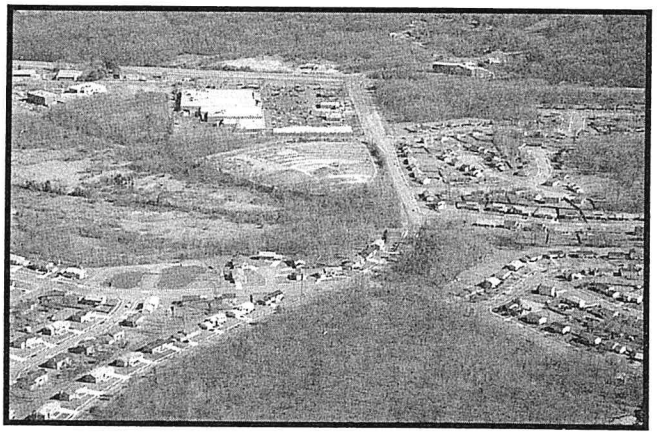
A BIOGRAPHY OF THE PAST

CHAPTER THREE

Introduction

Understanding the biography of the past is the first step in the process of designing small communities. We must understand the relationship between the rational and the personal programming that contributes to the current physical condition. We carry our past with us. By combining the most positive aspect of our past programming with a clean rejection of the negative, the future is more clearly defined. In this Chapter, I offer my perspective on the evolution of sprawl development through a brief description of the roles of federal and local policies, planning movements, and social, political, and economic trends as they relate to land use. I examine the inefficiencies of sprawl, the disparate demands on local infrastructure, and the social impact of living in developments that are strictly utilitarian areas with no sense of place--the Edge Cities, residential subdivisions, office parks and strip malls. Through a realization of the negative effects of sprawl, we come to understand that much of the pattern formulated in the 1930s has reached optimization and is beginning to deteriorate. This is exacerbated by building new sprawl development and approving additional plans, some of which is not yet built. What is required is a new vision, application, and process. In short, we must understand what sprawl is so that we may implement a more thoughtful and responsive planning process.



Typical sprawl pattern with separated land uses.

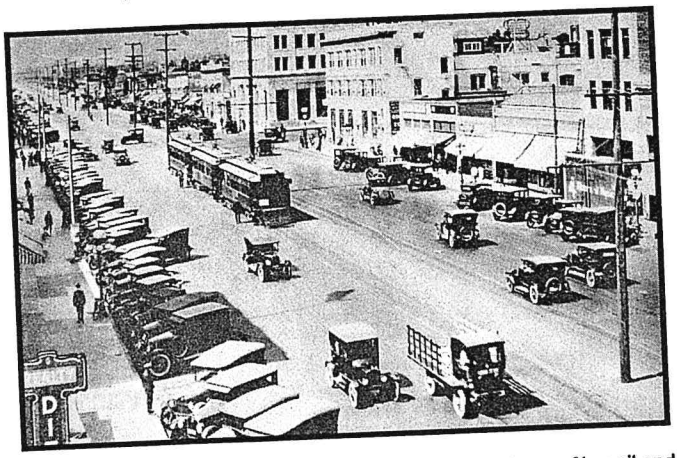
An image that always receives a negative/unacceptable rating.

An Historical View of Forces Affecting Land Use

The following analysis is a synopsis of events that have conditioned our thinking about the pattern and consequences of sprawl. It is presented to provide a basic understanding and chronology of the planning biography of our past. It highlights some of the most significant legislation and records the events and policies that clearly reveal the reasons why many land planners, bankers, and transportation planners continue to encourage sprawl today. Readers should consider what role these played in the planning of their towns and the surrounding region.

An Older America

In the late 1800s the country consisted primarily of vibrant and fundamentally positive villages, towns, and farms. These villages and towns were the center of social and community life. There were also a few large cities, like New York and Chicago, where large groups of immigrants lived in very crowded and congested conditions. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the City Beautiful Movement sought to improve the urban image through the construction of monumental public facilities in the center of cities. This was a time when streetcars were heavily used and most needs were within walking distance of the home or the streetcar stop. Throughout the twentieth century, the private automobile became increasingly popular. Although it began as a recreational vehicle for the affluent, it soon became affordable because of the efficiencies of the assembly-line and mass production. Increasingly, there were signs that the popularization of this mode of transportation would have an impact on the design of places. The familiar images of the 1920s indicate a love affair with this new technology. Just how far reaching the impact would be could hardly have been foreseen.

