that way; it just feels comfortable. It's got everything we kind of want and we don't really want for a whole lot."

<u>Dorothy and Sam</u>[18]

Dorothy and Sam both grew up, during the 1950s, in small towns around the Des Moines area, which have since become suburbs of Des Moines. Interstates did

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[18] All quotations in this sub-section use this citation: Scott, D., & Scott, S. (2015) *Prairie Trail Interview 4/Interviewer: K. Greteman*.

not exist, and the pace of life was much slower than it is today. Dorothy remembers moving around after her father returned from World War II. They were "poor, and so [they] lived with [her] grandparents," and finally they had a new "two-bedroom house, a bathroom in the middle, a living room and a small kitchen." It was "very small" with an "ugly basement where the furnace was—they were huge, you know! It was ugly, but boy they were proud." She slept in the same bedroom as her parents and brother, which is hard for her to imagine now, but "[they] did didn't know any better, and it was wonderful. It was fantastic. The refrigerator was out the back door, and it was one of those wooden refrigerators. The ice man came and brought the ice" for it. Her father, an employee at Maytag, would bring home new washing machines for her mother to test out. And when they moved into their second house in a development, the basement was new and "nice enough that [she] could go down and do the laundry." They had "the ringer kind [of washing machine], and then [they] progressed to the automatic." Her parent's "last house, of course, was all the nice stuff—had a pool and everything." The first house Sam remembered was a "big old ramshackle dumpy kind of thing—a farmhouse, but located in town" on a mud road. "Outside was a ringer washing machine," and the entrance to the basement, which was like "a little kind of like dungeon." "The refrigerator was on the back porch. It was electric. The washing machine was the old ringer type cause [he] remembers [he] kept getting a finger in it." All of the houses around them were different, "not cookie-cutter but custom," on different sized lots. Sam "knew everybody," and "everybody knew him." The kids in the neighborhood were little gangs, and they "would pair off and have snowball fights. If [they] wanted to go anywhere [they]

walked or rode [their] bicycle. That was just the way it was." Dorothy's parents would give her a quarter, and she would "walk to a little store, buy a whole sack full of candy, and come back home and eat it all." Dorothy remembered visiting an aunt, who lived in Des Moines, on the weekends with her family. "It took over an hour and a half to get there. They thought, 'we'd never get there. Are we there yet? Are we there yet?'" Money was tight for Sam's family, so he started working in the seventh or eighth grade at the lumberyard. Sam and Dorothy reminisced,

> Sam: But summers, grandpa and grandma lived on the farm, and they had a flock of chickens. They went to town went to town every Friday night and bartered, you know. They take the cream and get money for that; then go to the grocery store. We peddled eggs, you know…have to go out and get the eggs…peddled eggs every Friday. They had an egg route in West Des Moines.
> Dorothy: That was a long trip.
> Sam: It was, and that was before interstates.
> Dorothy: Oh my.
> Kristen: It would be an all-day thing?
> Sam: Oh yeah.
> Kristen: To go drop off eggs?
> Sam: Oh yeah, and I remember 50 cents a dozen.
> Dorothy: Oh gee!
> Sam: Then we'd stop in Valley Junction, in West Des Moines, for a sandwich and a cup of soup. That was the highlight of the week!

Dorothy had her own special highlight. Her family would go "to Heiss' and get an ice cream cone, and then sit on the town square eating it and watching all the people go by." In comparison with today, Sam and Dorothy recollected,

> Dorothy: It was the good old days, and the good old days to these people [gesturing around her] are nothing like our good old days so…
> Sam: You know there weren't as many people. There weren't as many cars.
> Dorothy: Things to do…

Sam: There weren't as many things to do, so you had to—I'll say—invent things.

Dorothy: You just did your own thing.

Suburban

Danielle[19]

Danielle grew up in "just a typical neighborhood, and it was great." She had friends who lived nearby, and while the neighborhood did not have sidewalks, the road was not busy. They "rode their bikes all over town." Her family's house was big; "not big by standards now", but big to her at the time. It was just a "few steps into the main floor, the kitchen, living room, dining room, and then down a few stairs to the family room; upstairs to the bedrooms, and it was comfortable." All around her were "typical houses." There was "nothing out of the ordinary in that neighborhood." At "the end of the street was the Urbandale baseball diamond, so there was a lot of traffic." She "could walk down there to watch baseball games" with her friends, "so that was fun." There was not a park or school nearby.

Ethan[20]

Ethan grew up in a suburban neighborhood "on a dead-end street, with big huge fields behind the house." Now it would be called a cul-de-sac. To him, it "seemed pretty normal. Kids ran around and played baseball between the places everyday." They "walked across the fields to the park. It was a different time because [people] didn't really have to worry about [their] kids." Ethan "didn't have a

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[19] All quotations in this sub-section use this citation: Dalton, D. (2015) *Prairie Trail Interview 3/Interviewer: K. Greteman*.

[20] All quotations in this sub-section use this citation: Ferguson, E. (2015) *Prairie Trail Interview 5/Interviewer: K. Greteman*.

lot of video games like [they] do now, which is probably a good thing because [he] would be hooked on playing video games all the time."

<u>Amanda</u>[21]

The first several years of Amanda's life, her family lived in small town south of Des Moines. She remembers "knowing all the neighborhood kids when [she] was little. It was safe then for [a] five year old to wander the neighborhood with her friends." Her family moved to a Des Moines suburb when she was in elementary school, and they lived on a cul-de-sac in an "average cookie-cutter house." "Nothing out of the ordinary, the house was pretty typical. [Her family] got in the car for everything." Her parents would go "into [the] garage, get in [the] car…[the] garage door goes up. [They would] leave and return…drive into [the] garage…the garage goes down." They did not interact "with [their] neighbors, because [they were] never really outside." "Why would [they] walk anywhere except to just go for a walk?" There was not much traffic, and all the neighborhood children played together, "creating a sense of community." She does not remember the adult neighbors having a relationship, but all the children "knew each other from playing outside in the street." Her family moved to a different house in the same neighborhood, so she was able to retain her friends. She would "still go to that same street to play with those same friends, and [she] lived there until college and getting married."

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[21] All quotations in this sub-section use this citation: Hyde, A. (2015) *Prairie Trail Interview 1/Interviewer: K. Greteman*.

Cameron[22]

Cameron grew up in "a nice residential neighborhood. It was kind of off the main stuff, and it was in a no outlet area. The road just looped around, basically, with a couple little dead-end streets, so it was kind of a quiet neighborhood." There was no through-traffic. Many "of the neighbors were pretty tight and a closely knit community as well." Built in the 1950s, at a cost of $25,000, his family lived in a "quaint two-bedroom house that [they] ended up building out a bigger bedroom in the basement for [his] older brother and [himself] when [his] little brother showed up." They "needed a little more room." The house had "little mini windows that stuck above ground just enough to put a little light in the basement." "It was a rather small house" with one bathroom upstairs and a utility bathroom downstairs. "It was cramped quarters for five people to be in that house." He fondly remembers the "the closeness of the community." There were many young families on the street, including ten or twelve boys about Cameron's age. "In like five blocks there was probably at least a dozen or better kids in [his] age range or my older brother was a year older than [him] and in his age range." The neighborhood children "used to do everything" together; "out in the street playing football or hockey." His parents "wouldn't think twice about letting them play in the street." "If people ever drove through fast when they shouldn't have, no neighbor ever hesitated hollering and letting them know that, 'You better slow down through here.'" They used to have neighborhood block parties with "just nonstop fun and playing whenever [they]

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[22] All quotations in this sub-section use this citation: Taylor, C. (2015) *Glynn Village Interview 2/Interviewer: K. Greteman*.

wanted to; everybody would get together." Neighbors were always willing to lend a helping hand. Cameron reminisced,

> In my old neighborhood, we had a creek that ran behind the neighbors across the street…went right in their backyard. Normally was never a problem cause it was a creek that was only like three feet on the deepest end and it had like 20-foot banks. So it never flooded with the exception of one time and it was pretty amazing to watch the neighborhood kind of just spring into action. I mean people were filling sandbags and creating like a huge sand barrier. My neighbor had his flat bottom boat out and was going over to neighbor's houses and helping people to get out of their houses. Once they got submerged over, our neighbors' basement wall collapsed in, and the whole creek flooded in with creek mud. And when it receded, we were all over helping them dig it out and try to get them back to where they should be.

In his childhood neighborhood, "life was very simple." Neighbors asked each other, "Hey you want to watch the kids?" And he has found that same simplicity in Glynn Village.

Previous Living Experience

Participants were also asked to describe the place they had lived before moving into Prairie Trail or Glynn Village. Most participants had owned a home before, and had moved from a conventional suburban neighborhood to Prairie Trail or Glynn Village. Their responses tended to be a comparison between their previous neighborhood and the neighborhood they live in now. When considering their previous living experience, many were unhappy with the lack of community found in the conventional suburban neighborhood. Amanda and her spouse previously lived in a "very cookie-cutter neighborhood. She said, "The streets were all very straight, and the houses were all very similar. And it just had a kind of cold feeling, because there was no reason to get out of your house and see the neighbors. There was

really no place to take a walk, no parks nearby" (Hyde, 2015). She felt a lack of community. Amanda said,

> I really only knew our next-door neighbor, and I kind of knew the lady across the street. Everyone else, you know, they move in, they move out. And you only kind of wave. And it's sad–like, I wish I would have worked harder to get to know them. But everyone just sort of hides in their home. (Hyde, 2015)

When Danielle's children were younger, she enjoyed her previous neighborhood, "but then as the kids got older it was further out…I missed having a neighborhood" (Dalton, 2015). Andrea speculated that the type of houses in her previous neighborhood kept neighbors from meeting each other. She said,

> We lived next to a retired couple and another young couple, but that's the only people we knew were on either side, and that's kind of that, everybody kind of kept to themselves. There weren't a lot of kids playing in the street, you know like this at night. Maybe because it was kind of like us, not a lot of kids would fit in a two-bedroom, one-bath perhaps, so maybe that's the difference. (King & King, 2015)

Cameron attributed the lack of community to the design of the neighborhood. He said,

> It just didn't seem like the area was that conducive to getting out, cause there was no sidewalks…um and maybe just people…it's hard to say. Um I don't know. I mean I honestly don't know. We'd meet a few people here and there, but it was nothing like hey let's…you know we're going to come over and let's barbecue or do whatever else it might be. It was pretty much just a couple of people in our neighborhood that was it. (Taylor, 2015)

Residents also complained about the monotony of the neighborhood from their previous living experience. Jackie described her neighborhood. She said, "The houses were pretty typical. All front-loading garages, and you know, the standard lots. So it was pretty normal for what you see in Ankeny, but there was a lot of similarities in the houses, so about every 4th one was the same" (Broadhurst, 2015).

After Mary and Morgan moved back to the Ankeny area, they "moved into kind of a quick house" (Kirby & Kirby, 2015). Morgan described it as "just a two-story. My wife calls it a box, but it was a two-story box, Windsor-type home. It was just in the neighborhood amongst rows upon rows of houses" (Kirby & Kirby, 2015). Mary was not too keen on the house. They said,

> Mary: And then, Emma [Mary and Morgan's daughter] and I made it impossible for Morgan to stay in the house that we were in. We just did not like the house. We hated the house.
> Morgan: What was the name you called it?
> Mary: The box. We called it the box, because it had no character. It was just the box. And so we made Morgan move from the box to this [their house in Prairie Trail]. (Kirby & Kirby, 2015)

Morgan made a connection between the monotony of the conventional suburban neighborhood and the lack of community. He said, "That's the whole idea, we wanted to be able to know our neighbors versus living in a long row, and people come and go and they don't even know who you are. Because the last place I think we just knew our neighbor across the street and that was it" (Kirby & Kirby, 2015).

All participants drew from their childhood living experience, previous living experience, or both when making the decision to live in Prairie Trail or Glynn Village. The monotony of the conventional suburban neighborhood did not feel like the nostalgic childhood home they reminisced about. Their previous neighborhoods were lacking a sense of community. Keeping these things in mind, many chose their respective neighborhoods to find what was lacking in the former or remembered from their childhood, and through the process of building a life in their new neighborhoods, they, collectively, built social identities in Prairie Trail and Glynn Village.

