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SPRAWL



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aerial photographs of
suburban sprawl courtesy
Landslides, Boston

Editor's Notes

We have recently moved our offices into a small building that we bought and renovated. It has gone through a succession of owners and uses—a grocery store, a meat market, a triplex—and now a design consulting firm (and a magazine) and a rental apartment. Our neighbors are a great bakery, two accountants, an upscale flower and antique store, a place that paints cars, and apartment buildings and single family houses.

In short, we now reside in the kind of neighborhood Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk campaign for so passionately. The architecture of our neighborhood is not remarkable, but in its diversity, richness of experience, and pedestrian scale, our neighborhood is.

This issue of *Design Quarterly* presents a range of responses to the phenomenon of urban sprawl. It is a topic that cannot be ignored by anyone. Sprawl is changing our physical world—rapidly and for the rest of our lives. RAJ

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*Small Town Sprawl:
Wal-Mart Distribution Center*
Menomonie, Wisconsin
Christopher Faust,
Suburban Documentation
Project, 1993

Covering over 40 acres, this building—with its loading docks, paved surfaces, and fueling stations—serves the Wal-Mart stores recently built in Minnesota. Though 50 miles east of St. Paul, towns such as Menomonie are rapidly growing as bedroom suburbs and distribution points for the neighboring Twin Cities.

Growing Wiser: Finding Alternatives to Sprawl

by Richard Moe

The American preservation movement has moved beyond the meticulous restoration of landmarks and the creation of museums. We're also now involved in trying to make America's communities more livable. We're concerned about sprawl because it devastates older cities and towns, where historic buildings and neighborhoods are concentrated. Sprawl has drained the life out of thousands of traditional downtowns and inner-city neighborhoods, and we've learned that we can't hope to revitalize these communities without doing something to control the sprawl that keeps pushing farther and farther out from the center.

The National Trust's involvement with sprawl dates back to the 1970s, when we developed our Main Street program to help bring life back to historic downtowns that were losing businesses to the malls and the bypasses. That effort has become the most successful downtown revitalization program in the country—we've seen commercial districts in more than 1,000 places come back to life—but we soon realized that it wasn't enough to clean up the mess created by sprawl. We needed to deal directly with the root of the problem.

In 1993 we placed the entire state of Vermont on our annual list of "America's 111 Most Endangered Historic Places" because sprawl was (and still is) threatening its cohesive small towns and countryside. We intensified our efforts in the recent successful confrontation with the Walt Disney Company over plans for a huge development in northern Virginia. The battle over Disney's America wasn't about how a theme park might interpret American history; it was about sprawl that threatened to overwhelm one of the most scenic and historic areas in America.

What is sprawl? You know it when you see it. And you see it almost everywhere. It's the low-density development that spreads out from the edges of cities and towns. It is poorly planned, land-consumptive, automobile-oriented, designed

without regard to its surroundings. It is usually ugly, and it is enormously destructive.

One form of sprawl—retail development that transforms roads into "sellscapes"—is frequently spurred on by discount retailers. The two giants in this industry, Wal-Mart and Kmart, are planning 500 new stores within the next few years, many of them superstores with more than 200,000 square feet of space. In many small towns, a single new superstore may have more retail space than the entire downtown business district. The retail center of gravity shifts away from Main Street. As business drops off, downtown stores and offices close or relocate. Facing a loss of rental income, property owners cut back on maintenance. Facing a loss of tax revenues, governments cut back on services. Downtown becomes ghost town, while the retail building binge continues across a landscape already littered with the equivalent of nearly 4,000 abandoned shopping centers or "dead malls."¹

Sprawl's other most familiar form—spread-out residential subdivisions that "leapfrog" from the urban fringe into the countryside—is driven largely by the American dream of a detached home in the middle of a grassy lawn. The dream carries a hefty price tag—and you don't always get what you pay for.

Developers frequently claim they can build more "affordable" housing on the edge of town—but "affordable" for whom? The developer's own expenses may be less, and the home buyer may find the prices attractive—but who picks up the extra costs of fire and police protection, new roads, and new utility infrastructure in these outlying areas? We all do, in the form of higher taxes for duplication of services and infrastructure that already exist in older parts of our cities and towns. Sprawl is heavily subsidized by both federal and state dollars.



David Graham
New Construction
Route 1, Massachusetts, 1989



Nicholas Nixon
Developing Paradise Hills
Albuquerque, 1974

Many of the bedroom communities that sprang up on our urban fringes after World War II are now beginning to fade, and older suburbs are being abandoned just as inner cities were abandoned in decades past. As the cycle of decline and abandonment repeats, sprawl pushes outward, wreaking havoc on town and country alike. We lose almost three million acres of productive farmland a year, and our cities are turning into doughnuts—with the hole in the center getting bigger and bigger.

Increased dependency on cars isolates children, the elderly, and people who can't drive. Traffic worsens, commuters leave home earlier and get back later, leaving them less time to spend with their families or participate in the life of the community. Inner-city residents are victimized by economic segregation, stagnant property values, and declining public services. Even drugs and crime have left the inner city for the suburbs. It's very hard to find a sense of community in a strip mall, and the social costs of sprawl may be the most devastating in the long term.

Sprawl isn't the same in all parts of the country. In some areas it's an unintentional by-product of mushrooming growth and laissez-faire policies. Elsewhere, it was eagerly sought out in the name of economic development. In the boom years of the 1970s and 80s, states such as Colorado launched aggressive marketing campaigns to attract business and industry, extolling the ready availability of land and frequently offering attractive development incentives. The strategy succeeded, bringing an onslaught of sprawl that most officials equated with "progress." But as the boom turned to bust, people began to realize that development that destroys communities—and asks residents to pay for the destruction—isn't progress, it's chaos.

In 1947, William Faulkner wrote an irate letter to his hometown paper, the *Oxford Eagle*. The historic courthouse in Oxford was threatened with demolition, and Faulkner was furious: "They call this progress," he wrote. "But they don't say where it's going; also there are some of us who would like the chance to say whether or not we want the ride."

More and more people are deciding they *don't* want the ride—or at least they're wondering whether the price of the ticket isn't much too high. As dramatic evidence of this change of heart, I call

your attention to a remarkable report recently issued in California.² The report states flatly, "California can no longer afford the luxury of sprawl" because it has "shifted from an engine of California's growth to a force that now threatens to *inhibit* growth and degrade the quality of our life." Strong words—and they take on added weight from the fact that the initiative for producing the report came from the Bank of America. A leader of the mainstream business community that traditionally preaches the gospel of unlimited growth now says that sprawl is bad—not just for the environment but for business as well.

Sprawl isn't inevitable, it's merely easy. Too many developers follow standard formulas, and consumers haven't demanded much better.

Anti-sprawl is not anti-growth. The question is not whether our communities will grow, but *how* they will grow. We need better development models to replace the random collision of economic forces that has turned much of our landscape into what Peter Blake calls "God's own junkyard."

Communities should be shaped by *choice*, not by chance. Our choices are clear. We can let the highway engineers and the Wal-Marts do our planning for us, or we can take a more active role ourselves. We can keep on accepting the kind of communities we get, or we can learn how to get the kind of communities we want.