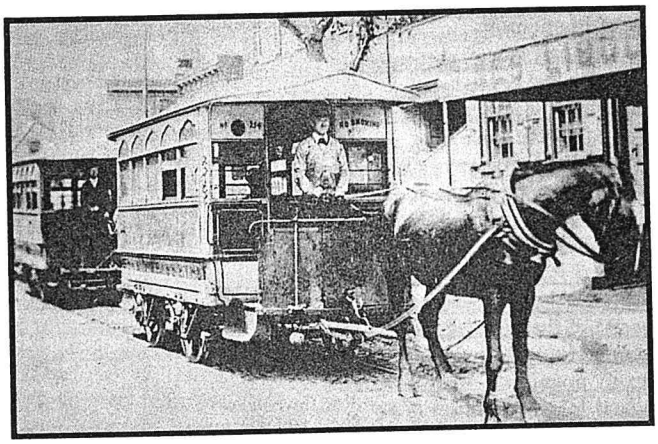


For a short while cities and towns were able to have a balance of transit and automobiles.

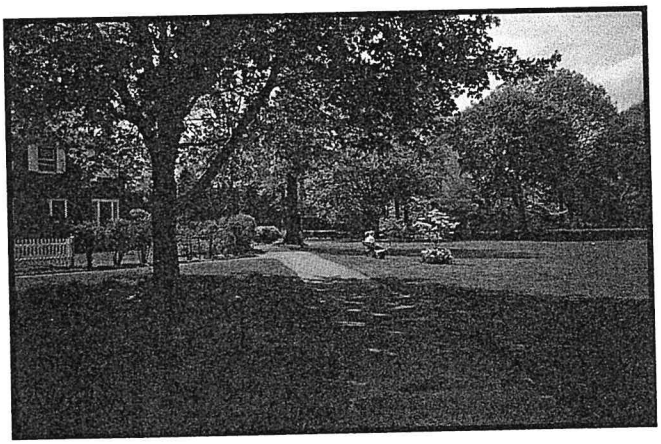
Early Suburbs

Places that developed in the late 19th or early 20th century have a slightly different development pattern. During this time, streetcars and interurban transit facilitated the growth of towns and cities beyond their original boundaries. New streetcar suburbs sprang up at unprecedented distances from the city or town center. On a very limited scale, development began to sprawl. In the streetcar suburb, the detached house was popular and possible because of available land. Perhaps more important, however, the street-