CHAPTER 7

CONTINUING THE NARRATIVE OF SUBURBIA:

BELONGING AND INCLUSION THROUGH MORPHOLOGY

A theme that arose over and over was that of community. These participants were searching for the opportunity to create a sense of community. As documented in Gans' *The Levittowners*, building a sense of community was common during the era of the mid-century suburb, but during the past few decades of drastic morphological, social, and economic change in conventional suburban neighborhoods, the sense of community felt lost to the participants (Gans, 1967). People were living differently than they had during the mid-century suburban era. As Morgan said, "You know, they're on their deck, most of the decks have fences and stuff all the way around them" (Kirby & Kirby, 2015). Prairie Trail and Glynn Village were developed to combat the conventional suburb, and through differences in morphology the residents are beginning to feel a sense of belonging and inclusion. While participants tout these neighborhoods' excellence, the question of who can live there and who cannot remains. Regardless, these participants were in search of that lost sense of community, and they found it, in many ways, in both Prairie Trail and Glynn Village.

Morphology Affects the Strength of Community

Much of the interview conversations revolved around the descriptions of the houses and neighborhoods of the participants. What did these neighborhoods look like? How did they function? What features did they contain, and what features were

not included? Through these questions, the theme of morphology as a promoter of community appeared. As residents described their houses, garages, sidewalks, trails, parks, and open spaces, they began to tell stories about how good design decisions create place, which makes people care more strongly for that place and come to love it. Once a group of people loves a place, they share that love with one another, and create a community. Residents related the sense of community directly back to the parts and pieces of their neighborhoods, creating a social identity for themselves, their neighbors, and the places they lived. Thus the right kind of morphology can build a community and a social identity.

Architecture

When discussing the architecture of the residents' houses, there was overwhelming praise from most residents for extra storage and larger rooms than previous living experiences. The general layout of the house, the style of the house, and in particular, the functions of the kitchen were commented on. Adam and Kayla had toured multiple houses in conventional suburban neighborhoods before choosing theirs in Glynn Village. They found houses with

> The same layout, big oversized kitchen, back deck. They had like a mudroom. They had a foyer. They had the big kitchen, and then you'd walk upstairs and there'd be four bedrooms smashed in a row at the top of the stairs. And it felt like you'd be living on top of each other if you had any kids or anything else…I mean they're all just right there. (Adam Brown, 2015)

Kayla agreed, and they gravitated toward an open concept plan.

> Neither one of us liked them, because I mean, the main floor was beautiful. It was all great, living room, dining room, office space, and then you go upstairs and you walk up a tiny little hallway and there's six bedrooms up there, and it's just so uncomfortable and cramped. I just, didn't want that there; so we

just really gravitated to the open concept, walk out ranch type of feel. (Benson, 2015)

The open concept plan, popularized during the mid-century suburban housing boom, was a popular model with multiple residents in both neighborhoods. Max described his house as a semi-open concept. He stated,

It's a relatively semi-open floor plan; there is a hallway, it goes to the back of the home, where there's a, we have a kitchen and then our family room area and then as you go into the house, to the right are the steps, you go up and there are four bedrooms upstairs with two bathrooms. (Gabel, 2015)

Jackie, in Prairie Trail, commented on her open concept design as being "really overboard" (Broadhurst, 2015). She said, "We wanted to have everything right here and have, you know, the main bulk of the living space be completely open" (Broadhurst, 2015). Nancy attributed the open concept to be a good fit for entertaining during the holidays. She said, "Its open concept. We have Christmas and everything here and it fits everyone real nice" (Clague, 2015). After touring many conventional suburban homes, Adam and Kayla were convinced that the open concept was for them. Kayla said, "We just fell in love with the layout, because it was so efficiently laid out; meaning it's not like a huge house but the open concept, the walkout ranch aspect to it. You know they made really good use of the space that they have" (Benson, 2015).

While the open concept was a common choice for the interior of the house, the walkout ranch was a well-liked style for the exterior. Besides Adam and Kayla's walkout ranch house, Sarah and her spouse looked specifically for the style after moving from a four-story house in another state. Sarah said,

Our last house [had] so many levels. Laundry was on one level. The master was on another level. The kids' rooms were on a level. The kitchen was on

one level. It was a very unique and neat floor plan, but we were constantly running up and down stairs. (Hicks, 2015)

Ethan disliked stairs as well, and purposefully built a ranch style house to accommodate the lifestyle he wanted for himself and his dogs. He said,

> My friends have a two story and I just didn't want to keep going up and down stairs everyday. To me that's just wears you out; every single day up and down the stairs. So I liked the idea of the ranch plan. It was pretty open, and you can see–if you have people over—you can be in the kitchen cooking and see people in the family room and at the table. So I liked that idea of it. (Ferguson, 2015)

The kitchen was recognized as the most suitable space to bring the family together, to entertain friends and neighbors, and to create a sense of community within the house. Kayla felt that the kitchen is the "natural place for people to come together" (Benson, 2015). When asked what her favorite space is within her house, she gave examples of how she and her spouse use their kitchen, located on their open concept main floor. She said,

> The kitchen…just love that main floor. It's just so open. Like I could be reading a book on the couch and Adam could be making dinner, but we're not like so compartmentalized off that we can still like hold a conversation. [The kitchen], which is where we spend all of our time, even when we have people over. There's the girls are in the kitchen and the guys are on the deck, and that's just cause they're grilling out or doing something. Yeah I mean people just naturally congregate in kitchens anyways. (Benson, 2015)

Amanda designed her custom house to have the kitchen as the only living space on the main floor, directly inside the front entryway. Her living room and children's' play space is located in the basement. She recognized the kitchen to the main space that her family spends their time. She said, "And we do sit around the table – we color there, we play games there, we sit there while Mom's cooking. And it really is where we hang out" (Hyde, 2015). Jackie agreed that the kitchen island is am important

feature in her house. She said, "This ginormous island is like where we probably spend 80% of our time" (Broadhurst, 2015). The architecture of the house can foster a sense of community between family members and invited guests. While the spaces inside the home remain mostly private, the spaces outside the home become semi-private, semi-public, and public.

The front porch

Though not required, the front porch is a common feature in Prairie Trail, as the covenants suggests each house have one to build a sense of community. Residents agree that it does just that. Mary and Morgan were skeptical at first. The houses in Prairie Trail are set closer together on smaller lots than the conventional suburb. The houses seemed to lack privacy. Their first impression was negative, but

> The more we started looking at it the more we kind of liked the idea of having the close neighborhoods. Having porches in the front where your neighbors can see…I like the idea of you can walk down anyone's sidewalks and you can meet you neighbor and say hi or whatever. And that was the whole idea about the porches in the front, which appealed to us too. (Kirby & Kirby, 2015)

The semi-private front porch convinced them to build their house in Prairie Trail. Having lived in the neighborhood for several years now, Morgan stated, "The porches bring it together" (Kirby & Kirby, 2015). And Mary agreed, "Yeah they do. And you can see out there and sit out there. Like we were talking the other night when big storms come through and Don across the street…Ryan and Don are yelling across the park, 'Ay, did you see this, did you see this'" (Kirby & Kirby, 2015). For Mary and Morgan, front porches build community. They said, "So that's the fun part too. You can just hang out and people stop by or see somebody and say, 'hey,

wait, I need to tell you something'! Or you sit there and people walk by with their dogs and come up on the porch and talk to you" (Kirby & Kirby, 2015).

While front porches are not a design requirement of Glynn Village, many of the houses have them. Cameron's house has a front porch, but it is small and not very functional. He said,

> They make the front porches on some of those so shallow it's even hard to get chairs and when I go around it you literally have to be like okay…make sure you're not doing anything silly and fall off the edge into the flower garden…kind of thing, because there's not a lot of room behind it. (Taylor, 2015)

Some of his neighbors have "amazingly deep porches," and he admires their ability to function as a community builder as he interacts with neighbors while watching his children play in the front yard (Taylor, 2015). While Cameron and his spouse didn't design their house, he says that, in hindsight, he would

> Make [the porch] a little bit deeper. It just seems like if they added an extra foot to it even would make it that much nicer and probably even more than that would be even better, but it seems like a…almost one of those silly things that they should have thought about a little bit more. (Taylor, 2015)

Ethan, in Prairie Trail, on the other hand, purposefully redesigned the floor plan of his house to make the front porch eight feet deeper. He said,

> I just like the idea of everybody having a front porch. One of things I actually did with this [house] was add on an extra like 8 feet to the porch, so you could actually put a chair out there and sit. So you could actually sit out and there and enjoy the porch instead of not being able to enjoy it. So I love the front porch. (Ferguson, 2015)

Dorothy and Sam, also in Prairie Trail, love their front porch. As retirees, they enjoyed sitting on their porch and watching the activity of the neighborhood around them. Dorothy said,

> It's nice to sit on our front porch and look at the park. Everybody says, "Why did you want to move across from the park? It's noisy. Its nothing but little kids." I sit out there in that swing. We have wonderful neighbors. We're like grandma and grandpa, and I love it! (Scott & Scott, 2015)

A testament to the visibility front porches provides within a neighborhood is Jackie's recognition of Dorothy and Sam enjoying their own porch. Jackie said, "[They are] the grandma and grandpa of the neighborhood. Its good to know, because you know they're sitting on the porch kind of just watching the kids play and looking out for them" (Broadhurst, 2015). The semi-private front porch creates visibility and gives neighbors an opportunity to interact due to the close proximity of the houses and the inclusion of sidewalks. The semi-public spaces within the neighborhood build on this growing sense of community by an appearance of cohesion and common identity through the design of the house and neighborhood.

The garage, alley, and driveway

Each of the neighborhood covenants presents ideas and regulations about the appearance the houses in the neighborhood can have. The garage and driveway are common features of every house in a conventional suburban neighborhood. These semi-public spaces became an opportunity to create an appearance of cohesion and common identity through design. Notably the alley is not a common conventional suburban feature, but it is one of the main urban design strategies used throughout Prairie Trail and in one small section of Glynn Village.

When Mary and Morgan first toured the neighborhood, there were a lot of open lots and not very many houses. Morgan said, "So when we first got here there wasn't a lot going on, and so actually we never even looked at the neighborhood because we didn't like the idea of the rear entry. The back alleys and stuff" (Kirby &

Kirby, 2015). While Amanda initially liked the idea of the alley-load house, she found it "hard to find a plan for" (Hyde, 2015). After living in the neighborhood for several years, Jackie's kids "still call [the garage door] the front door. They can't get the fact that the front door is on the opposite side of the garage" (Broadhurst, 2015).

While the alley is so uncommon in suburban neighborhoods around the Des Moines area, many residents came to love the alley as a way to separate the façade of the house and the garage. Adam and Kayla were the only interviewed residents in Glynn Village with an alley-load house. Adam said,

> We've never been a fan of the homes that like—you look at the house and there's like four garages and that's like the front of the house. What I love about the front is you don't see the garage. So many houses you drive by, all you see is the garage is three-quarters the front of the house. Mine you don't. You see what looks like a very small quaint house. (Adam Brown, 2015)

Kayla agreed, "So that was a huge benefit to us and we have a private alley that we drive to get to our garage" (Benson, 2015). Alley-load garages can work on many house sizes. In Prairie Trail, Amanda's 6400 square foot house was an alley-load house. She said,

> I like the alleyway. I like that my house is just pretty in the front. I feel like, you know what, the garage is not the pretty part. You could get a pretty garage, I guess, but people don't get pretty garages… The front should be the pretty part. That's where people enter, and so I like the look, for sure. (Hyde, 2015)

Morgan and his spouse were initially put off by the alley-load houses, but decided the appearance of the house was more important than having a garage off the street. Morgan said,

> So the first thing you see is the front of the house. That's part of it. That was part of the whole idea. Which was attractive. Some places the garages are clear in the back because they have a back alleyway. This street right over

here everything has the back alleyway so you don't have any front approach in so they had to mix them both. (Kirby & Kirby, 2015)

Even if the garage is front-loading, the covenants in Prairie trail requires that "it has to be 16ft back from front side of the house" (Kirby & Kirby, 2015). Overall the alley-load garages seem to foster a sense of community. Amanda stated,

> I know all the people who live in my alley, like, because there's really only, you know, like a single lane between our driveways. I know them by name, we bring cookies to each other. We, you know, watch each other's kids. Our kids see the other kids out and they go play, so I think it actually fosters that neighborhood idea. And I feel like – so, you know, I share basically a driveway with Jennifer behind me, and I can call her and be like, "I'm a little lonely today, can we just talk?" or "I had a fight with my husband," or "Hey, what was that recipe of brownies you brought over?" And, you know, just like we have like a real relationship because we share an alley. (Hyde, 2015)

With the exception of Adam and Kayla, large front-load garages were more popular in Glynn Village, where there is not a regulation about the placement of the garage on the property. Hilary and her spouse liked the fact that most houses in Glynn Village have three garages, unlike the conventional suburban neighborhood on the east coast that they moved from. She said, "It had a one-car garage, which a lot of the houses out there do. I need to have a two-car garage was kind of a… Nobody parks their car in a garage out there. It's all on your driveway and you just keep your stuff in the garage" (Smith, 2015). Cameron felt similarly about the suburban neighborhood he and his spouse had previously lived in. He said,

> The old one was a two-car attached garage. One of the big things we were looking for at the new house was you never realize how much stuff you have. And I was like a two-car garage would be great, and then we started realizing, especially with kids, two-car garage doesn't even cut it. And I actually had to build an eight by eight storage shed behind the garage in order to fit half the stuff that we had. (Taylor, 2015)

The placement of the garage on the property and the urban design feature of an alley, in Prairie Trail, seems to be more connected to the idea of building community and a social identity than the front-facing three-car garages of Glynn Village.