While sprawl is a nationwide problem, there is no national solution. We certainly must seek changes to federal policies that encourage sprawl, but we should not look to the federal government for a quick-fix answer to the problem of sprawl. Nor should we expect local government alone to produce an effective solution. Limited jurisdiction hampers the ability of local government to deal with an issue that doesn't respect political boundaries; efforts to control sprawl in a limited area often just shift the problem from one community to another.

The best hope for truly effective action against sprawl lies at the state and regional levels. Local governments must cooperate in developing strong regional strategies for using already developed land more efficiently, making thoughtful choices about where new development should and should not go, and setting up regulatory mechanisms that are fair, clear, consistent, rational, and farsighted.

First, at the federal level, government policies that mandate, encourage or reward sprawl should



David Graham
Canyon Gate
Las Vegas, 1991

be revised. Transportation policy, which is perhaps the biggest offender, should be based on principles that reward rational planning and efficiency instead of on principles that reward sprawl. Plans to build new beltways and bypasses should remind us that the phrase “if you build it, they will come” doesn’t apply only to ballparks.

Tax policy that favors new development over rehabilitation should be replaced with policies that encourage the reuse of existing housing stock and the revitalization of inner-city neighborhoods. We’ve become expert at recycling everything from newspapers to aluminum, but we’re not very good at recycling communities. We’d better learn how. We don’t have an infinite amount of land to build upon, and many western states may run out of water before they run out of land. Even if the natural resources were available, we don’t have the money to build the new roads, schools, and other infrastructure that sprawl demands.

At the state level, many governments are seeking solutions to problems that can’t be solved as long as sprawl continues to consume so much of the average state budget in the form of transportation-related costs. Some states have recognized the need for some form of statewide or regional land-use planning mechanism. Oregon’s “urban growth boundary” legislation is both innovative and workable, and states such as Vermont, Rhode Island, and Georgia have adopted varied approaches that could serve as useful models elsewhere.

In other states, encouraging initiatives are just getting under way. In Colorado, for example, Governor Roy Romer is leading a courageous effort to manage the poorly planned growth which is of interest to Coloradans. Governor Romer’s “smart growth” initiative is one of the most promising new public policy initiatives in the country.

At the local level, communities should discard planning and zoning practices that encourage sprawl. Many zoning laws make it impossible—even illegal—to create the sort of compact, walkable, human-scaled environment that attracts us to older neighborhoods and historic communities all over the world. What’s needed is a new urbanism based on old wisdom, and nothing encourages me more than the work being done in this area by a new generation of urban designers.

How we plan to use land is at the very crux of this issue. Land-use planning is a term that puts

many people to sleep and scares others, but it’s a concept we have to come to terms with if we’re to deal effectively with sprawl.

We can’t hope to make substantive progress until we build a broad-based constituency for fighting sprawl and creating more livable communities. Businesses and government agencies must be part of this coalition, along with community groups and private citizens—both urban and rural residents. Working together, they should insist on—and assist in—the development of an integrated system of decisions and regulations that knits communities together instead of tearing them apart.

America is a young country and still has a pioneer mentality. We hold some deeply entrenched attitudes: the notion of boundless space, the concept of a throwaway culture, the conviction that newer is always better. We must challenge those attitudes.

During the 1950s and 60s, urban renewal was touted as the best hope for transforming American cities. Hundreds of viable older neighborhoods and thousands of historic buildings were bulldozed. Decades later, many American cities still show the scars—and still suffer from many of the problems that this policy was supposed to solve.

For a whole generation of preservationists, the fight against urban renewal was the crucible in which their theories and convictions were tested and refined. It was the major catalytic event in the growth of the preservation movement. In reflecting on the legacy of that time, it’s worth recalling a statement by John Kenneth Galbraith: “The preservation movement has one great curiosity. There is never retrospective controversy or regret. Preservationists are the only people in the world who are invariably confirmed in their wisdom after the fact.”

Preservationists were right about urban renewal. And in the process of speaking out against it, they ultimately helped change government policy, helped change long-standing patterns of behavior, helped change the way Americans thought about our cities. Now we face our own challenge in the fight against sprawl, which is to us what urban renewal was to an earlier generation.

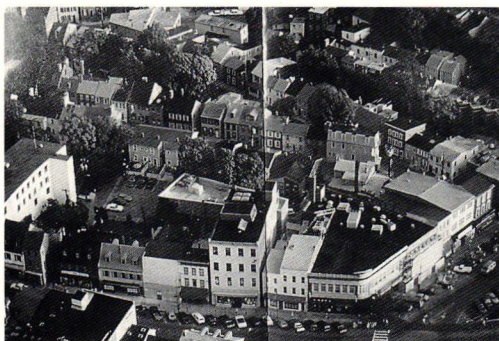
1. *How Superstore Sprawl Can Harm Communities*, Constance E. Beaumont, National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1994.

2. *Beyond Sprawl: New Patterns of Growth to Fit the New California*, prepared for Bank of America, The Resources Agency of California, Greenbelt Alliance, and Low Income Housing Fund, 1995.

Neighborhoods and Suburbs

by Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk

*There have been only two types of urbanism in North America:
The neighborhood pattern,
which was the model from the first settlements
to the middle of this century,
and the suburban pattern, which has been the model since.*



Neighborhoods are urbanized areas containing a balance of human activity: a variety of housing, adequate shopping, a range of workplaces, and the facilities for elementary education. These are integrated to other neighborhoods by a network of small streets. Neighborhoods aggregate to form towns and cities, while a single neighborhood standing free in the landscape is a village.



Suburbia has the same human activities separated into "zones." These appear as "residential subdivisions," "shopping centers," and "office parks." These elements are interconnected by a system of few but large thoroughfares including arterials, collectors, and highways.

Both models are similar in their initial capacity to accommodate people and their activities; but the suburban model tends to develop environmental, social, and economic deficiencies that choke off its sustained growth.

The differences between these models are not statistical but physical, the most important of which are illustrated below:

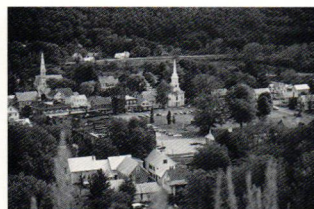
building codes



Suburban codes specify the function of buildings, but their size and disposition on the lot is variable. This creates the potential for situations which are incompatible physically, thus eliminating mixed-use as an option.

Neighborhood codes control the size and disposition of buildings, assuring physically compatible situations, and permitting the function of the buildings to vary initially and to change over time.

shopping



The shopping centers of the suburban communities are physically isolated from the adjacent housing subdivisions, forcing all residents, even the most proximate, to drive.

The commercial areas of neighborhoods are seamlessly integrated with housing, providing residents a gradient of choice: to live adjacent, close, or distant from the activities of the center.