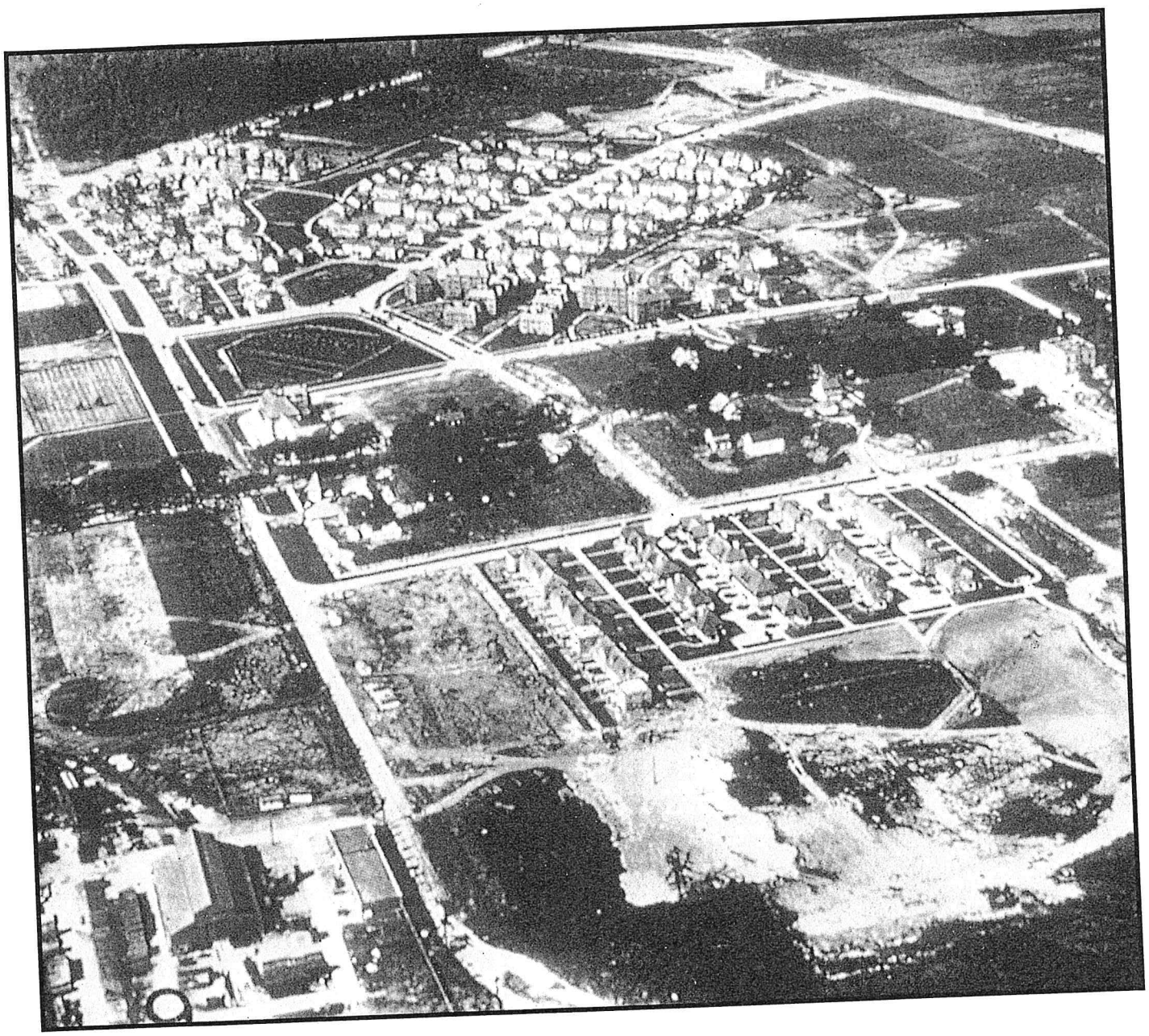
car made increasingly distant residences possible because householders could more quickly reach jobs, services, and cultural sites within the metropolitan area. Although streetcar suburbs could be placed at great distances from town, the community continued to be fairly compact. People still had to live within walking distance of the streetcar; it was their primary means of transportation. Thus, the streetcar suburb could not experience rampant and unchecked growth.



At the same time as the developing streetcar suburb, during the period roughly between 1870 and 1930, rail lines, streetcars, and the emerging automobile offered a freedom in town design that had not been known before. This freedom gave an impetus to design for new towns. Such newly designed residential towns made possible an escape from the 19th century industrial city, often a foul and unhealthy place. Town planners saw an opportunity to offer a better life away from the tenements, they espoused country living, while endowing their plans with the community and cultural facilities of the city. Radburn, (c. 1929) by Wright and Stein, has been one of the most influential of these suburbs. Radburn attempted to combine the growing dependence on the private automobile with the ability to walk to a train station and to school without crossing a road. The basis of the plan was a complete multiple-use community. This plan departed from the traditional community form with the use of cul-de-sacs off loop roads and internal walkways and parks. Because of the stock market crash in 1929, Radburn was never completed. Consequently, it has never been properly repeated. However, many of its individual features have been adopted without an understanding of the whole concept. The cul-de-sac, for instance, is the most used and abused feature in current suburban subdivisions. We now see cul-de-sacs without the walkways or the internal parks. Houses do not front on parks, one can not easily walk to community facilities.



The internal park of Radburn, NJ, created at the ends of the cul-de-sacs.



This is an aerial view of Radburn, (c. 1930) provided by Radburn Association.

The Evolution of Sprawl from 1900 - 1992: Why Did It Occur?