The yard and sidewalk

Critics state that the semi-public suburban feature of the front yard and the public suburban features of the sidewalk have become places that do not foster community building. Feedback from residents in Prairie Trail and Glynn Village dispute that claim; many found the semi-public and public qualities of their neighborhoods to be great places to meet and interact with their neighbors, forming common bonds and a social identity. Residents from both neighborhoods commented on the inability to accomplish a walk in under an hour, as stopping and talking happens often due to the number of people outside on the sidewalks, recreational trails, and in their yards. Andrea said,

> We can't just walk down to the mailbox and come back, because we end up talking to five or six different people and a five-minute trip turns into a half hour. And that's exciting! It's fun just to catch up with everybody and see what's happening. I really like the feel of the neighborhood. (King & King, 2015)

Cameron and Morgan mentioned the reason they left their previous conventional suburban neighborhoods was the lack of interaction with their neighbors. Morgan said, "Other places we've been just row upon row and nobody really knows each other and this has been different. We know all the neighbors and that's the way we like it" (Kirby & Kirby, 2015).

Danielle claimed that neighborhoods can still be close without having amenities such as the nearby parks and schools, but sidewalks are a must (Dalton,

2015). Coming from a rural clustered suburban development without sidewalks, the fact that Prairie Trail had both sidewalks and recreational trails drew her in. While Cameron's previous neighborhood wasn't "conducive to getting out cause there was no sidewalks," he finds it "hard to actually go on a walk sometimes cause you're walking around and you end up talking to people as you walk along and all of the sudden you're 20—30 minute walk turned into an hour endeavor" (Taylor, 2015). Both neighborhoods also contain recreational walking and biking trails. Cameron thinks the trails are a positive asset to the neighborhood. He said, "I knew that there were walking paths going through the grass area [the prairie], which I really like it because it gives me all kinds of walking trails. I can take my kids out" (Taylor, 2015). Sarah saw an obvious connection between trails and community. She said, "I think trails help with [building community]. Maybe you get that from sidewalks, but you also have to provide the areas and the space" (Hicks, 2015). As an avid bicyclist, Morgan has four or five trails leading around and out of Prairie Trail, and he believes [the trails are] what kind of drew us all together as a neighborhood" (Kirby & Kirby, 2015).

Another condition found in both neighborhoods is the close proximity of the houses, resulting in smaller front and back yards. While most feedback was positive, Max stated he "liked and disliked at the same time the closeness of the homes" (Gabel, 2015). Nancy believes the close proximity of the houses allows for parents to keep track of their and other people's kids. She said,

> Everyone just looks out for each other. I mean they do. Our dog ran out the front door the other day and ran down the street, and the neighbor grabbed him right away. Just different things. And if I saw some kids crawling on the transformer the other day, and they weren't even my kids, so I just said, "Hey,

lets not do that." We all just watch over everybody. There are enough eyes and everything around that everybody kind of watches out for everybody else. (Clague, 2015)

When asked why he felt the sense of community was stronger in Prairie Trail, Jordan said, "I am not sure why it's different, I think maybe just, you do see people closer, closer together, you know physically their houses" (King & King, 2015).

The size of the yard shrinks as the proximity of the houses gets closer. Of all the features in this section, the size of the yard brought the most mixed feedback. As a realtor in Prairie Trail, Jackie found many of her male clients were concerned about losing a sense of privacy with a smaller yard. She said, "Most women buyers want to be here, and their husbands maybe not as much because they're looking for more space in the yard; just a little bit more you know personal space I think" (Broadhurst, 2015). She elaborated on this thought by stating,

> The lots are a little bit smaller, so some of the houses are closer together and you don't have the typical yard that, you know, with the suburban homes. You have the big back yard; and your front yard is all concrete, so I think that's one of the turnoffs for a lot of what I see from the men buyers. It's interesting that all the women want to be here, because they're the ones raising the kids and want to be where the action is and their kids can have their friends and so the husbands are the ones that seem to go back and forth to work and just want to have that privacy. (Broadhurst, 2015)

Others felt a different sentiment. Jordan felt the neighborhood provided a slew of urban amenities while retaining the ability to have a yard. He said,

> Having the downtown feel of it, I mean not the noise, but having all of the amenities of an urban space but still having a bit of a yard if you'd like it. A little quieter and some space to spread out and so yes bike trails, and just the ability to get outside and again still have those amenities so…

Ethan liked the feel of the neighborhood and the ability to get "to know the neighbors" and "to see people in their yards and doing stuff" (Ferguson, 2015). He

said, "And its fun to see people actually in their yards and things" (Ferguson, 2015).

Andrea acknowledged the pros and cons to the close proximity and the smaller

yards. She said,

> They are very close together, and that's not for everybody for sure, but it
> seems to work for us. We feel like, again, our lot is pretty deep so I don't mind
> it. It's kind of nice, now that we got to know them [their neighbors] right over
> there really well. We can…it's just right over there. They usually have a
> basketball hoop out, and we'll play with them for a while. He and Abigail
> [Andrea's daughter] I know are pretty similar age-wise. So yeah, I don't mind
> it and it's pretty nice to be able to just walk over there and just strike up a
> conversation. (King & King, 2015)

Despite the divided feedback, everyone admitted the many opportunities to get to

know their neighbors through the design features of the sidewalk and yard.

Open space and parks

Both neighborhoods have various kinds of public space. Both contain

recreational trails, while Prairie Trails also holds two parks with a third being

developed now. Glynn Village also has a grassy plot on the edge of one of the

prairie sections that acts as a play space. Many state that these types of public

places are vital for community interaction, and residents agree. The parks and open

spaces provide ample opportunities for kids to get out and be active. This, in turn,

provides opportunity for older residents to watch the activity. Jacob stated, "You see

people and families in the park all the time. And that is to me very pleasing I hope

that doesn't change. We did see a lot of individual families coming and using this

play area" (Hacket & Hacket, 2015).

The open spaces and parks provide a place for children to be active and get

to know neighbors that are their own age. Nancy, her spouse, and their four children

moved from a rural location, which had a lot of open space for her children "to roam or run" (Clague, 2015). Thus the fact that Prairie Trail had two parks within walking distance of most houses was a great asset to Nancy and her family. She said,

> Here my kids are outside all day, everyday. Even though our yard isn't that big, there is a lot of green space normally between houses and this circle area and the alley is the kickball field. I mean everyday after school there is baseball. There are tennis balls out in the grass right now. That's what they do all day, everyday. And that's been really good. They get to know all the other kids. There are other kids all in this alley area, and that's where they all meet after school. So that's been pretty cool. (Clague, 2015)

Amanda made a connection between the parks and open spaces and community building. She said,

> That's one of the lovely things about just the big open spaces–that they can go play at the park, and they're still having that community idea because they're with their neighbors. And a lot of times, we'll head to the park and we ring the doorbell of the neighbor's house, and say, "Do you want to go to the park with us?" And we just all go to the park together, and I'll take the other kids with me, or, like, if it's one of my neighbors that I know and they want to do that too, that's fine with me as well. (Hyde, 2015)

While the parks are providing a space for the neighborhood children to meet each other and be active, the older residents in Prairie Trail are watching from their front porches. Mary and Morgan, empty nesters, carried out a side dialog about the park across the street from their house during the interview. They said,

> Morgan: To me, [the park] drew me here. That's why I wanted to be here on the corner and the park across us so I could watch activity. Like I say anytime you go out there, there are kids running around and activity going on. That's what I wanted. That's what drew me here. We could have picked anywhere around here, but we wanted to be, to me because of the park. Which kind of surprised you.
> Mary: It did kind of surprise me.
> Morgan: I told you why, and that's what I always went back to; was that little park. (Kirby & Kirby, 2015)

Morgan elaborated more on what drew him to be located next to the park.

> Being around a park. You can probably see out there…there is kids all the time playing out there. We got kids here, kids over there. All the kids run up to Mary and call her grandma. That's what we like…just wanted to have the neighborhood feel. It's cool for us, because our neighborhood is right here, like this, we have a park in the middle, and once the last house got built, then it was completed, and it's been great. I mean there is houses around us but our little area is right here. (Kirby & Kirby, 2015)

Dorothy and Sam, also empty nesters, chose to locate their house across the street from the park as well. Dorothy simply explained, "I said who wants quiet, you know? We're quiet when we come in here [the house]. Outside its always fun" (Scott & Scott, 2015).

Park space doesn't exist in Glynn Village, but Adam wasn't concerned. He mentioned the close proximity to Centennial Park, the largest park in Waukee, and the face that none of his friends lived near such a great asset. He described Centennial Park,

> But if I look northeast, I can see all of Centennial Park, which is like a 20 acre beautiful park with a golf course, children, families, softball fields, baseball fields, tennis courts. They shoot fireworks off over my house almost basically every Fourth of July. So you get a lovely view there. I have access to all those amenities, all that green space, which I love. (Adam Brown, 2015)

He explained his lack of concern about having dedicated park space in Glynn Village.

> What do we need green space for? We're right next to the biggest park in the city. If you want to go walk and play disc golf…you want to go take our niece and nephew to play, we've got three of the biggest play sets in the city right there. I mean what do you…when we go for walks, I don't go in my backyard. We walk through the park. (Adam Brown, 2015)

Parks and open spaces in the neighborhoods become gathering places for residents, allowing for community building and interaction for people of all ages.

Prairie

Much of this section on morphology has explained the community identity of Prairie Trail. Glynn Village is advertised as a conservation community, but on closer inspection, many features in the neighborhood are similar to those of the conventional suburban neighborhood. Despite this fact, there is one feature that stands out in Glynn Village: the tall grass prairie. As explained in chapter six, Glynn Village contains 134 acres of tall grass prairie land. The prairie acts as a buffer between neighbors providing a sense of privacy, houses the recreation trails, and creates a visual identity for the neighborhood. The sense of privacy was important to residents, as it was perceived to increase the close proximity of the houses. Adam stated,

> A lot of my neighbors don't have someone else looking directly in their back deck...seeing what they're grilling and can look into their kitchen seeing what they're eating. They have prairie grass now. They can see their other neighbors visually, but it's not one on top of the other. (Adam Brown, 2015)

When searching for a house with their realtor, Hilary and her spouse saw the neighborhood as distinct from the other conventional suburban neighborhoods in the area. When asked what made Glynn Village seem different, she replied, "The fact that like even though there's a house behind us, it's not. You know, our property lines don't match up and there is all this big green space and really nice trails" (Smith, 2015). Cameron felt the prairie was visually appealing. He also had the impression that Glynn Village was different when searching for a house with his realtor. He said,

> It also kind of gives you that buffer between your back neighbors. We were looking at another house in West Des Moines, and it was in a nice neighborhood but neighbors fence lines are right on...right next to one

another…I mean its like a shared fence in the back. So I like how a lot of the houses have that, you know, 20, 30 yard buffer sometimes in between. (Taylor, 2015)

Many of the prairie strips, such as the one behind Cameron's house, have recreational trails running through them. Besides acting as a buffer, Cameron elaborated, "It offers some recreation to it as well and then it gives you that…a little bit of feeling of space. Now granted you have people on your left and right but at least out the back you're not looking in somebody's kitchen window basically. So I kind of like that" (Taylor, 2015). More was stated about the prairie acting as a privacy buffer than its original intention of being a storm water retention strategy.

While the majority of the interview participants found the prairie to be an asset, comments were made about residents in the neighborhood who did not respect the prairie behind their backyard lot line. Multiple residents mentioned that some in the neighborhood were tearing the prairie out of their backyard and sodding the land. This was very frustrating to Sarah and others. She said,

> I guess that was really frustrating to a lot of people who like the prairie because, it, you know, it was just kind of like, I don't know, to me it was kind of like they were taking away part of yard or part of our, you know, part of our backyard or something like that just because it was, to me, it was everybody's land. (Hicks, 2015)

Others such as Max weren't sure what to think about the prairie, as it is not a common suburban feature. He said, "So having that buffer there [the prairie], but I wasn't really quite sure what that meant in terms of maintenance and upkeep and some things that they do such burning prairie, or mowing down, and all that" (Gabel, 2015).