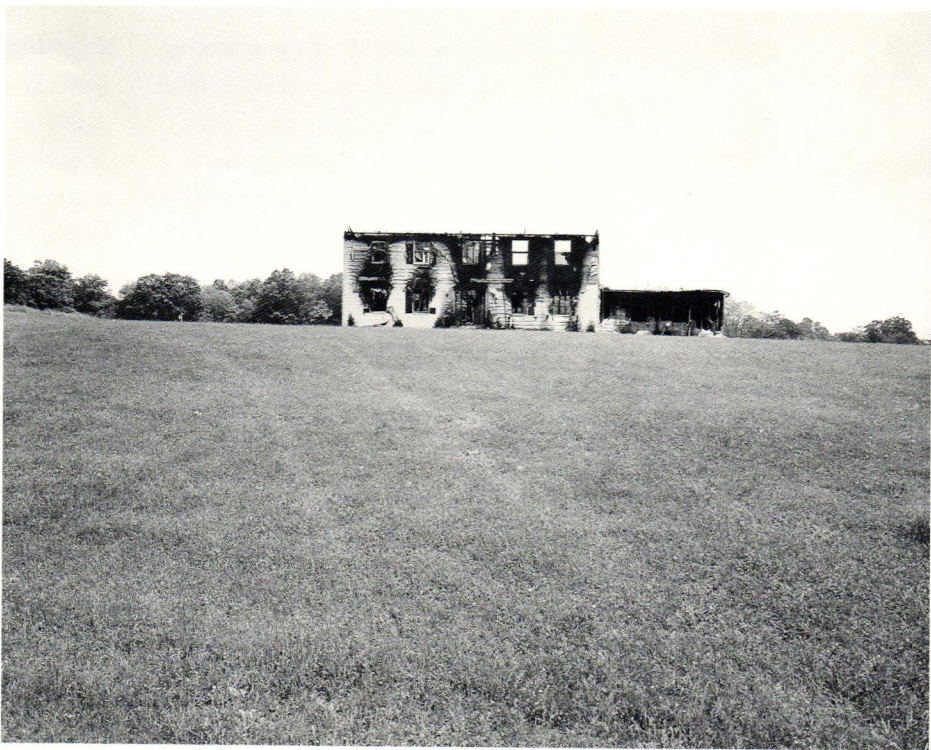
Marcia Due
Columbia County, New York, 1993



Marcia Due
Dutchess County, New York, 1990



Marcia Due
Columbia County, New York, 1992

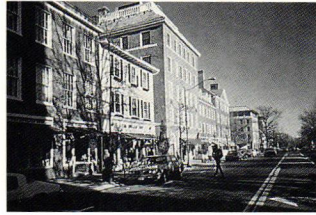


Marcia Due
Dutchess County, New York, 1989

business



The businesses in suburbia are in office parks segregated from shops and restaurants, forcing midday commuting and creating depopulated zones at night and on weekends when businesses are closed.

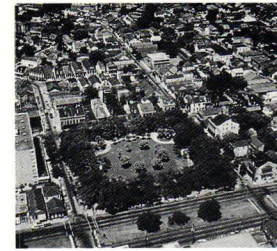


Neighborhood businesses are integrated, often with shops below and housing adjacent, which supports activity all day long.

open space



Suburban open space is defined by quantity, and usually disposed ornamentally in strips to extend the backyards of certain houses, where it is neither useable nor visible by the larger community.



Neighborhood open space is defined as "squares" or "parks," which are of specific use to the community and always located on the fronts of buildings, where they are accessible to the public.

public space



Suburban public space is occupied sporadically, usually during specifically organized activities such as festivals.

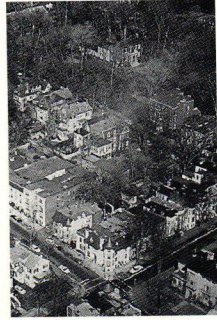


Neighborhood public space is occupied inevitably and constantly by virtue of its connection to daily activity.

housing

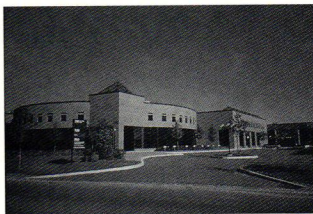


Suburban housing is segregated by income into enclaves, enabling separate security and maintenance services supported by homeowner association dues, fostering a breakdown of the larger community.

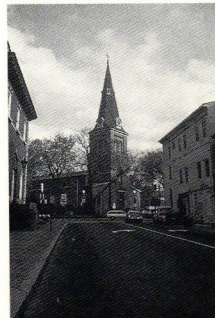


Neighborhood housing is slightly segregated by street (apartments on one street, townhouses on another, and houses on a third) but integrated by geographic proximity, shared public space, and common taxation for municipal services.

civic buildings



Suburban civic buildings for education, religion, meeting, and culture are often built at undistinguished sites that become available opportunistically.

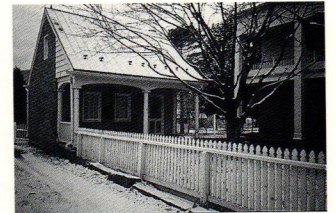


Within neighborhoods honorific locations at squares or at the termination of street vistas are reserved for civic buildings; such sites support the relative importance of buildings, which may be quite modest.