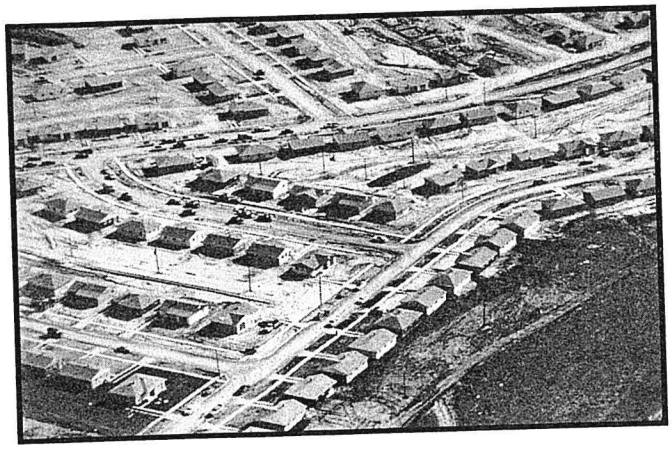
Sprawl is the product of federal programs and policies and the corresponding state and local land use policies. It is an economic program of personal consumption, reinforced by court decisions. It is the result of a premeditated set of planning policies that were developed during the New Deal era in order to create consumer investment activity though infrastructure and policy incentives provided by the Federal Government. The federal programs supporting the 30-year mortgage guarantee and new highway construction opened previously inaccessible land to speculators. The highways were needed to provide access to land and to give the middle class their piece of the media-programmed American dream, a small lot, a house, a T.V., and a car, the image reinforced by the 1939 World Fair. The marketing campaigns worked. The new consumer society loved the new houses, new cars, and new appliances. Dad worked, Mom stayed at home. They left the farm and the old neighborhood. They moved to the country. Now the limitations of this vision are becoming evident. Now we see that these policies entailed pollution, the degradation of the countryside and a style of life neither convenient nor problem free. Now we see that that American dream consumes an unprecedented amount of exurban land, requires millions of cars, millions of miles of highways, and billion of barrels of oil. While these policies were undertaken in order to create market demands from the New Deal Era through the 1980s, it is now clear that this economic policy created serious ecological and economic problems. Furthermore, the price of housing and cost of living have outpaced many personal incomes.

Mom, Dad, Dick, Jane, and Spot. The traditional nuclear family, for which sprawl was planned and designed, has changed radically.

Village of Euclid v. Ambler Realty

This landmark 1927 court decision upheld the constitutionality of single-use zoning, thereby rationalizing its universal application. Protection of the health and the safety of the community justified the separation of residential, commercial, and industrial land-uses from which one or another use was excluded. This ruling became the basis of all comprehensive zoning and planning in the United States, making single-use zoning the norm and mixed-uses zones illegal in many places. Euclidean zoning is the prime land-use regulating characteristic of sprawl. As evidence of the pervasiveness of such sprawl consider whether you know of any municipalities that permit a mix of uses in a single zone.

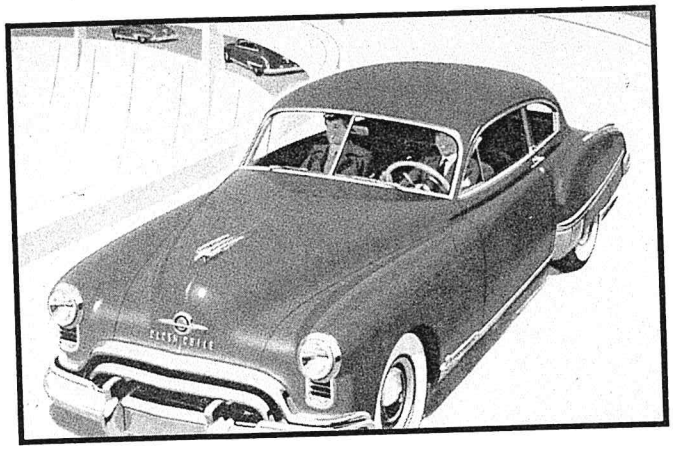
Land separated into Euclidean zones.



1950s style subdivisions

Federal Housing Administration (FHA)

In response to the poverty and consequent neglect of municipal facilities during the Depression, government programs were enacted to stimulate economic growth. The National Housing Act, adopted in June, 1934, created a program to stimulate building activity. To facilitate home financing, the FHA provided insurance for long-term mortgages, extending repayment periods for up to 30 years. The market for home ownership was vastly expanded, and housing starts grew from 93,000 in 1933 to 619,000 in 1941. The FHA was mostly concerned with "economic soundness"; consequently, it tended to favor new construction, suburban development, rather than urban redevelopment. The FHA also established minimum standards for home construction. These uniform standards became the basis for residential construction during a time of unprecedented growth. The cookie-cutter subdivision was created, producing acres of similar houses on uniform lot sizes with similar layouts and mortgages.