While misunderstanding of the intent to include the tall grass prairie into the neighborhood development existed, a couple residents described their intense pride for the prairie and the visual identity it gave the neighborhood. Regina couldn't understand why others in the neighborhood wanted to replace the prairie with sod. She said,

> I was walking the dog one day last fall or last summer, and I went back in there [the prairie] and I was like, "Oh yeah, this is what it's supposed to be like." I mean I got teary-eyed just walking through there. It was just gorgeous. People just don't get it. Everybody's just so used to mowing things down, you know? They think that it's not a good yard if it's not mowed. You know what I mean? (Hacket & Hacket, 2015)

As an elected official in Waukee, Sarah understood the intent behind the placement of the prairie, as it goes along with initiatives put into place by the Waukee City Plan. This, paired with the fact that she was a landscape photographer, made her a great proponent for the tall grass prairie. She stated,

> I didn't know that I would like it as much as I do and be as proud of it, I guess, as I am. And how do I put this? I get very frustrated when people don't get it or appreciate it. I've had people make comments about, "Why don't they just mow the weeds down and sod it? It would look so much prettier." And I'm like, "No but its prairie. Its not weeds." Being here five and a half years, I've seen it change, and you see it change from spring to fall and its beautiful, and the different things that happen at different times. That's what's amazing! And like photography, I mean, it's beautiful! Oh its amazing! I mean there's just different, different. There's always different things, different years, different things pop up, and its just unique. Its different, I never thought I would be as—I guess I don't know how to explain it—as much of a proponent as I am of it. (Hicks, 2015)

Each part of the morphology within these neighborhoods, from the front porch to the alleys to the parks and open spaces, plays an important role in the sense of belonging and inclusion the residents feel.

CHAPTER 8

CONTINUING THE NARRATIVE OF SUBURBIA:

BUILDING A SOCIAL IDENTITY

Residents in Prairie Trail and Glynn Village felt inclusion. While they commented on the strong sense of community within the neighborhoods, the elephant in the room became the people that do not live in the neighborhood; those that are excluded for a variety of reasons. This unspoken sense of exclusion continues a trend that developed during the construction of the first conventional suburbs. This trend of exclusion remains, but technology has changed much since the first conventional suburbs of Levittown. Residents felt a sense of community not only through the morphology of their neighborhoods but also through the neighborhood Facebook pages. Residents also commented on the shift in priorities for convenience and distinctiveness. These qualities of inclusion, exclusion, the use of social media, and shifting perceptions points to the residents of Prairie Trail and Glynn Village building their social identities as neighborhoods.

Inclusion and Exclusion

Suburban history is rife with issues of inclusion and exclusion. Prairie Trail and Glynn Village are not different. The main limitation of this study, as stated in the introduction of the paper, is that the majority of participants were white, middle to upper class people. Diversity was scarce, and when specifically asked to describe the diversity within the neighborhoods participants couldn't. While restrictive to the study, this limitation can also be perceived as a continuing trend of segregation in

suburban neighborhoods through factors such as cost to buy a house and the restrictive covenants of the neighborhoods. While these neighborhoods lack in diversity, the residents that live there believe, wholeheartedly, that they have been included into the community, and many wished to live in a place where they knew their neighbors shared the same lifestyle and goals. This issue of inclusion and exclusion is complex, and the following paragraphs will give insight into the thoughts of the residents.

The residents of Prairie Trail and Glynn Village held perceptions about the demographics of their neighbors. Cameron acknowledged that the lack of community in his previous neighborhood was attributed to the demographics. He said, "Its probably demographic issues, and the ability for people to get out and intermingle a little bit more" (Taylor, 2015). He elaborated,

> I like to think part of the reason that Glynn Village is such a close community is not only because of the ability for people to get out and that they're all in the same demographic…that's probably one of the things to is there was such a wide demographic in my old neighborhood. There were a lot of older couples. Um so there's, you know, how much are we going to have in common per se. (Taylor, 2015)

This perception that similarity in age leads to similarity in lifestyles and goals was common. As a realtor in the neighborhood, Jackie admitted her surprise in older people wanting to live in Prairie Trail. She admitted, "I was surprised at, you know, the number of people, from young to old. They kind of like the idea of having, you know, more variety in ages instead of being in a retirement community" (Broadhurst, 2015). Sarah acknowledged the range of ages. She stated, "Its all-encompassing. It's the 20-something to grandparents. I mean, its everybody melding together. I mean, that's the cool part of it" (Hicks, 2015). She said older residents were moving

into Glynn Village to take advantage of the recreational trails, the pool at the community center, and the smaller alley-load houses to downsize and be near to grandchildren (Hicks, 2015).

Residents also commented on the amount of children in both neighborhoods. When asked how many residents had children, Jordan stated, "Almost everyone around here. I'd say 99% has kids. There's a couple retired folks here, but yeah, a lot of the young kids around Annabelle's [Jordan's daughter] age" (King & King, 2015). It was important to Nancy that her children have a lot of neighbor children to make friends with. She said,

> Our daughter who just turned three is the youngest. There is this girl right back here on the corner that is pregnant right now. I would say it goes, the second youngest is probably five, I would say. And my oldest is 15. There's a big variety. And over by our new house, where we are building, there are a lot younger families. So they don't have the older kids, but they have the littler ones, so my daughter will have some friends to play with. And then down the street, they have boys that are roughly my three boys' ages. So there's all sorts of kids. (Clague, 2015)

Ethan remarked on the "good mix" of ages on his block (Ferguson, 2015). He stated, "I think there are some in their thirties… There's some that are in their 50s on this block too and then their 40s. So you've got pretty good range of ages just right here" (Ferguson, 2015). For the demographic of income, every response was middle to upper class.

All interview participants felt their neighborhood was inclusive, and that they were welcomed with open arms. There was a strong sense of belonging and that their neighbors shared similar lifestyles and goals. When asked to define the word community, Dorothy and Sam simply stated, "Well it's a group of people that live

together work together…share the same likes and dislikes…share the same views same lifestyle" (Scott & Scott, 2015). Amanda liked the idea of different types of people coming together for one purpose. She said,

> I think it's [community] a group of people coming together to support each other; and by support, meaning be friends with and kind of have a common life with. And so I think you can have people of every area of life, like, you can have a newly married couple and a retired couple, and just people from different social aspects, people from different religions, and they can all be together to support each other. (Hyde, 2015)

Jackie and Sarah both felt like they were a part of something bigger by creating a strong community within their respective neighborhoods. They felt "strongly that its [community] important. It's an important piece of what we have here and why we chose this neighborhood" (Hicks, 2015). Jackie stated, "People in Prairie Trail just have more of a desire to be a part of something bigger and not just be in their own space. I think a lot of people want that neighborhood feel and want to be part of a, you know, the group and not just be on their own" (Broadhurst, 2015).

Residents also stated they felt a strong sense of belonging within the neighborhoods. Jordan likened the feeling of belonging to what he saw on the television show *Desperate Housewives*. He stated,

> And we really wanted to have a feel of *Desperate Housewives* that we saw on TV and stuff. We were like, everyone's getting together and stuff in the neighborhood, and we were like we want to have something like that, and you know, where I could reach out the window and, "Hey do you have some sugar I could borrow?" Stuff like that. (King & King, 2015)

He elaborated, "It's kind of like a second family. You know, like a family outside of your internal family, and almost like cousins and brothers. And it's just a sense of belonging like you do have in your family, which we do have here, which I like" (King

& King, 2015). Dorothy and Sam talked about their morning walking routine. They said,

> Dorothy: Every single morning we can go [walking at the Aquatic Center] from nine-thirty til quarter-to-twelve because they don't open til 12, and I love that I can do that.
> Sam: Well that keeps us old people active.
> Dorothy: It does, and I get to go with the neighbors and its fun! They always include me. Its fun, so I feel good. (Scott & Scott, 2015)

They also discussed the fact that though surrounded by younger families with children, they felt a sense of belonging and welcome from their neighborhoods.

> Sam: Well the difference is we're older. We're 71 years old. The New Urbanist community of today is young small kids. I have no problem with it. It's just we sometimes don't fit in, but…
> Dorothy: They make us very comfortable.
> Sam: They make us fit in and make us feel comfortable, so we have no problem with it. (Scott & Scott, 2015)

In Glynn Village, Jacob and Regina were thinking about the future for their youngest son who had a disability and lived in his own apartment in his parent's basement. They wanted him to feel comfortable in the neighborhood after they were gone. Jacob said, "We hoped he could feel like he was a real part whether we were here or not" (Hacket & Hacket, 2015). As residents in a conservation development, they also felt that they shared a common goal with their neighbors. Regina said, "But there are groups of people who, by some reason, are gathered and hopefully working towards common goals that would benefit others for a good life. That's pretty simplistic, but being mindful of your environment and other people" (Hacket & Hacket, 2015).

While residents did not say the word exclusion, explicitly, based on certain factors within the neighborhood, it can be implied that these neighborhoods exclude people. The factors that play the biggest role in excluding people from the

neighborhood are the covenants and the cost to purchase a house. The initial cost to buy a house in these neighborhoods ranges from $220,000 to over one million dollars (Hyde, 2015). This factor alone excludes many in the lower, and even, middles classes from purchasing a house. As Amanda said, "I don't know how I would classify people, but definitely more affluent and education-wise probably higher than average only because of the job required to buy a house in this price range" (Hyde, 2015). Some interview participants talked of their struggles to validate the extra cost. Hilary acknowledged that the house she and her spouse built was "more expensive than [they] wanted to spend," but justified the extra cost by considering the neighborhood amenities and location (Smith, 2015). Spending within their budget during the construction of their house was important to Andrea and Jordan. Andrea said,

> So unless you have an unlimited budget, you either have to have a bigger house with not so great finishes or a smaller house with higher end finishes. So we chose to choose the more compact for us, smaller house that we use every room, there's no formal dining room and have high quality, long lasting finishes. (King & King, 2015)

Jackie described her confusion over the idea of mixed property values in Prairie Trail. For example, her house was assessed at approximately $400,000, while her next-door neighbor's house was assessed at over one million dollars. She said,

> It stumps me; the mixed property values, I mean. I think it's good because it brings a variety of you know of people to the neighborhood. That's the biggest benefit to me. You have support for the neighborhood from maybe the upper levels that you wouldn't have in a neighborhood that had, you know, more lower value houses. The value thing is still getting me. (Broadhurst, 2015)

Ethan expressed concern over others being able to afford the neighborhood. He stated, "I don't know. I just think some of the home prices…it's going to be hard to get other families in here with the increase in the cost of homes" (Ferguson, 2015).

The neighborhood covenants also played an exclusionary role, mostly through the regulated minimum size of each house and the particular architectural detail required for the exterior. These things make the cost of a house higher and more unachievable for those in the lower income classes. Jackie explained the basics of the architectural style covenant in Prairie Trail. She stated,

> There's, you know, all the different styles in the neighborhoods and basically per block you can only have—I can't even remember the number but—a certain amount of Arts and Crafts, a certain amount of Colonials, a certain amount of the Tudor style. So they are trying to keep it so that there's not too many of the same look on a certain block. I think that's important to kind of give a mix of styles in the neighborhood and not get too much of the same throughout. So it's kind of nice that way. (Broadhurst, 2015)

Amanda attributed the sense of community to the neighborhood covenants. She said,

> And I think actually that the rules that put on this neighborhood help to foster that because the average person doesn't just move in here. Maybe they do if the house is for sale for resale, but if you're building a home it's quite the process to move in, and because of that you really get to know: Why am I moving here? Why am I choosing this? I could build any kind of house I want down the street – why do I want to listen to all these rules and spend money on landscaping just because the neighborhood wants me to? That kind of thing. So I'm hoping this idea, because it's strong right now, continues. (Hyde, 2015)

The neighborhood covenants tend to attract a certain kind of person. As Amanda stated above, they usually are not the "average person," but someone who can afford a more extravagant home (Hyde, 2015).

When asked about diversity in the neighborhood, most residents did not have a response. Having previously lived in a diverse community in Central Iowa, Nancy stated, "I would say that my kids go to school with maybe a couple African American kids and these kids are Hispanic who live down the street. So there's some [diversity]. Its just not…I mean in Fort Dodge, oh my gosh, it was probably a third of their class" (Clague, 2015). She also commented that in her children's previous school system, there were "a lot of the kids…on free and reduced lunch. And then we moved here, and there's not the diversity race-wise or economically" (Clague, 2015). Danielle commented on the lack of diversity in the neighborhood, "You know honestly, I think there might be a couple Hispanic, and I know there's one. I think that's it" (Dalton, 2015). She said, "I wish there was a little bit more diversity, and I don't really know what to do about that" (Clague, 2015). Ironically, Nancy struggled with the lack of diversity in Prairie Trail while expressing concern "about the apartments and townhomes and that sort of thing" that were being built near The District (Clague, 2015).