affordable housing

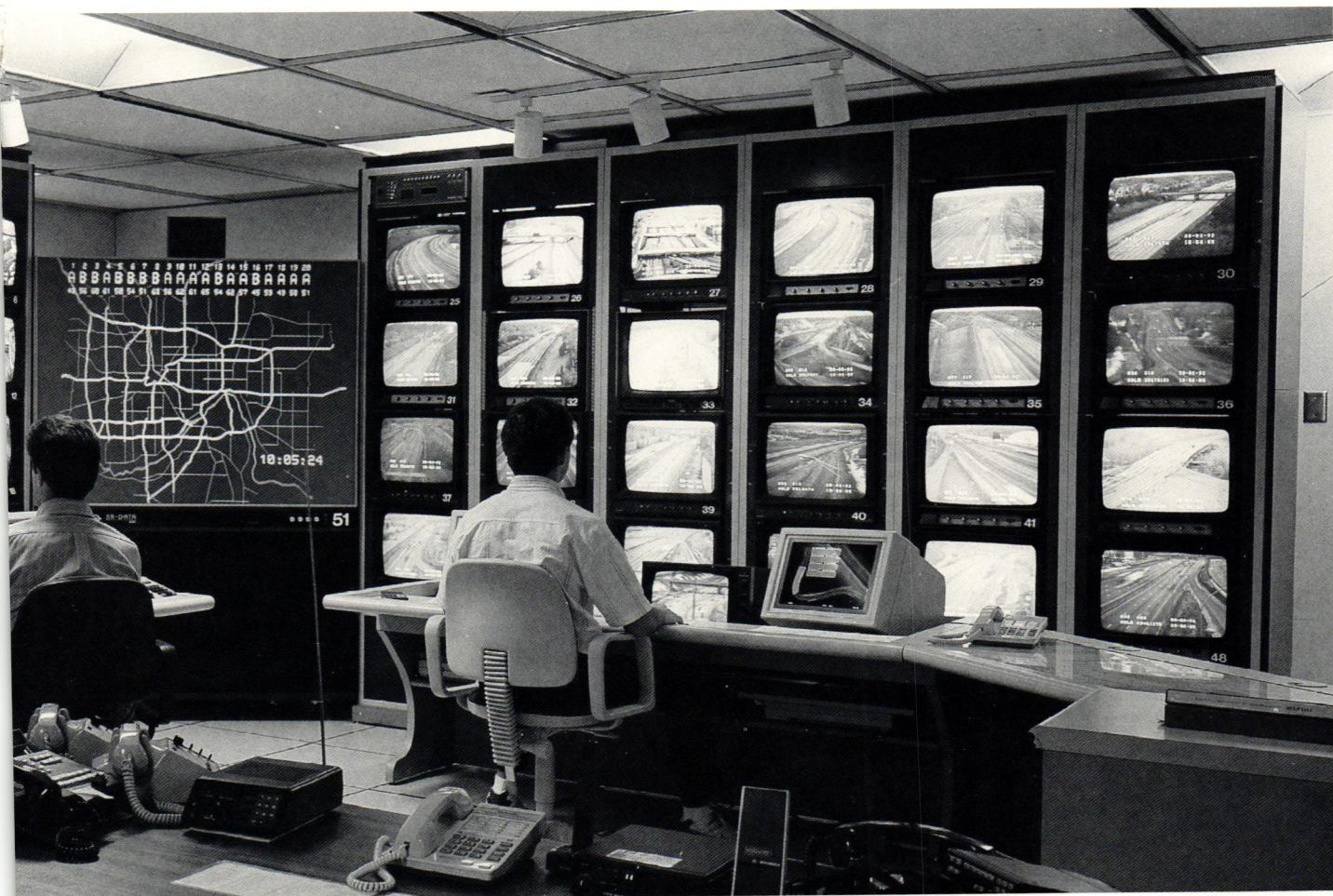


In suburbia affordable housing is subsidized and usually provided in large clusters at locations separate from middle-income housing, creating problematic concentrations of poverty.



In neighborhoods there are rental apartments at the rear yards of middle-income houses, which provide economically integrated and individually supervised affordable housing, as well as supplemental income for the mortgage payments of the home owners.





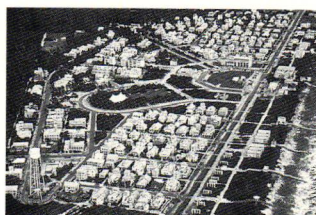
*Managing Scale:
Metro Traffic Control
Minneapolis, Minnesota
Christopher Faust,
Suburban Documentation
Project, 1992*

Minneapolis and St. Paul have one of the nation's most extensive "smart" freeway systems whereby traffic is monitored by closed-circuit camera and managers control metered access at all on ramps. In this view, two operators oversee banks of monitors with a metropolitan freeway map showing the freeway loop built around the periphery of the suburbs in the 1960s. New growth now extends 20 miles farther in all directions.

street layout

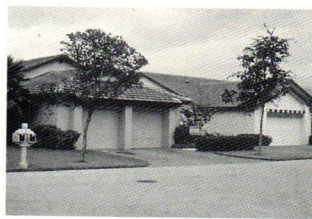


Suburban street layouts are most often aggressively curvilinear, which causes disorientation and makes it difficult to find addresses without specific directions.



Neighborhood street layouts may bend as necessary to accommodate existing conditions, but each street trajectory retains its cardinal orientation.

garages



Throughout suburbia, garage doors are the primary facade expression of houses, making the experience from the street both boring and unpleasant, especially on smaller lots where the driveways cover over the front lawns.



In neighborhoods, lanes or alleys permit garages to be at the rear, freeing the facades for socially interactive elements such as windows, porches, and stoops facing the street.

building articulation



The architectural expression of suburban buildings is usually highly articulated and rotated relative to the street, precluding the stable definition of space as place.



Neighborhood buildings are only modestly articulated and all buildings are aligned, creating a wall that defines a sense of place.

facades



The building articulation of suburban houses is primarily at the facade to create “curb appeal” leaving little architecture for the rear yard.



Facades of neighborhood houses are simple, leaving recourse to articulate private spaces at the rear yard.

landscaping



Suburban landscaping is deployed ornamentally, creating a scenography in support of the real estate sales effort.



Neighborhood landscaping is primarily remedial, makes spatial gaps, and corrects excessively wide street spaces.

curb radius (corners)



The radius at the curbs of suburban streets is large, increasing the crossing distance for the pedestrian and permitting cars to turn without slowing down.



The curb radius of neighborhood streets is small, minimizing the distance between sidewalks and forcing cars to a stop before turning.



Nicholas Nixon
Glenwood Heights
Albuquerque, 1974

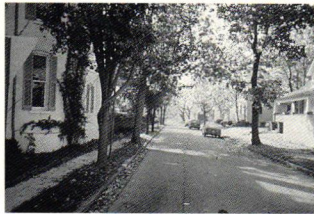


Nicholas Nixon
Housing Development, Academy and San Mateo
Albuquerque, 1974

traffic



Suburban residential “collectors” are much too large (sized for an unlikely conflagration of emergency vehicles), encouraging the typical car to speed, thereby justifying the need for the cul-de-sac.

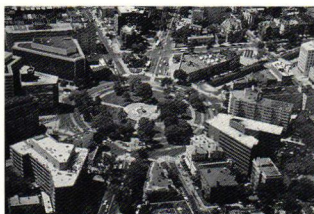


Typical neighborhood streets are sized to be no larger than demonstrably necessary for emergency vehicles, forcing cars down to speeds which are compatible with residential use.

intersections

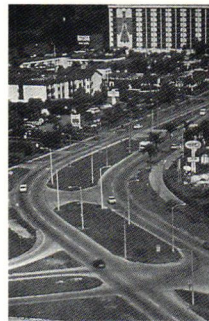


Major suburban intersections are geometrically designed for the fast and free flow of traffic, withdrawing enormous areas from other use and negating the possibility of mitigating construction costs.



Major neighborhood intersections are designed to create useful parks and to accommodate marketable building sites.

urban fabric



Suburban arterials are specialized for traffic, creating spaces inhospitable to buildings and people, thereby sundering the urban fabric.



Neighborhood boulevards are complex accommodations for traffic, parking, trees, and sidewalks, creating habitable public spaces that weave the buildings into an urban fabric.

The Neighborhood pattern has several positive consequences:

By bringing most of the activities of daily living into walking distance, everyone, but especially the elderly and the young, gain independence of movement.

By reducing the number and length of automobile trips, traffic congestion is minimized, the expense of road construction is limited and air pollution is reduced.

By providing streets and squares of pedestrian scale neighbors, walking, come to know each other and to watch over their collective security.

By providing appropriate building concentrations at easy walking distance from bus stops, public transit becomes a viable alternative to the automobile.

By providing a full range of housing types and work places, age and economic classes are integrated and the bonds of an authentic community are formed.

By providing suitable civic buildings and spaces, democratic initiatives are encouraged.

The Suburban pattern has several negative consequences:

By assuming the need to drive to and from all activities, the need for larger streets and parking lots is a self-fulfilling prophecy and the natural landscape is consumed.

By consigning the available public works budget to transportation infrastructure, the human infrastructure of civic buildings is starved.

By separating areas, the investment of personal time in the activity of commuting is mandatory.

By being forced into multiple automobile payments, many cannot qualify for home mortgages.

By being dependent on adult drivers, the young lead an unnecessarily circumscribed existence.

By losing self-sufficiency once they lose their driving ability, the elderly must be re-housed in retirement communities.

A Sense of Place, a Sense of Time

by J. B. Jackson

This essay is excerpted from the 1994 book of the same name, published by Yale University Press. Reprinted with permission.