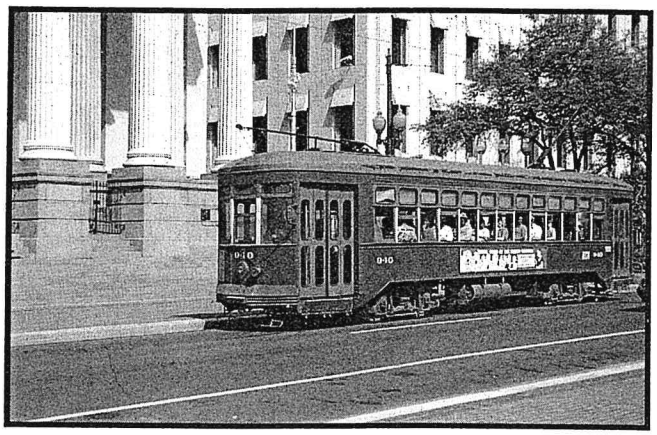
The vision of the smiling driver of a new car on the multi-deck roadway c.1950.

Federal Highway Administration

In 1937 the Federal Highway Administration was established; it called for new road types to accommodate the individual ownership of cars and trucks. The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) manual, first published in 1937, was soon to become the "Bible" for all road design standards. It provided standards for the modern freeways, highways, arterials, collectors, intersections, and ramps we know today. Subsidized by the Federal Government through a tax on gasoline, massive highway building programs were encouraged. Highways became a symbol of progress and development along them followed shortly. Strip commercial and residential subdivisions grew up along these thoroughfares, steadily gobbling up the countryside. The economic engine of the country was gearing up. Such development proceeded unchecked and without any rational plan. Such unchecked development was only reinforced by the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1956.

The Elimination of the Streetcar

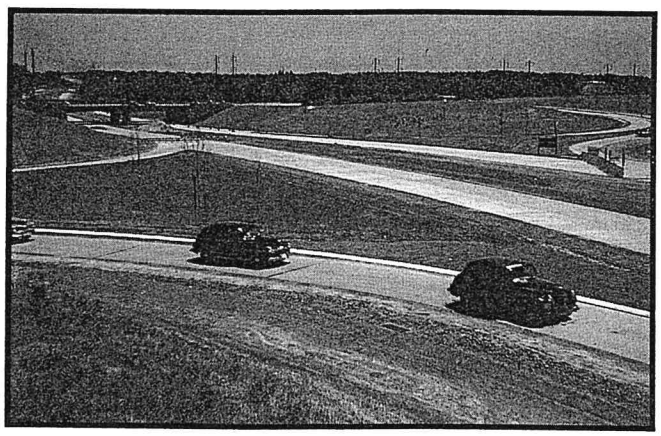
Most of our larger cities and towns once had a network of street cars. The village I grew up in had a street car system connecting the center of several villages like a string of pearls. But streetcars lost their popularity, dismantled by a coalition of automobile and oil companies, when automobiles, which moved faster than streetcars, became a requisite component of the American dream. Gasoline was cheap, and the convenience of getting in the car and driving off became part of everyday life. Even Los Angeles once had a remarkable system of trolley cars, that is now being replaced after billions of dollars of investments in roads and freeways. New Orleans, Boston, and San Francisco are among the best known American cities that maintained their streetcar systems. Today the systems in New Orleans and Boston are looked upon as valuable models of low technology transport, and San Francisco's well known cable cars are a major tourist attraction as well as a functional component of the city. Street cars provide structure and order to the neighborhoods, villages, and cities that they service.



The streetcar, functional, efficient and fully occupied.

The New York World's Fair, 1939-1940

The New York World's Fair fostered the vision of the American Dream. It popularized the new highways and sprawl pattern by heralding the city of the future, one that was laid out along a string of super highways. In GM's Futurama, visitors marveled at the future while traveling above a huge model. The aerodynamic cars of the future promised even greater freedom. The fair was only one of the widely publicized definitions of life in the future. Immensely popular, it introduced Americans to many of the artifacts we now take for granted. For the first time many Americans saw television and heard of air conditioning, two technological marvels that have played their part in defining the American home. These inventions made the neighborhood movie obsolete and the cooling front porch a less-than-necessary amenity.



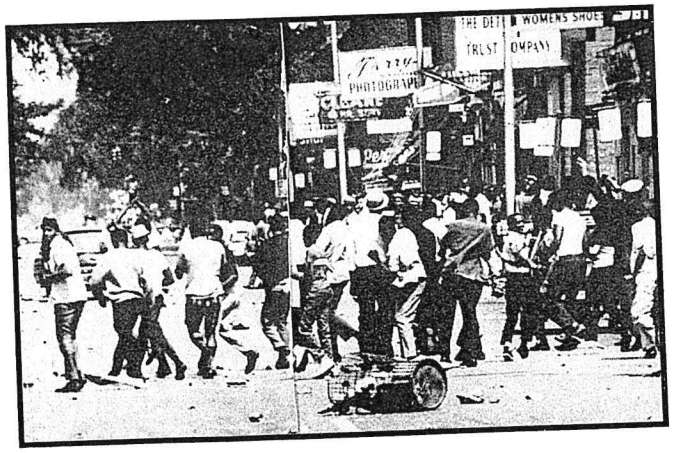
The vision of the new highway system.