The residents in Prairie Trail and Glynn Village seem to contradict themselves. Most are excited about the prospect of suburban living with easy access to urban amenities, which will be discussed in more detail later in the chapter. While enthusiastic for a more urban living experience from the economic and civic spheres, residents want to live next to people who share their lifestyles. They are hesitant to discuss diversity, and most likely, more hesitant to live next to people who are different from themselves. Thus these neighborhoods cherry-pick the urban aspects they consider parallel to their lifestyle goals, such as trendy restaurants and retail

shops, while leaving social urban aspects, such as racial and economic diversity, in the city center. While residents in these neighborhoods openly acknowledged wanting to live next to their social peers, only a few recognized the privilege they held. Dorothy and Sam said,

> Sam: I think the world as a whole is getting…that's [the American Dream] getting more difficult to attain. The gap between the haves and the have-nots is growing wider and that American dream is becoming…
>
> Dorothy: They have to get a different American Dream. I mean it's not like ours. (Scott & Scott, 2015)

Emerging Outlets for Community

Both Prairie Trail and Glynn Village have Facebook pages, and a majority of the residents made a comment or more about the part that Facebook plays in their neighborhoods. This unexpected factor acts as an outlet for residents to create a sense of community. Jackie comments on the connection between the Prairie Trail Facebook page and building community. She said, "It's still a way for us to communicate without us having to be face to face, and so yeah I feel like that really brings everybody together" (Broadhurst, 2015). Residents use the Facebook page as a communication tool, posting ads, advice, safety warnings, upcoming events, and neighborhood issues. Residents even use their Facebook pages to meet their neighbors. Amanda emphasized the ability to meet people online that you might not run into around the neighborhood. She said, "It [the Facebook page] does allow us to communicate with neighbors that we may not know otherwise and get to kind of know them. And then you see them at the park, and you're like, 'Wait, I know you,' and then you can talk about stuff" (Hyde, 2015).

Many residents commented on the helpfulness of the Facebook pages in asking for and offering help to a neighbor. New neighbors ask for recommendations on local services, such as a "dentist or a pediatrician or a mechanic. And people always try to give advice" (Taylor, 2015). Cameron stated,

> You know, I need a babysitter on our Facebook page…'she's available, she's available, she's available.' You know its like everybody jumps in, and its just like you have almost everything you need there with…with help and advice or whatever else it might be. (Taylor, 2015)

Searching for an appropriate house in Prairie Trail for her mother to purchase, Amanda used a former connection she had made on the Facebook page. She said,

> And so on our Facebook page in our neighborhood, someone had said, 'Hey, we're about to list our home for sale,' and I said, 'My mom might be interested.' And that woman was…I got to know her, because…she had posted something about having baby food that her daughter didn't eat anymore, and I had a baby, you know, so it was like, 'I'll take your baby food.' And that's how I got to know her… (Hyde, 2015)

Over 2,400 people have liked the Prairie Trail Facebook page. Despite the huge number of followers, the posts offering help to others have not stopped. A particularly poignant story came from Mary. She said,

> We have one gal that I didn't even really know, and she had just built her home and was diagnosed with brain cancer and was gone. But you know we all kind of helped out the family as much we could. We sent some flowers…a couple went to visit her; you just kind of look out for each other. (Kirby & Kirby, 2015)

In addition to offering help, neighbors have also used the Facebook pages to post safety concerns. Reckless teenage drivers were a topic touched upon within both neighborhoods. Concerns about unsafe driving were posted on the Facebook pages and usually addressed as parents found out what their teenagers were doing. In Glynn Village

…there [was] a young kid that was, I mean, zipping through on a motorcycle, and it apparently happens during, kind of, midday when we were thinking parents aren't home. And it was addressed, apparently, where they…actually called the police to actually have them go to the house, and apparently dad's taking care of it cause he might not have even known it was happening. (Taylor, 2015)

In Prairie Trail, residents noticed a car acting suspiciously. With the help of a neighbor, Mary collected the license plate number and posted the sighting on Facebook. She said,

I was outside and this other kid walked by and I said what kind of car it that? I told him what was going on and so he walked over to the mailbox pretending like he was getting something and he gave me the license plate and I posted it on Facebook. (Kirby & Kirby, 2015)

Some wholeheartedly agree to the use of Facebook for this kind of issue. Andrea said, "And luckily…our good Facebook page has posted a couple of times if neighbors have seen a car driving around that looks a little suspicious or looking into windows" (King & King, 2015). Ethan seemed amused. He stated, "So you get people that will post stuff on Facebook like, 'hey if anybody has a kid or a teen in a white car—or this or that—tell them not to drive so fast or go around cars.' So that's kind of interesting" (Ferguson, 2015).

Residents also use the Facebook pages to vent concerns about neighborhood issues. In Glynn Village, residents were concerned about the rezoning of a nearby area to increase the density trifold. Sarah explains this issue is how the Facebook page got started in the first place. She said, "Everyone kind of came together. It turned into something that was incredible, and I think it actually brought, you know, this core group like really close" (Hicks, 2015). She also talked of her frustrations with long-time residents not comprehending the fact that the

neighborhood is a conservation development. She said, "We still have people that get on there [the Facebook page] and they're like 'it's a conservation community?' And you're like, 'how do you not know that?' Because it's such a huge part of it!" (Hicks, 2015). Other residents have expressed frustration over the posts that appear on the Facebook pages. Nancy stated, "Sometimes people will complain about things that I think are completely stupid. I just don't like the drama and the negativity" (Clague, 2015). Despite the criticism, support for the Facebook pages was overwhelmingly positive. Amanda stated,

> On that page [the Facebook page], people set up all sorts of thing…a neighborhood Easter egg hunt…a neighborhood children's Fourth of July parade where the kids make a parade and then we all have a brunch together at the park. And there are these great neighborhood activities that are so lost in our society that we really don't create a community together. We're living in Ankeny that's going to double in size in the next five years, but we have a community within that huge city. (Hyde, 2015)

The Facebook pages act as a funnel for all activity going on within the neighborhoods, creating a channel for the strengthening of community. As Mary said, "We know everything that is going on in here through the Facebook" (Hacket & Hacket, 2015).

CHAPTER 9

CONTINUING THE NARRATIVE OF SUBURBIA:

SHIFTING PERCEPTIONS

Much of the conventional suburban morphology evolved from perceptions held from conventional wisdom, ideas accepted as true with the facts to back up the claims. Issues such as separated land use, the convenience of a car, and having a distinct home created a morphology that led to a lack of pedestrian infrastructure, longer driving distances and commute times, and oversized houses. The morphology of Prairie Trail and Glynn Village is, in some ways, different from the conventional suburb, and residents reflected on the changes in ways that suggest a shift of commonly held perceptions.

Proximity to Commercial Amenities is Attractive Instead of a Nuisance

The conventional suburban subdivision, typically, lacks commercial land use or amenities. While this separation of land use was a popular way to develop subdivisions in the past, residents in Prairie Trail and Glynn Village find the nearby commercial districts useful, exciting, and attractive. Morgan stated, "We like doing things. We like getting out and about. The whole Ankeny, Des Moines area is just comfortable. It's attractive" (Hacket & Hacket, 2015). The commercial districts, The District and Kettlestone, easily accessed by both cars and pedestrians provide convenience to the residents. Nancy stated,

> Before I would have to drive ten or fifteen minutes to get to the grocery store, you know, so I would just have to go buy groceries for the whole week or two weeks at a time and just bring them home. And now my husband runs to HyVee probably three times a week just getting something I forgot or

whatever. Just the convenience of it with having the kids has made life so much easier. (Clague, 2015)

To Jackie, the general access to The District, the parks and amenities within Prairie Trail, and the other commercial areas around Prairie Trail was important. She stated, "It feels like it is being in close proximity to the various day to day things, you know, not only do you have a neighborhood feel but you have close access to your everyday activities" (Broadhurst, 2015). It also made her feel like she was a part of a community. She stated, "To me it's the community, being part of something bigger, and having access to everything, you know, that makes your day to day life easier" (Broadhurst, 2015).

As The District and Kettlestone are in various stages of construction, not all residents knew about the amenities the developments will contain in the future. Danielle was unsure what The District would ultimately contain, but was excited about the existing amenities. She stated,

> Across the street [SW State Street] they are going to try and get some shopping and restaurants and things like that, and just try to have it be, you know, easy access for us over there. We walk over to the restaurants, Jethros and now Fongs. And I didn't necessarily pick this neighborhood for that reason. I think it's a definite plus and I like all of that. (Dalton, 2015)

On the other hand, Adam and Kayla were eagerly awaiting the commercial development near Glynn Village to be completed. Kayla was drawn to Glynn Village, in part, because of the Kettlestone development. She stated, "I liked the position Glynn Village was in relation to the new developments, the developments to come, the interstate, just the ease and the convenience" (Benson, 2015). Adam stated, "I know how that trail system [from Glynn Village to Kettlestone] will all connect, and I have some inside knowledge on when it will connect, so it's fun" (Adam Brown,

2015). Andrea and Jordan were also drawn to Prairie Trail because of plans for the development of The District in the future. Andrea stated, "We just thought it was a neat idea, a cool concept, you know, having this planned community and then the district across the street with restaurants, and movie theatre eventually, amphitheater, and that kind of thing" (King & King, 2015). They voiced concern for the uncertainty about the completed District, but expressed excitement nonetheless. Andrea stated, "I think it's exciting to see the commerce building up, and I think that's what we've been waiting on. You know every time we see something breaking ground, we're like, 'oh what is it?'" (King & King, 2015).

Convenience of Car to Convenience of Walkability

As many residents, within Prairie Trail and Glynn Village, talked of the excitement of being near commercial amenities, they also discussed the ease of access to The District and Kettlestone. Many conventional suburban neighborhoods lack commercial land use and sidewalks. This made everyday tasks tiresome, and "it was a drive to get anywhere" (King & King, 2015). Andrea, from Prairie Trail, stated, "I get spoiled here. No way would I want to do that [drive]" (King & King, 2015). There seems to be a shift from the convenience of using a car to acquire everyday needs to the convenience of walking. While this shift exists, none of the participants work within walking distance of their jobs, and still require a car to commute. While most comments came from residents of Prairie Trail, residents in Glynn Village also commented on the ease of walkability within their neighborhood.

The ability to fulfill daily needs through walkability was popular; the concept of living "in a city within a city" in Prairie Trail (Kirby & Kirby, 2015). Morgan stated,

> You've got, like I said, the grocery store, the doctors, the dentists, the restaurants. Everything – the school, pool, everything you want in the city – is kind of like right here, and if you don't have to go very far or get in a car to do it then you know it's appealing down the road. I mean you just have to beep bop down over there. You can get on a bicycle if you want. That's appealing, at least to us anyway, down the road. There's everything that I need. As I get older, I don't have to run clear across to one side of the city or to the other side of the city to get to what I need. I don't have to go out of town, I don't have to go, I don't want to. (Kirby & Kirby, 2015)

While Prairie Trail is a suburban neighborhood, having access and being within "walking distance to those sort of urban amenities" was the main reason for some to choose the neighborhood (King & King, 2015). Jackie stated,

> Oh my gosh, this is just what we want! We want to be right in the middle of things and have the school right here and the pool and the restaurants and coffee and all that; within a walking distance as opposed to having to drive in for everything. (Broadhurst, 2015)

In particular, the ability to walk to The District, the developing commercial area in Prairie Trail, for an evening out on the town was a draw. Ethan stated, "You've got the entertainment district across the street; just all those activities…you can just walk to from your house. So it's kind of neat" (Ferguson, 2015).

While the ability to walk to nearby commercial areas was a prominent response, residents also commented, "it's really nice to be, you know, within walking distance of so many kind of family friendly things" (Smith, 2015). The thought of walking to the commercial area with his kids was appealing to Jordan, "You know the ability to, when my kids are older, just to say 'hey, let's go walk to the grocery store or to the movies,' as opposed to getting in our vehicles to go everywhere is exciting for me" (King & King, 2015). Others valued the opportunity for their kids to walk to the schools, such as Amanda, who stated,

And with a school in the neighborhood even and then the high school is within eyesight, kids can ride their bike or walk to school from kindergarten through high school, and actually through college because there's Simpson and actually then there's DMACC (Des Moines Area Community College). Right? So, everything is right here. (Hyde, 2015)

Amanda also connected the proximity of and walkability to the park as an opportunity to interact with her neighbors. She stated, "It's [the park] close enough to walk – you don't have to drive. And that's great – we walk to the park all the time and then you see your neighbors" (Hyde, 2015).