The truth is, Americans are of two minds as to how we ought to live. Publicly we say harsh things about urban sprawl and suburbia, and we encourage activity in the heart of town. In theory, but only in theory, we want to duplicate the traditional compact European community where everyone takes part in a rich and diversified public life. But at the same time most of us are secretly pining for a secluded hideaway, a piece of land, or a small house in the country where we can lead an intensely private nonurban existence, staying close to home. I am not entirely sure that this is a real contradiction. While we agree that scatteration and the dying central city are both of them unsightly and illogical, we also, I think, feel a deep and persistent need for privacy and independence in our domestic life. That is why the freestanding dwelling on its own well-defined plot of land, whether in a prosperous residential neighborhood or in impoverished urban fringes, is so persistent a feature of our landscape. That is why our downtown areas, however vital they may be economically, are so lacking in what is called a sense of place.

“Sense of place” is a much used expression, chiefly by architects but taken over by urban planners and interior decorators and the promoters of condominiums, so that now it means very little. It is an awkward and ambiguous modern translation of the Latin term *genius loci*. In classical times it meant not so much the place itself as the guardian divinity of that place. It was believed that a locality—a space or a structure or a whole community—derived much of its unique quality from the presence or guardianship of a supernatural spirit. The visitor and the inhabitants were always aware of that benign presence and paid reverence to it on many occasions. The phrase thus implied celebration or ritual, and the location itself acquired a special status. Our modern culture rejected the notion of a divine or supernatural presence, and in the eighteenth century the Latin phrase was usually translated as “the genius of a place,” meaning its influence. Travelers would say that they stayed in Rome for a month or so in order to savor the genius of the city. We now use the current version to describe the *atmosphere* to a place, the quality of its *environment*. Nevertheless, we recognize that certain localities have an attraction which gives us a certain indefinable sense of well-being and which we want to return to, time and again. So that original notion of ritual, of repeated celebration or reverence, is still inherent in the phrase. It is not a temporary response, for it persists and brings us back, reminding us of previous visits.

So one way of defining such localities would be to say that they are cherished because they are embedded in the everyday world around us and easily accessible, but at the same time are distinct from that world. A visit to one of them is a small but significant event. We are refreshed and elated each time we are there. I cannot really define such localities any more precisely. The experience varies in intensity; it can be private and solitary, or convivial and social. The place can be a natural setting or a crowded street or even a public occasion. What moves us is our change of mood, the brief but vivid event. And what automatically ensues, it seems to me, is a sense of fellowship with those who share the experience, and the instinctive desire to return, to establish a custom of repeated ritual.

I realize that this definition automatically excludes many localities which a careless use of the term endows with a sense of place. I think it is essential that we *do* exclude many current usages. But to return to the American scene, particularly to the average American western town or city, I would say that for historical reasons few of them have structures or spaces which produce any vivid sense of *political* place. What until very recently we have had are spaces and events related to the *family* and the small neighborhood group. By that I mean not merely the home—which in the past was the basic example of the sense of place—but also those places and structures connected with ritual and with a restricted fellowship or membership—places which we could say were extensions of the dwelling or the neighborhood: the school, the church, the lodge, the cemetery, the playing field. Ask the average American of the older generation what he or she most clearly remembers and cherishes about the home town and its events and the answer will rarely be the public square, the monuments, the patriotic celebrations. What come to mind are such nonpolitical, nonarchitectural places and events as commencement, a revival service in a tent, a traditional football rivalry game, a country fair, and certain family celebrations. For all of these have those qualities I associate with a sense of place: a lively awareness of the familiar environment, a ritual repetition, a sense of fellowship based on a shared experience.

These localities are many of them out-of-date. As our cities have grown we have come closer together and acquired a more inclusive sense of community. Even so, I'm inclined to believe that the average American still associates a sense of place not so much with architecture or a monument or a designed space as with some event, some daily or weekly or seasonal occurrence which we look forward to or remember and which we share with others, and as a result the event becomes more significant than the place itself. Moreover, I believe that this has always been the common or vernacular way of recognizing the unique quality of the community we live in. The Old World farm village came to life whenever it observed the traditional farm calendar or the church calendar. The special days for plowing, for planting, for harvesting, the days set aside for honoring the local saint, were days when the local sense of place was most vivid. What made the marketplace significant was not its architecture, it was the event which took place there, the recurring day. It would be worth studying how special places have been abandoned over time, and how the event itself has been relocated.

Modern America, of course, has abandoned most of that traditional calendar. But to take its place we continue to evolve, in town after town, a complicated schedule of our own. What brings us together with people is not that we live near each other, but that we share the same timetable: the same work hours, the same religious observances, the same habits and customs. That is why we are more and more aware of time, and of the rhythm of the community. It is our sense of time, our sense of ritual, which in the long run creates our sense of place, and of community. In our urban environment which is constantly undergoing irreversible changes, a cyclical sense of time, the regular recurrence of events and celebrations, is what gives us reassurance and a sense of unity and continuity.

A remarkable book entitled *Hidden Rhythms* by Eviatar Zerubavel, published in 1981, is a pioneer treatment of what the author describes as the sociology of time: "the *sociotemporal order* which regulates the lives of *social* entities such as families, professional groups, religious communities, complex organizations, or even entire nations." Zerubavel writes that "much of our social life is temporally structured in accordance with 'mechanical time,' which is quite independent of 'the rhythm of man's organic impulses and needs.' In other words, we are increasingly detaching ourselves from 'organic and functional periodicity' which is dictated by nature, and replacing it by 'mechanical periodicity' which is dictated by the schedule, the calendar, and the clock."¹

There is no need to dwell on the ever-increasing importance of mechanical time in modern America with our insistence on schedules, programs, timetables, and the automatic recurrence of events—not only in the workplace, but in social life and celebrations. Nor need we be reminded that this reverence for the clock and the calendar has robbed much social intercourse of its spontaneity and has in fact relegated place and the sense of place to a subordinate position in our lives. Much has been written (notably by Ervin Goffman and Joshua Meyrowitz) about the disappearance of spatial distinctions and spatial characteristics because of the electronic media. In terms of the High Plains, I think it could be said that two factors contributed to an early shift from sense of place to sense of time in the organization of the landscape: the advent of the railroad with its periodicity—a decisive influence in the patterns of social and working contacts in the small railroad towns—and second, the almost total absence of topographical landmarks. Zerubavel, however, goes further in describing the social consequences of this sharing of schedules and calendars and routines, and the consequent downgrading of gathering places:

A temporal order that is commonly shared by a social group and is unique to it [as in a work schedule or holidays or a religious calendar] to the extent that it distinguishes and separates group members from “outsiders” contributes to the establishment of intergroup boundaries and constitutes a powerful basis of solidarity within the group. . . . The private or public quality of any given space very often varies across time. . . . By providing some fairly rigid boundaries that segregate the private and public spheres of life from one another . . . time seems to function as a segmenting principle; it helps segregate the private and the public spheres of life from one another.²

So in the long run it is that recurrence of certain days, certain seasons that eventually produces those spaces and structures we now think so essential. I believe we attach too much importance to art and architecture in producing an awareness of our belonging to a city or a country, when what we actually share is a sense of time. What we commemorate is its passing; and we thus establish a more universal historical bond and develop a deeper understanding of our society. Let me quote from Paul Tillich:

The power of space is great, and it is always active for creation and destruction. It is the basis of the desire of any group of human beings to have a place of their own, a place which gives them reality, presence, power of living, which feeds them, body and soul. This is the reason for the adoration of earth and soil, not of soil generally but of this special soil, and not of earth generally but of the divine powers connected with this special section of earth. . . . But every space is limited, and so the conflict arises between the limited space of any human group, even of mankind itself, and the unlimited claim which follows from the definition of this space. . . . Tragedy and injustice belong to the gods of space, historical fulfillment and justice belong to the God who acts in time and through time, uniting the separated spaces of his universe in love.³

1. Eviatar Zerubavel, *Hidden Rhythms: Schedules and Calendars in Social Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), xii.

2. *ibid.*, 141.

3. Paul Tillich, *Theology of Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959), 16.



Nicholas Nixon
Albuquerque Sports Stadium
1974

Whatever Happened to Urbanism?

by Rem Koolhaas

This essay is excerpted from S, M, L, XL published by Monacelli Press. Reprinted with permission.

This century has been a losing battle with the issue of quantity.

In spite of its early promise, its frequent bravery, urbanism has been unable to invent and implement at the scale demanded by its apocalyptic demographics. In 20 years, Lagos has grown from 2 to 7 to 12 to 15 million; Istanbul has doubled from 6 to 12. China prepares for even more staggering multiplications.

How to explain the paradox that urbanism, as a profession, has disappeared at the moment when urbanization everywhere—after decades of constant acceleration—is on its way to establishing a definitive, global “triumph” of the urban condition?

Modernism’s alchemistic promise—to transform quantity into quality through abstraction and repetition—has been a failure, a hoax; magic that didn’t work. Its ideas, aesthetics, strategies are finished. Together, all attempts to make a new

beginning have only discredited the *idea* of a new beginning. A collective shame in the wake of this fiasco has left a massive crater in our understanding of modernity and modernization.

What makes this experience disconcerting and (for architects) humiliating is the city’s defiant persistence and apparent vigor, in spite of the collective failure of all agencies that act on it or try to influence it—creatively, logistically, politically. The professionals of the city are like chess players who lose to computers. A perverse automatic pilot constantly outwits all attempts at capturing the city, exhausts all ambitions of its definition, ridicules the most passionate assertions of its present failure and future impossibility, steers it implacably further on its flight forward. Each disaster foretold is somehow absorbed under the infinite blanketing of the urban.

Even as the apotheosis of urbanization is glaringly obvious and mathematically inevitable, a chain of rearguard, escapist actions and positions postpones the final moment of reckoning for the two professions formerly most implicated in making cities—architecture and urbanism. Pervasive urbanization has modified the urban condition itself beyond recognition. “The” city no longer exists. As the concept of city is distorted and stretched beyond precedent, each insistence on its primordial condition—in terms of images, rules, fabrication—irrevocably leads via nostalgia to irrelevance. For urbanists, the belated rediscovery of the virtues of the classical city at the moment of their definitive impossibility may have been the point of no return, fatal moment of disconnection, disqualification. They are now specialists in phantom pain; doctors discussing the medical intricacies of an amputated limb.

The transition from a former position of power to a reduced station of relative humility is hard to perform. Dissatisfaction with the contemporary city has not led to the development of a credible alternative; it has, on the contrary, inspired only more refined ways of articulating dissatisfaction. A profession persists in its fantasies, its ideology, its pretension, its illusions of involvement and control, and is therefore incapable of conceiving new modesties, partial interventions, strategic realignments, compromised positions that might influence, redirect, succeed in limited terms, regroup, begin from scratch even, but never will reestablish control. Because the generation of May ’68—the largest generation ever, caught in the “collective narcissism of a demographic bubble”—is now finally in power, it is tempting to think that it is responsible for the demise of urbanism—the state of affairs in which cities can no longer be made—paradoxically because it rediscovered and reinvented the city.

Sous le pavé, la plage (under the pavement, beach): initially, May ’68 launched the idea of a new beginning for the city. Since then, we have been engaged in two parallel operations: documenting our overwhelming awe for the existing city, developing philosophies, projects, prototypes for a preserved and reconstituted city and, at the same time, laughing the professional field of urbanism out of existence, dismantling it in our contempt for those who planned (and made huge mistakes in planning) airports, New Towns, satellite cities, highways,

highrise buildings, infrastructures, and all the other fallout from modernization. After sabotaging urbanism, we have ridiculed it to the point where entire university departments are closed, offices bankrupted, bureaucracies fired or privatized.

Our "sophistication" hides major symptoms of cowardice centered on the simple question of taking positions—maybe the most basic action in making the city. We are simultaneously dogmatic and evasive. Our amalgamated wisdom can be easily caricatured: according to Derrida, we cannot be *Whole*, according to Baudrillard, we cannot be *Real*, according to Virilio, we cannot be *There*—exiled to the virtual world: plot for a horror movie.

Our present relationship with the "crisis" of the city is deeply ambiguous: we still blame others for a situation for which both our incurable utopianism and our contempt are responsible. Through our hypocritical relationship with power—contemptuous yet covetous—we dismantled an entire discipline, cut ourselves off from the operational, and condemned whole populations to the impossibility of encoding civilizations on their territory—the subject of urbanism.

Now we are left with a world without urbanism, only architecture, ever more architecture. The neatness of architecture is its seduction; it defines, excludes, limits, separates from the "rest"—but it also consumes. It exploits and exhausts the potentials that can be generated finally only by urbanism, and that only the specific imagination of urbanism can invent and renew. The death of urbanism—our refuge in the parasitic security of architecture—creates an immanent disaster: more and more substance is grafted on starving roots.

In our more permissive moments, we have surrendered to the aesthetics of chaos—"our" chaos. But in the technical sense chaos is what happens when nothing happens, not something that can be engineered or embraced; it is something that infiltrates; it cannot be fabricated. The only legitimate relationship that architects can have with the subject of chaos is to take their rightful place in the army of those devoted to resist it, and fail.

If there is to be a "new urbanism" it will not be based on the twin fantasies of order and omnipotence; it will be the staging of uncertainty; it will no longer be concerned with the arrangement of more or less permanent objects but with the irrigation of territories with potential; it will no longer aim for stable configurations but for the

creation of enabling fields that accommodate processes that refuse to be crystallized into definitive form; it will no longer be about meticulous definition, the imposition of limits, but about expanding notions, denying boundaries, not about separating and identifying entities, but about discovering unnamable hybrids; it will no longer be obsessed with the city but with the manipulation of infra-structure for endless intensifications and diversifications, shortcuts and redistributions—the reinvention of psychological space. Since the urban is now pervasive, urbanism will never again be about the "new," only about the "more" and the "modified." It will not be about the civilized, but about underdevelopment.

Since it is out of control, the urban is about to become a major vector of the imagination. Redefined, urbanism will not only, or mostly, be a profession, but a way of thinking, an ideology: to accept what exists. We were making sand castles. Now we swim in the sea that swept them away.