Walkability to amenities within the neighborhood cuts down on the driving time residents are required to do. Morgan talked about the difference between Prairie Trail and the neighborhood he lived in previously. He stated,

> You want all this stuff surrounding you so you have a neighborhood versus just living in a long stack of houses. You know, then you have to drive 15 miles one way or 15 miles that way to get to the doctor or grocery store, whatever. I'd just as soon have it all in one area. Comforting. (Kirby & Kirby, 2015)

Hilary and her spouse moved from a huge city on the east coast to Glynn Village, and she agreed, "We just hated…We just were spending our lives in a car. You know, I lived 12 miles from my job and it took me an hour to get…I mean it just was awful. So quality of life, you know, we wanted to move back to be…Just get out of our cars" (Smith, 2015). Sarah connected walkability to an increase in the population and popularity of Waukee. She stated,

> When people know that they're going to get a quality education for their kids and a good safe community…and you don't have a very long commute… What we're seeing is a ton of people moving back, kind of like us. We've lived other places in the country, and we want to raise our kids now, so we're coming back, which where its safe and [we] don't have traffic [and we] can get a good job. (Hicks, 2015)

Dorothy discussed walkability as an advantage for the resale of her home. She stated, "Other people that would buy this…you know, they're going to say, 'I have small children' cause I'm sure it's going to be a growing family that wants this house proximity to school. I mean you can with them there" (Scott & Scott, 2015).

Architectural Distinctiveness is Important to Some and Not to Others

Conventional suburbs are known for a cookie-cutter appearance, with each house resembling the house next door. While the collective attitude toward the nearby commercial developments and walkability was positive, the value of architectural distinctiveness within Prairie Trail and Glynn Village was held by some and not by others. One trait that most residents agreed on was the distinctiveness of their respective neighborhoods. Andrea and Jordan were drawn to Prairie Trail, because "the houses are all different. They're not sort of cookie cutter and that you know that was the design of this place. It was all very unique" (King & King, 2015). Sarah, in Glynn Village, agreed, "We liked the uniqueness of the neighborhood. We liked that it was different than just your regular…than every other neighborhood in the city" (Hicks, 2015). The neighborhood covenant of Prairie Trail is restrictive, regulating the style and architectural detail of each house. Danielle found comfort in this. She stated, "I like the neighborhood because all of the houses are different. Even though you have the four styles. They're all a little bit different on the outside" (Dalton, 2015). While she admitted architectural distinctiveness was required on the exterior, she still said, "I don't know how it's unique though" (Dalton, 2015).

While Danielle remained unsure of the distinctiveness of Prairie Trail, others wished to stand out from their neighbors. While living in Prairie Trail, Nancy and her

spouse were in the process of building a new home also in the neighborhood. She stated,

> I know that our new house is Arts and Crafts style… I don't really want it to look like the other houses around us that are Arts and Crafts. We have some copper on it. We tried to do a few details that other people didn't have since you are kind of restricted with the style and that kind of stuff. It kind of makes you think outside the box if you want yours to look different and stand out. (Clague, 2015)

Residents also discussed the idea of the custom home. Both Max and Sarah, each the second owner of their homes, stated that "no other home looked like [theirs] in the neighborhood" (Gabel, 2015). Each had been custom built by the builder with a floor plan that was not replicated anywhere else in Glynn Village. Max stated,

> I really like that, what makes it unique to me is the fact there is no other home that looks like this. There are a lot of other homes in that development that are what I would say cookie-cutter. They just kind of threw up that one design, and there's some that are right next to each other, and they're even the same color. Ours has little bit of…I want to say architectural flair on front of it. It's got a bunch of different false peaks and some different roof things. (Gabel, 2015)

Sarah felt that the people that live there, even if they aren't the people who designed or built it originally, could make a home unique. She stated, "I just think its unique in the way we…every home is unique in the way people decorate it. We do a lot of things ourselves, so we're constantly changing it" (Hicks, 2015). This statement points to the fact that uniqueness to these participants is in the decoration of the interior and not the architecture. Involved in the entire design process of her home, Amanda felt her nontraditional floor plan was truly unique. She stated,

> One of the things that's unique about this house that I've actually not seen in another house was we really wanted the kitchen to be that central focus part

of our main floor, so we don't have a living room on our main floor; we just have a huge kitchen with a window seat. And we don't have a kitchen table, we actually just have an island that can seat twelve, and none of the cabinet people or granite people have ever had a counter that big. You know, it was definitely unique, but we wanted that to be where we all were. So I think that's my favorite part of the house. It is…it's unique. (Hyde, 2015)

During the process of purchasing his custom house, Max found many of the options presented by the realtor in conventional suburban neighborhoods to be so similar he couldn't tell the difference. He stated, "We got to the point we couldn't tell the difference between them so really the ones that stuck out were the ones we looked at the following day [in Glynn Village], we looked at four different homes about that day, and the home we bought was the first one we looked at" (Gabel, 2015).

As owners of an alley-load home, Adam and Kayla recognized their house "might not be unique within [their] block," but claimed the house would be unique within the Waukee and Des Moines area real estate market (Adam Brown, 2015). Adam stated, "You know, I'm not as concerned with my home standing out. I think I care less about my home standing out from the block than I do from my home standing out from the market" (Adam Brown, 2015). Kayla added, "Comparing it to our peer's homes, even those that are getting built nowadays, it's just so different. And not that we were going for different when buying a house but I would say that that is a big differentiator" (Benson, 2015). Alley load houses are not common in Waukee or the greater Des Moines area, and so "everyone who comes to our home thinks it's so unique. But it's ironic. They walk in and say your house is so unique, but I couldn't remember your address so it was hard to find where you lived" (Adam Brown, 2015). Kayla added, "you would be surprised how many people get lost and don't know which house is ours cause a lot of the houses look the same. 'Where do I

park' is always the question or the text message we get" (Benson, 2015). The fundamental form of the alley-load houses is different than all others in the neighborhood. This changes the public-private relationship between that of the private use in the back and guests that enter the house at the front.

Despite the uniqueness asserted by custom and alley-load homeowners, many residents, in Prairie Trail and Glynn Village, felt their homes were not unique. Many of these residents did not have any design input on their house. The builder constructed and sold the house completely finished. This led to floor plans being built multiple times, mirrored to give a slightly different appearance. When asked how his house was unique, Cameron stated, "Maybe it's not. It's a very similar layout to a lot of people. I know even like our second neighbor over, they have the same house just a different front façades so it doesn't look identical on the outside but the layout is pretty similar" (Taylor, 2015). Builders also tweaked front façades to give different appearances to the houses. Cameron stated, "They do try to alter the façade to a degree…the roof line changes a little bit different. Ours has kind of more the…I guess you would call it almost like a Prairie Style" (Taylor, 2015).

Others bluntly affirmed their admiration for and their intent to build a house similar to that of their neighbors. Hilary's house, in Glynn Village, and the three next to it have the same floor plan with slightly different façades. She said,

> I mean we had seen the house right next door when it was for sale, and somebody had made an offer on it before we could get ours in, and it just so happened that that builder had this lot too. So, we were like, 'okay, well build us the same house.' And to us that was not a big deal, because we were in [a previous] neighborhood of 54 homes with only three home styles. (Smith, 2015)

Hilary and her spouse inquired about flipping the plan so as not to totally replicate their neighbor's house, "but for whatever reason, the lot elevation, whatever… I don't know. I don't know. I think he just didn't want to do it. It's fine. I was used to living in a house that looked exactly identical…" (Smith, 2015). Ethan also struggled to describe his house as unique. He stated, "Oh gosh, I don't know that it's really unique. It sits on the corner right next to the park…and having a fence around almost the entire property. That's probably the only way that's its really unique" (Ferguson, 2015). Dorothy and Sam valued function and maintenance over distinctiveness and used only "stock and standard materials" (Scott & Scott, 2015). Dorothy said,

> I don't know that it had anything that any of the other houses don't have. I really don't its always the color, and its always the cupboards that you pick out and how big you want this and how small you want that. You know, basically, there's nothing really I guess you could say is special or different here…pretty basic and basically easy to take care of. That's what I need. And we could fancy it up. I mean you could just go through this house, and you could put up all kinds of things and change it. You know you could really, because I've seen other houses that have done it, but this fits us at our age so we're fine. (Scott & Scott, 2015)

Most houses in the developments could be considered Neo-Historic, although houses in Prairie Trail are required to have more architectural detail than what would be seen in the conventional suburb. Residents felt this required distinction made their houses more unique than houses in other developments. Overall, most of the homeowners that claimed their home was distinctive were living in Prairie Trail. This could be attributable to the fact that the architectural covenants are more restrictive in Prairie Trail than Glynn Village.

CHAPTER 10

CONTINUING THE NARRATIVE OF SUBURBIA:

THE AMERICAN DREAM TODAY

The continued connection between the suburbs and the idea of the American Dream is apparent. *The New Yorker*, the *Washington Post*, MSNBC News, *Psychology Today*, *Slate*, *The Atlantic*, *Vanity Fair*, U.S. News, and *Smithsonian* have all published articles about the suburbs, homeownership, and the American Dream in the past decade (Brooks, 2004; Bump, 2015; Edwards, 2010; Francis, 2012; Gallagher, 2013; Kamp, 2009; Khimm, 2014; Leinberger, 2008; Misra, 2015; Putnam, 2013; Sandler, 2011; Semuels, 2015; Uchitelle, 2010). While the strength of the relationship between the two is clear, how people, specifically in Prairie Trail and Glynn Village, define the American Dream seems to have gone through a generational shift. Participants were asked to describe the American Dream of their parents and grandparents, which many responded was financial security. The American Dream as defined by Adams in 1931, before the rise of the conventional suburban neighborhood, was,

> That dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement…It is not a dream of motor cars and high wages merely, but a dream of social order in which each man and each woman shall be able to attain to the fullest stature of which they are innately capable, and be recognized by others for what they are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of birth or position. (Adams & Gallagher, 1931).

This definition took centuries to build and refine, but popular culture today suggests the American Dream is a house in the suburbs, two children, a car in the driveway,

and a dog; superficially the perfect life. In an editorial for *The New York Times* in 2004, David Brooks agreed. He said,

> The reality is that modern suburbia is merely the latest iteration of the American Dream. Far from being dull, artificial and spirituality vacuous, today's suburbs are the products of the same religious longings and the same deep tensions that produced the American identity from the start. (2004)

Could this shallow definition be the truth? Did the American Dream really change from the opportunity to achieve to how many square feet are in the master suite? Have Americans turned away from the ideals of their heritage to prioritize material things? While this study cannot possibly generalize how all Americans define the American Dream, it does give a sense of how nineteen individuals define the American Dream. This section is dedicated to the American Dream, the relationship of the American Dream to the suburbs, and asks the question: What is the American Dream today?

Defining the American Dream Today

One of the principal goals of the *Declaration of Independence*, the ideal of freedom still holds an important place in the minds of Americans in Prairie Trail and Glynn Village. According to Amanda, whose spouse was born in another country, this ideal is often taken for granted. She said, "The freedom that we have here is just so unappreciated, and just even the fact that we can know our neighbors and just be real people is a freedom" (Hyde, 2015). Jacob and Regina felt that freedom was the ability to live their lives as they pleased without interference from the government. They said,

> Jacob: To me it's a combination of people and the environment for a common goal. The goal in some communities is religious. The goal of some

communities is conservation. So a common goal with a group of people in a common environment.

Regina: Without being restricted by government rules that says you can only have this much work or you can only earn this much money or you can only live here. I think of the American dream as based on democracy and your work ethic and the love of the land and your God and your fellow man. (Hacket & Hacket, 2015)

Others expressed frustration about a misunderstanding of the role of the government. Jordan said, "I don't think we realize how lucky we are to have all the benefits we have, even though we complain everyday about the government stepping in with this or that, but I don't think we realize if we lived somewhere else what we'd have" (King & King, 2015). On the other hand, Sarah felt the services afforded by the government gave the individual a greater sense of freedom. She said,

> The American Dream, to me, is living in a safe community or living in a place where I'm provided with protection; whether its fire or police or things likes that, access to medical care because its through my job, the ability to work, or the ability to choose to do what I want and to live where I want and to elect who I want. (Hicks, 2015)

She was passionate about the ability to vote through Democracy—to choose the direction of the future. People who claimed the government took their individual freedom because their voice was not listened to frustrated her. She said, "I think so many people say that their voice isn't heard. Well you're not talking loud enough then, because every vote counts. Get involved! If you don't get involved and learn more and say more, then you can't really complain" (Hicks, 2015).