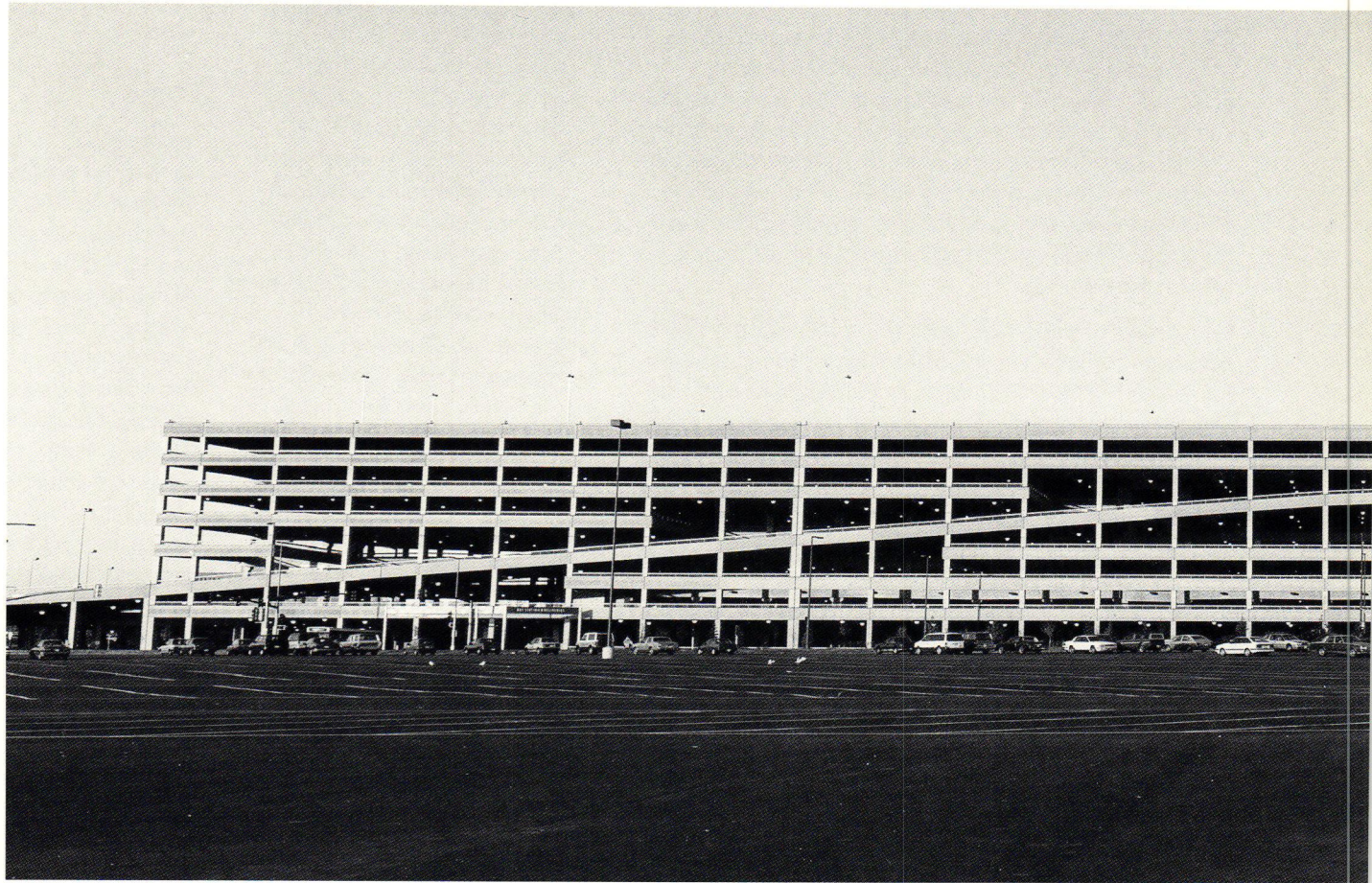
To survive, urbanism will have to imagine a new newness. Liberated from its atavistic duties, urbanism redefined as a way of operating on the inevitable will attack architecture, invade its trenches, drive it from its bastions, undermine its certainties, explode its limits, ridicule its preoccupations with matter and substance, destroy its traditions, smoke out its practitioners.

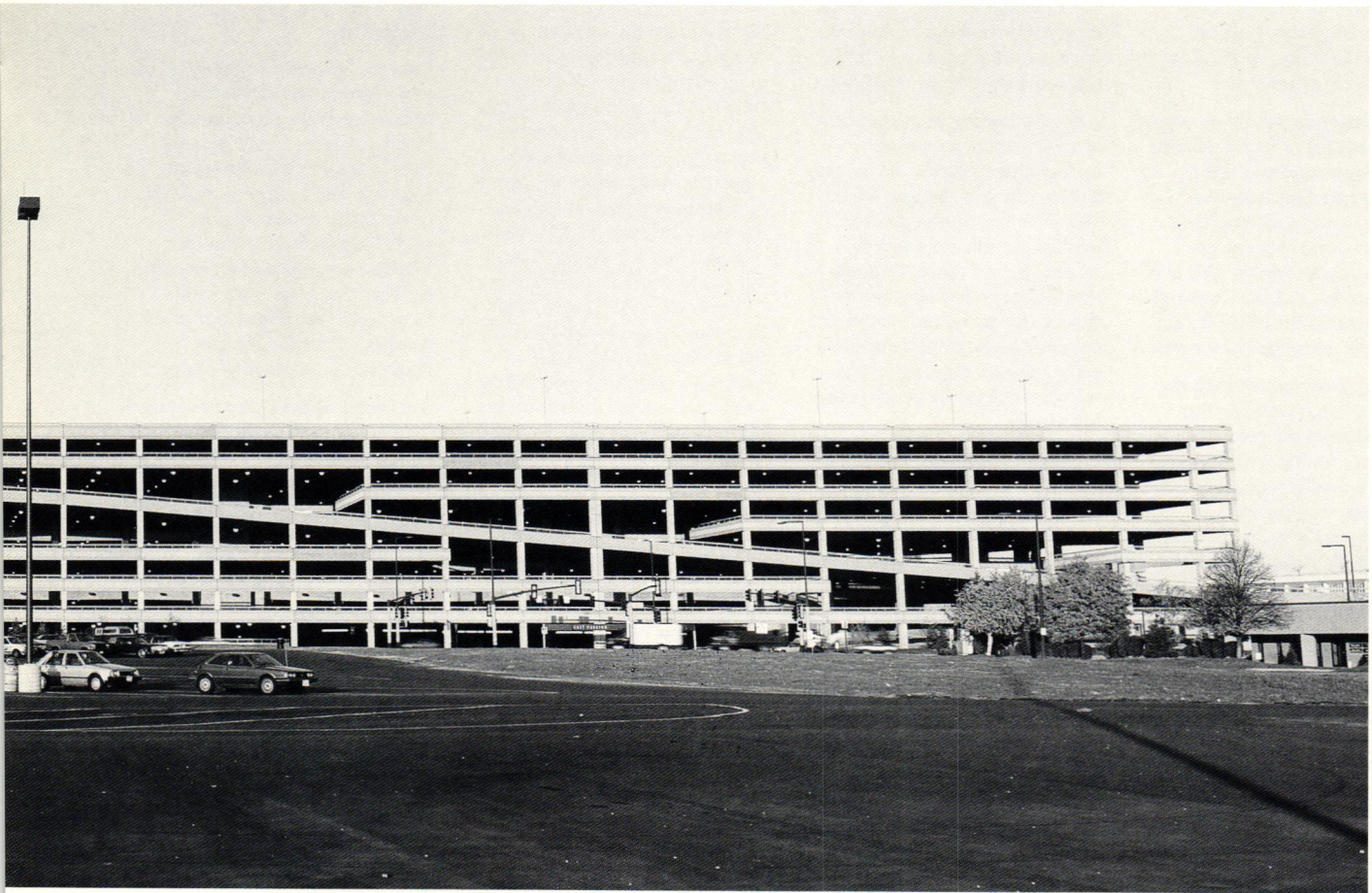
The seeming failure of the urban offers an exceptional opportunity, a pretext for Nietzschean frivolity. We have to imagine 1,001 other concepts of city; we have to take

insane risks; we have to dare to be utterly uncritical; we have to swallow deeply and bestow forgiveness left and right. The certainty of failure has to be our laughing gas/oxygen; modernization our most potent drug. Since we are not responsible, we have to become irresponsible. In a landscape of increasing expediency and impermanence, urbanism no longer is or has to be the most solemn of our decisions; urbanism can lighten up, become a Gay Science—Lite Urbanism.

What if we simply declare that there is no crisis—redefine our relationship with the city not as its makers but as its mere subjects, as its supporters?

More than ever, the city is all we have.





*East Parking Ramp at
Mall of America*
Bloomington, Minnesota
Christopher Faust,
Suburban Documentation
Project, 1992

The 4.2 million square foot Mall of America is the nation's largest shopping mall. Airlines sponsor shopping junkets to the Mall from places as distant as Japan. Most shoppers arrive by car. The parking ramps on the east and west ends of the Mall express not only its massive-ness but the huge investments needed to keep cars on the road and walking from car to store at a minimum.

Biographies

Andres Duany was born in New York City in 1949, and grew up in Cuba until immigrating to the United States in 1960. He studied architecture as an undergraduate at Princeton University and received his graduate degree from Yale School of Architecture, where he was most influenced by the lectures of Vincent Scully. His apprenticeship included work in the offices of Ricardo Bofill and Robert Stern.

After moving to Miami in 1974, Andres became a founding partner of Arquitectonica, along with his wife Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, in 1976. During their four years with this practice, they participated in the first executed buildings of the Constructivist revival, some of which are the largest exemplars of the style.

In 1980, disenchanted with the making of architectural form detached from the principles of urbanism, Andres and Elizabeth opened a new practice, DPZ Architects. Among the firm's early projects was the regulating plan and the building codes for the new town of Seaside. They have completed over 90 plans since; most are new towns for private developers, but others are master plans for urban municipalities including those for the centers of Trenton, Providence, and Los Angeles, and those for inner-city neighborhoods in Saint Louis, Cleveland, and Fort Lauderdale. They are also planning northern extensions of Toronto for the provincial government of Ontario.

Andres and Elizabeth have been teaching at the University of Miami School of Architecture since 1975. Andres lectures extensively on the problems of suburban sprawl and teaches an annual summer planning course at Harvard's Graduate School of Design. Founding a master's in architecture program in Suburb and Town Design in 1989, Elizabeth continues with her students and other faculty at Miami to explore current issues in urban growth and reconstruction. As Director of the Center for Urban and Community Design, she guides the work of her colleagues on behalf of numerous local municipalities and communities.

John Brinckerhoff Jackson is considered by many to be the pioneer in landscape studies. The author of many groundbreaking books in the field, he is also the founder of *Landscape* magazine, where he served as editor for 17 years. His courses in the history of American landscape at Harvard and Berkeley were the catalyst for both universities to create entire programs in landscape and environmental studies.

After graduating from Harvard in 1932, where he studied history and literature, he moved to New Mexico. During World War II he served as a combat intelligence officer in North Africa, Sicily, France, Belgium, and Germany. It was while in France that he became aware of the French school of cultural geography, an experience that was the impetus for much of his life's work.

He began *Landscape* magazine with "the hope of arousing a kind of speculative interest in the human geography of the Southwest," and it branched out to become one of the most successful of the "little magazines," gathering over the years a diverse readership from the fields of geography, architecture, city and regional planning, landscape architecture, and environmental design.

Some of Jackson's books include *American Space*, *The Necessity of Ruins*, and *Discovering the Vernacular Landscape*.

Rem Koolhaas, considered by Philip Johnson perhaps the leading architect at work today, founded the Office for Metropolitan Architecture (OMA) in 1974 with Elia and Zoë Zenghelis and Madelon Vriesendorp. Heading an international roster of architects, Koolhaas served as master architect for Euralille, a billion dollar complex meant to transform the quiet northern-French city of Lille into the railway hub of the new Europe. His own contribution to the project, Congrexpo, a 200,000-square-foot oval complex housing a concert hall and three auditoriums (L, XL, XXL), won the Antonio Gaudi Prize. Subject of the recent exhibition "Thresholds/OMA at MoMA: Rem Koolhaas and the Place of Public Architecture" at New York's Museum of Modern Art, this Dutch architect is the author of the book-length manifesto *Delirious New York*, which sounded a new note in architecture, urbanism, and the ways they interrelate when it first appeared in 1978. It has recently been reissued by The Monacelli Press, which will also publish a massive new book, *S, M, L, XL*, detailing Koolhaas' subsequent explorations in "metropolitanism."

Richard Moe was born in Duluth, Minnesota, and graduated from Williams College in 1959. His ensuing public-service career led to administrative positions in city and state government and the chairmanship of the Minnesota DFL Party. During this period he received a law degree from the University of Minnesota.

In 1972, he moved to Washington to be administrative assistant to Senator Walter F. Mondale. Five years later, he was named chief of staff to Vice President Mondale and became a member of the White House senior staff. He practiced law in the Washington-ton office of Davis Polk & Wardwell from 1981 until he assumed the presidency of the National Trust for Historic Preservation in January of 1993.

A member of the Committee for the Preservation of the White House and the board of the Civil War Trust, Richard Moe is also the author of *The Last Full Measure: The Life and Death of the Minnesota Volunteers*.

The Suburban Documentation Project was founded in 1990 by landscape architect Frank Edgerton Martin and photographer Chris Faust. Since that time, the Project has generated several published articles and over 1,500 photos of urban growth in the Twin Cities, Chicago, Milwaukee, Des Moines, Denver, Seattle, and Portland. Earlier Project work was featured in the Summer 1992 and the Spring 1993 issues of *Design Quarterly*.

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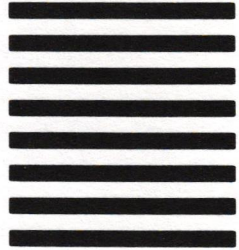


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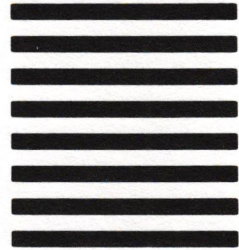


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Route 64, west of Route 89,
on the way to the Grand Canyon
Arizona, 1986