Other residents believed that freedom presented them with the opportunity to achieve anything. Andrea described her American Dream succinctly, "I think of the American Dream as anything's possible in America. I think it is up to what your

dreams are for you to make it" (King & King, 2015). Cameron agreed, "Well I guess it would probably be achieving what you would want to achieve, whether that's very little or quite a bit honestly" (Taylor, 2015). He also felt that some things about the American Dream don't change from generation to generation. He said, "I don't think that changes from one generation to the other…hoping your kids do better than you ever did, providing the best life you can. Hopefully they achieve more than you do, I think, is really what it is" (Taylor, 2015). Dorothy and Sam believed that the American Dream was the opportunity to achieve certain things, such as "prosperity," that "you're well off economically, that you're in a safe environment, that you live where you want to, that you do better than your…better off than your folks were, that you improve yourself" (Scott & Scott, 2015). Ethan felt achievement was being content within your career path. He said,

> You know, maybe I just grew up in the days when people told you could come from anywhere and be anything that you wanted to be. You could do anything. I don't know if that's old or outdated. I mean I think its still true, but I think so many people get lulled in doing the same thing everyday and going to the same job that they lose sight of what you wanted to do because you are making money now and need to keep that income coming in because you need to keep this or that. You need to keep that big house you have or whatever it is, you get lost in what you really wanted to do. Things like that, you can change it if you really wanted to. I just don't think people do that anymore. I think that's why some people hate their jobs. (Ferguson, 2015)

Morgan and Mary defined their American Dream as reaching their goals and having a sense of self-worth through achievement. They said,

> Morgan: I don't have to have ten billion dollars, you know, just as long as you… everybody's got to have a goal in life. And you try to reach that goal and if you do then in your mind you become successful.
> Mary: I think I would agree with that; to have something that you are proud of, something that is yours. (Kirby & Kirby, 2015)

Jackie also defined her American Dream as reaching her goals, but also expressed the inability to ever be completely satisfied. She said,

> I think success is having come to the point where you've achieved your goals. I mean you're always striving for more. I think you don't feel like you ever just get to a point where you're like, "Oh yeah. I'm good." But, you know, I feel like as a kid if I would have seen what I have now, I would have said, "Yeah. I'm living the American Dream." (Broadhurst, 2015)

Sarah expressed concern that many feel entitled to the opportunity to achieve. Instead, she felt they should feel privileged to have the opportunity to work hard to achieve their dreams. She said, "You don't get handed anything. You have the privilege to work for things and that's part of what you can do to make your dreams come true; working to get rich, but working to have enough to live the life you want to live" (Hicks, 2015).

Adam echoed many of the ideas above in his responses, but he also cynically noted that many Americans believe in the opportunity to achieve anything…through Capitalism. He had a rich and poignant response, which included in its entirety below.

> I watched a movie awhile back that was a terrible movie, but it had a great ending. It's called *Killing Them Softly* with Brad Pitt. Terrible, terrible movie…one of James Gandolfini's last films that he's in. But at the end of it, Brad Pitt is this hit man and he's…he's finished all of his hits, and he gets really cynical with the mob guy that's supposed to pay him off, cause the mob guy's like, "Well we're going to pay you less cause you killed this person, and they weren't really on our list." And they start really trying to hedge their bets with him and he starts talking kind of cynically about Benjamin Franklin, "And Benjamin Franklin, this American hero, and he freed the slaves and blah blah blah, but really he was just this rich old guy that wanted to fight against this because he wasn't really making money off of it." Or, you know, there was some benefit in it for him…is what Brad Pitt alludes to. And at the end he goes, "America's not…America isn't a family…America isn't a community…America's not a country…it's a business." And he says to the guys (and excuse my language), "Now shut up and fucking pay me." But some of that hits home for me. I think it's a unique view on America, cause it

really is when you look around at it. America is a…is a country based on Capitalism. It is a business. Everyone's their own business. I have a unique view, because I lived in Australia for six months and it gave me perspective on exactly how business-oriented we were. I remember getting there and being frustrated that Burger King closed at seven. You sell food to people…why would you…you should be open until 11 o'clock at night. Well that's not our [the Australians'] way. That's not what we [the Australians] care about. That's not what's most important to us [the Australians]. And you go outside of America and you realize how business and money-focused we are in every way, shape, and form, and everything we do. Things are open 24/7, because we've got to make that buck. (Adam Brown, 2015)

While much of the conversations about the American Dream steered toward achievement, success, and the freedom to live the life they pleased, participants also talked of how their American Dream included quality relationships with family, friends, and a community, such as Kayla, who said, "I think we would all define the American Dream as having a solid family. Having a general support system, whether that be your family, whether that be your friends or whomever" (Benson, 2015). Acknowledging that he has achieved his dream, Jordan put it simply, "It took me a long time to find my American Dream, but I think Andrea and my family and the house we live in is" (King & King, 2015). Amanda connected her American Dream to teaching her Christian faith to her children. She stated,

> And my goal is to raise my kids to know and love Jesus Christ and to love the people around them. And I think the way that the neighborhood ties into that is – how can you love the people around you if you don't know them? If you're successful because you made a lot of money and people respected you, but you forgot to enjoy life and your family is not together anymore or not a close unit, then are you really successful? So if I die with a lot of money, but my children didn't feel like I really loved them, that's not success. (Hyde, 2015)

Adam described his hope to be able to give back to those that had given to him. He said, "For me, my dream is being in a situation at some point in my life were I can help friends. That's my American Dream. To be able to be there for the people that make the wedding list so to speak. You want to be there for the people that were

there for you" (Adam Brown, 2015). Nancy equated her American Dream to a comfortable life with a happy and healthy family. She said, "So I would just say being happy and healthy and earning a living so you can live a comfortable life. And spend quality time with your family" (Clague, 2015).

Finally, participants relayed a sense of obligation to leave a legacy for the future generations. Kayla felt that her generation had the ability, through resources and technology, to truly make a difference for the future. She said,

> Like I said I'm sure that's the same but I feel like we're in a generation now that you know we truly believe we can make a difference, whether we can or not with the recycling and all the kind of stuff, the green movement you know we've got technology, we've got resources to make more of an impact… (Benson, 2015)

She emphasized her concern for future generations. She stated, "And we also want to and I'm sure this is the same for every generation but we also want to make this generation better for the next generation" (Benson, 2015). Sarah described her American Dream as "at the end of the day, when you have enough, and you've done enough for others, and left things better than when you found them" (Hicks, 2015). For the residents of Glynn Village and Prairie Trail, the American Dream of today seems to be having the freedom to live their lives as they see fit, the opportunity to achieve—whether that be through homeownership, business ventures, or quality relationships—and leaving a positive legacy for the next generation.

<div align="center">A Generational Shift</div>

When asked if they had achieved their American Dream, the overwhelming majority of the participants stated that they had. As most participants were under the age of 45, this represents a generational shift from the American Dream of their

parents and grandparents. Dorothy and Sam, the oldest participants at age 71, discussed this change with each other. They said,

> Dorothy: I mean these young kids growing up…we say, "How can they afford this [Living within Prairie Trail]?" That's their American Dream. I mean they're doing better than we did, and that's good so. I never thought about an American Dream. We're just doing what we can and liking it so…
> Sam: Yeah. We're comfortable. We're not rich. We're not poor. We're…
> Dorothy: We are who we are.
> Sam: We call ourselves average…the average person. (Scott & Scott, 2015)

They displayed surprise at the demographic of the people living around them, and genuinely accepted the fact that economic success seemed easier to come by for their neighbors than it had been for themselves, their parents, or their grandparents. Jackie, though three decades younger than Dorothy and Sam, recognized the same change and expressed her sentiment. She said,

> I think they [her parents] look maybe and see that we hit it earlier in life. To look at, you know, where I was when I was eight years old compared to my son at eight years old, we definitely have more than they did. We definitely have above and beyond what they did at this time, so I think, you know, we're equal now. It's like what they arrived at later in life. We are at much earlier in life. It's interesting to compare that timeframe. (Broadhurst, 2015)

Participants commented on this generational shift in two ways: a shift in priorities from sacrifice to self-interest and a shift from survival to excess.

From sacrifice to self-interest

During the time that many of the participants' parents and grandparents were striving for their American Dream, they were living to work and provide for growing families. Priorities were different thirty, forty, fifty, and sixty years ago: marriage and children happened at an earlier age for many, less pursued higher education, and

gender roles were more restrictive for women than men. When asked to compare his

parents and grandparents' American Dreams to his own, Adam elaborated,

> I think their society was more of a society of necessity at that time. I think women were being empowered. My parents are 50…in their 50's so in the '60s, '70s, '80s, which is before me…I was born in '85, I think the American Dream was all the possibilities of Capitalism. No one was really pigeonholed. I mean I think of the world in the movie, *Catch Me If You Can*. I think of that world, his parents…his dad saying, "I'm in the small businesses…" I think of the way it is now and how globalization has super mega international corporations. I don't think it was that advanced at that point. There was no internet. You knew your neighbor. You talked to your neighbor. Their American Dream was very different and it was a world with all these possibilities. And America was the best and the greatest country in the world. And they lived here…I mean they have the world's dream and they could do anything. And then out of necessity, someone sacrificed this...you have kids…you get married. Your goals and dreams kind of combine and collide so to speak. But I think their dream was…definitely had a different hue to it; maybe the same goals, but it was shot in black and white, where as ours is in color and HD. (Adam Brown, 2015)

It's a fact that women, in the United States, are waiting longer to have children now

than they were decades ago (Cauterucci, 2016). Kayla, a Millennial, said, "I mean

it's just, similarly we're putting off having children and getting married, it's just not the

same priorities as the past generations had" (Benson, 2015). Regina and Jacob

discussed the dichotomy between the American Dreams of Regina's parents and the

reality they faced due to gender roles during the 1950s. They said,

> Regina: I think my dad was living the dream that he wanted to do. My mom was an only child so she had six kids, so that was pretty crazy for her. She was an only child and grandchild so having six kids was like, "Woah!"
> Jacob: I am not sure that was a dream
> Regina: No. I don't think that was her original dream. I mean she was a good mother and she taught us well, but I don't think it was always so easy for her. (Hacket & Hacket, 2015)

Parents and grandparents also focused on having the financial security to send their children to college, when pursuits of higher education were less common than they are today. Ethan reminisced, "I think that was always a driving force for us to go to college so that we could do things that maybe our parents weren't able to" (Ferguson, 2015). Mary's parents just "worked hard…to have a good life for my brothers and myself. They wanted us to go out and be our own people, our own individuals and have our own separate lives" (Kirby & Kirby, 2015). Jordan felt that his parents worked harder and longer than he did to achieve their American Dream. He said,

> I think that they had, probably a stronger determination than I maybe had. I was like, "Eh, it's just me. I'm cruising' along." I don't think cruising along was in their plan. They were putting in a lot of effort forward from the get go…lot of difference there. And so I think my parents had a little bit of a different dream, but not that much. I think that they wanted to have a house and family and to succeed in what they do. I think it was a little different…different steps to get there. (King & King, 2015)

While parents and grandparents sacrificed to provide for their children, attitudes today, especially for Millennials, seem to be more self-interested. As Kayla stated, "If another opportunity comes along that's better, we're [Millennials] going to do it, because it's better for ourselves" (Benson, 2015).

From survival to excess

With the exception of Adam and Kayla, the participants grew up during the 1970s or earlier. Many of these talked of their childhood home atmosphere as one of survival, with parents who were just trying to make ends meet to become financially secure. Jacob describes the ambitions of his parents, "Their pressure was to provide for the family and life for the family. It was survival. They were still in the generation

of survival and if you could survive successfully and very well that was the dream"
(Hacket & Hacket, 2015). Regina added, "Right and get your bills paid. They were
thrilled" (Hacket & Hacket, 2015). Dorothy acknowledged the simplicity of her
parent's American Dream. She said,

> Well I know the American dream for my parents was just having a place of
> their own, rather than having to live with relatives. And, you know, dad
> needed a job. Just getting a job was a dream of his and having a house and
> being able to afford to have two kids. That was their American Dream, and I
> think for my grandparents it was just a little bit less than that. (Scott & Scott,
> 2015)

Cameron felt that his parents were in a similar situation. He said, "So I think
their…their dream is probably more or less kind of…they were probably more in a
survival instinct" (Taylor, 2015).

Regina recognized a change between the American Dream of herself and her
children, questioning whether they would be able to achieve what she had due to the
amount of excess that people were acquiring now. She said, "For my younger kids,
I'm not sure. The scale on which everybody's living now, it's not as simplistic, and
there's so much more material influence on things. I am not sure if their living the
American Dream is the same as ours" (Hacket & Hacket, 2015). Sam related his
parent's dream to the more excessive standards of today. He said,

> 40 acres today means absolutely nothing to people that farm thousands and
> thousands of acres. They [his grandparents] had the farm. They had their
> house. They were able to maintain it. They were able to eat well. You know,
> chicken for Sunday dinner was out in the henhouse. I mean it's come from the
> chicken house to the little bitty store in Altoona to the HyVee store in Altoona.
> It's the same [American Dream] only the times are different…the
> circumstances are different. (Scott & Scott, 2015)

Jacob mentioned, "I think that's just today's world, and even when we were growing up the peer pressure to do more and be more" (Hacket & Hacket, 2015). Danielle added,

> I mean they just had a totally different way back then. There wasn't cellphones and you know, more. I think it was just all about. You had your house and you had your food and your family and that was it. I mean I don't think they wanted for more. Things change and more becomes available so you want more. (Dalton, 2015)

As the younger generations acquire more at a faster rate that previous generations, they may have more time to enjoy life and have new experiences. For Jackie, this could be a positive change. She added, "I think that maybe values have changed. People maybe today want to live life a little bit more in the now, instead of hiding money under the mattress and saving it" (Broadhurst, 2015).

There was an emphasis on the ability to acquire more for less work than the previous generations. Kayla acknowledged that her grandparents had to "[make] sure that their family had food on the table, providing a healthy life, a living for their kids, and for their wives or their husbands" (Benson, 2015). She also mentioned, "They also worked really hard to do that. We don't have to work as hard for that" (Benson, 2015). Ethan was uncertain about whether the upcoming generations would suffer because of a lack of work ethic. He said,

> We grew up in a time when if you wanted a car, well how are you going to pay for the car? You better work. So it was a little bit different then. And its great that I see parents now that can afford to buy their kids a car. And there's attitude and stuff that plays in to that too. I don't know if some kids can handle their parents giving them a car. I think it means more if you have to work for it. (Ferguson, 2015)

Examining the American Dream of the past generations, Amanda said, "I see that the generation ahead of me and ahead of them made sacrifices for themselves in order to provide for their children" (Hyde, 2015). Looking to the future, she added, "And I think I see–and maybe it's just kind of in my circle of influence–this shift from the American Dream as providing for the future that now the American dream is focusing on the now–thinking let's enjoy life rather instead of just only planning for the future" (Hyde, 2015).

The Pursuit of Happiness

The many newspaper and magazine articles and editorials that exist on the topic of the American Dream and suburbia exclaim that the "American Dream is dead or dying" (Bump, 2015; Leinberger, 2008; Putnam, 2013; Uchitelle, 2010). For the residents of Prairie Trail and Glynn Village this simply isn't true. David Brooks says that Americans are under the Paradise Spell (Brooks, 2004). He describes this as

> The tendency to see the present from the vantage point of the future. It starts with imagination—the ability to fantasize about what some imminent happiness will look like. Then the future-minded person leaps rashly toward that gauzy image. He or she is subtly more attached to the glorious future than to the temporary and unsatisfactory present. Time isn't pushed from the remembered past to the felt present to the mysterious future. It is pulled by the golden future from the unsatisfactory present and away from the dim past. (2004)

He claims that Americans are always looking toward some vantage point in a more glorious future while ignoring or rejecting the present and past. While suburbia seemed to become the visual manifestation of the American Dream for past generations, the residents of Prairie Trail and Glynn Village dispel the idea that

Americans are looking for a magical place or solution for their lives. The American Dream is much simpler than that. Through the freedom they have, in the United States, to chase opportunities to achieve and to leave a legacy, Americans are simply in the pursuit of happiness, and the participants of this study echo this hypothesis.

"The American dream is focusing on the now–thinking let's enjoy life rather instead of just only planning for the future" (Hyde, 2015). Amanda's comment summarizes the shift of the American Dream. While past generations sought financial security through homeownership, generations today, within Prairie Trail and Glynn Village, have reached financial security faster than their parents before them; they are seeking happiness. Dorothy and Sam echo the theme of simplicity while finishing each other's sentences. They stated,

> Sam: Being comfortable with yourself and your surroundings…
> Dorothy: And proud of how your jobs that you've had and…
> Sam: Not living in excess, but not living on the other end of that scale too.
> (Scott & Scott, 2015)

As people are now used to having more of just about everything, Kayla thinks this changes the value of happiness. She said, "And I think the level of happiness and what people find, what people do to be happy or what makes them happy is very different now" (Benson, 2015). Danielle described her American Dream as, "Having a healthy family…a good job. I think they kind of go hand-in-hand. Having your family—your kids. They are happy and healthy" (Dalton, 2015). Kayla equated a proper life balance to achieving happiness. She said,

> It doesn't have to do with how much money you have in the bank or what position you hold at your job. I think it has much more to do with finding that happy place in your life; having that solid balance between whatever you

juggle in your world—whether that be work, family, or personal time—finding that sweet spot and having really good balance. (Benson, 2015)

Mary wished to have "a nice place to come home and just be myself. That's kind of my dream" (Kirby & Kirby, 2015). Morgan added, "Doesn't matter amount of money, doesn't matter amount of friends, just if you're happy within yourself, your family. It doesn't matter what you do" (Kirby & Kirby, 2015). They agreed that they had reached their American Dream. Morgan said, "This is kind of essentially where we wanted to be. Like I say, it's not the biggest house by far but we're happy with it" (Kirby & Kirby, 2015).

> Brooks' commented that Americans are seeking a
>
> Golden future from the unsatisfactory present and away from the dim past…that is just out of reach, just beyond the next ridge, just in the farther-out suburb or with the next entrepreneurial scheme, just with the next diet plan or credit card purchase, the next true love or political hero, the next summer home or all-terrain vehicle, the next meditation technique or motivational seminar; just with the right schools, the right moral revival, the right beer and the right set of buddies; just with the next technology or after the next shopping spree—there is this spot you can get to where all tensions will melt, all time pressures will be relieved and happiness can be realized. (2004)

The cynicism aside, residents of Prairie Trail and Glynn Village felt differently about their American Dreams. They talked of having experiences with their families over acquiring things, such as "free time to spend more time with family and do the things that we want to be able to do…kind of experiences for kids as they get older" (Taylor, 2015). They expressed the importance of living in the present, instead of solely planning for the future (Broadhurst, 2015). They are seeking a sense of home. Nancy said,

> Happiness…I don't care if I have the nicest house or the nicest things, but I think success is just if it makes you happier and makes your kids happy. If it makes you feel like you are at home. We just need to get home. We've been moving around a lot, and we just need to get home. (Clague, 2015)

Many expressed nostalgia for the "good old days," (Scott & Scott, 2015) or perhaps they might define as "paradise," (Brooks, 2004) which they seem to have found in their current neighborhoods. While they wish to leave a legacy so that the next generations have the opportunity for a better life, they are content with their own. These American Dreams are what the residents of Prairie Trail and Glynn Village are seeking; not some hyperbole about a paradise that is always out of reach. Brooks' editorial misstates the simple, but unabridged, American Dreams that are not so different from the American Dreams that built the United States. These American Dreams that the residents, in Prairie Trail and Glynn Village, are actively sustaining in the ongoing narrative of suburbia: freedom, opportunity, and happiness.

CHAPTER 11

CONCLUSION

The connection between the American Dream and suburbia, starting in the 1930s to today, remains intact. Many argue that suburbia became the physical manifestation of the American Dream for millions of people. This manifestation reflected the American identity composed of qualities like the need for privacy, individualism, and the importance of property ownership. Harsh criticism led to the advent of new suburban morphology, whose creators hoped would bring back the sense of place that had been lost with the demise of small town America and a renewed interest in conservation and environmental practices. Thus New Urbanist and conservation development started a new branch of the existing narrative of suburbia and the American Dream. How suburban residents felt about their neighborhoods remained unclear, and thus, a gap in the literature existed.

Through this research the role of these development types within the narrative becomes clearer. Residents, of Prairie Trail and Glynn Village, expressed a sense of nostalgia for the past, paired with the same American Dream of freedom and opportunity evoked during the founding of this nation. The residents stated that they were living their American Dreams. Mostly, they conveyed the fact that many are reaching a level of financial security faster than the previous generations who defined their American Dream as security. Their grandparents and parents strove for a Dream that seemed much simpler, that of survival and a vision of a better future

for their children. Thus the definition of the American Dream is shifting, from security for the future to living in the present.

The American Dream, as an aspiration, continues to be tied to homeownership and the economic status that comes along with owning a high-value suburban home in a nice neighborhood. Whether the participants of this study are changing their definitions of the American Dream because of the neighborhoods they live in is unclear. What is certain is that these participants are in the pursuit of happiness and finding happiness within the neighborhoods of Prairie Trail and Glynn Village. Residents prioritized a sense of community and collective identity, the amenities and convenience offered through walkability, and the ability to have a 'custom' home.

The morphology of the conventional suburb did not meet the aspirations of community and social identity the residents strove for. The morphology of Prairie Trail and Glynn Village played a role in creating attractive nostalgic physical characteristics of small town America and spaces for social interaction; the ability to be surrounded by like-minded people and have the home they want in a neighborhood that provides more amenities. While the residents prioritized proximity to like-minded neighbors, the unstated outcome is that of exclusion of any person unable to afford the high-cost suburban houses. This trend remains in tact from previous generations of all-white, higher-income suburbia. The high quality of life residents can attain in these neighborhoods helps them realize their American Dreams. The New Urbanist and Conservation Communities, of Prairie Trail and Glynn Village, may not be changing their definition of the American Dream, but these

people, who have similar definitions of the American Dream, are choosing to live in these neighborhoods.

Future Research

Future research on this topic is recommended as the sample size and limiting demographics make this research study impossible to generalize to a larger population. Another study could ask questions, such as:

- How many of these kinds of alternative developments exist in the Des Moines area?
- How many in the Midwest?
- How many in the United States?
- How many are being developed?
- How fast do the lots or houses sell?
- If more people are looking for these kinds of characteristics in development does that represent a larger trend or are these neighborhoods anomalies?
- How do these neighborhoods do in other parts of the country?
- What other alternative methods exist, such as co-housing or higher density suburban developments?
- What are the demographic trends by region or by the type of development?
- Are there regional characteristics?

How people define the American Dream, on a regional or nationwide scale, could give designers clues on how to design better places. This research could speak directly to practice, giving architects, planners, urban designers, landscape architects, and others the ability to comprehend the meaning behind the words their clients use to describe their wants and needs. This is speculation, of course, but perhaps through a study of the definitions people hold of the American Dream and an analysis of the places they live and work could translate into better design of homes and neighborhoods. Perhaps this could improve the quality of life for all kinds of people, not just middle to upper class white people, and increase protection for

the environment. If the design of places revolved around semiotics, or the meanings, behind the built features in a person's life, a greater understanding could be revealed about what people really want when they say that they like large kitchens, three-car garages, and big yards. Could this help designers create better solutions for their clients? Could this change sprawl to make it better? Could this create a new future for suburbia?

Better comprehension of clients' wants and needs, paired with the needs of the environment, could help designers create better places. The outcomes of this research has the potential to help designers create places worth caring about (Kunstler, 2004). In a country that prioritizes automobiles over people, economy over quality, and repetition over distinctiveness, rethinking about how the design process works could change the functionality of the built environment in ways unimagined, ultimately, adding another branch to the narrative of the American Dream.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Could you please state your name and the neighborhood you live in.

1. How long have you lived in your home?
2. Tell me what drew you to live in this neighborhood? What factors went into your decision to live here?
3. How long do you think you will live in this neighborhood?
4. Tell me about where you lived before you moved into this house?
5. Could you tell me why you chose this house?
6. Tell me about your house. Walk me through it. Describe it for me.
7. Did you have a role in designing this home or did you buy this home after it was built?
    a. Did you buy this house from another homeowner or a home builder?
    b. Did you change anything? Remodel?
    c. Is your home designed by an architect? A builder?
8. How is your home unique? Through the design, the way it is decorated….
9. Do you feel that your home displays your family's personality?
10. Tell me how you feel about living in a…. New Urbanist neighborhood/ conservation development?
11. Tell me about where you grew up? About the house and neighborhood you grew up in.
12. What memories stick out about that neighborhood?
13. How do you define….success, safety, community?
14. When someone says the term, the American Dream, what does that mean to you?
15. Do you feel like you are living the American Dream?
16. What do you think the American Dream meant or means to your parents or grandparents?
17. Is there anything that you would like to add to the conversation?