World War II and the National Resources Planning Board (NRPB)

Even before the war's end, deteriorating cities were seen by planners as the ultimate challenge. The NRPB brought a new intensity to our thinking about the future of cities, and vast changes were seen for the post-war society.

One of the many Levittowns.

Urban renewal in New Brunswick, NJ.



Urban riots of the late 1960s

After the War

With the return of veterans and the baby boom's larger families, farmland was re-evaluated for its development potential. New housing was required. Villages began to expand. Random cul-de-sacs and curving street patterns, patterns that paid no heed to the terrain requirements, appeared in former fields outside of the traditional walkable villages and neighborhoods. Large cities began to lose their middle- and upper-income populations as FHA programs were strengthened. Through television and marketing, the expectations of Americans grew. A house in the suburbs and a car, or two, in the garage became the definition of the good life. The suburbanization of America began in earnest when Levittown was started, in 1947, on 1,400 acres of Long Island. At a rate of 35 per day, more than 17,000 identical houses were built within the next few years. Levittown demonstrated to the housing industry how to work on an unprecedented scale; it paved the way for other even larger Levittowns, as well as smaller clones, across the country.

Urban Renewal

The National Housing Act of 1949 addressed "the elimination of substandard and other inadequate housing through the clearance of slums and blighted areas." The Housing Act of 1954 expanded Urban Renewal to establish "a broad unified front to accomplish the renewal of our towns and cities," by establishing redevelopment procedures. However, Urban Renewal programs dealt only in physical renewal and did not strive to redevelop the community as a whole. The empty lots cleared by Urban Renewal are still visible in many of our cities and urban centers. In terms of community planning these acts have proved to be a dead-end. They neither ended the degradation of the inner city nor promoted the creation of healthy environments.

Late 1965

Inner city riots demonstrated the pent up frustrations in the cities, and led to additional economic flight from cities. Fear, excessive drug use, low educational attainment, and high unemployment have contributed to additional urban flight and subsequent suburban growth.

Federal 701 Comprehensive Planning Act

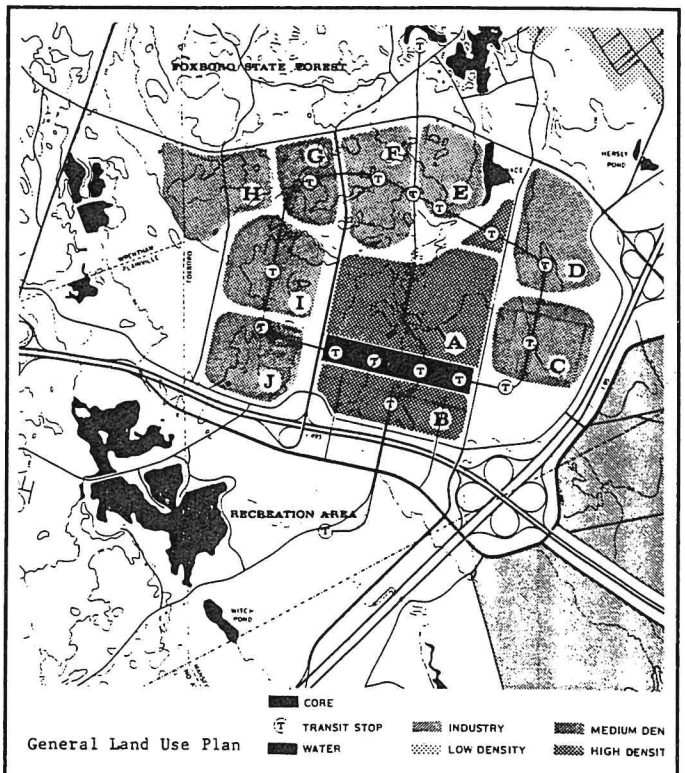
This act subsidized the creation of comprehensive master plans during the 1960s and 1970s. The resulting plans mirrored the current thinking in the area of land-use management, and they encouraged urban sprawl. They typically required single-use zoning and highway development, both of which underscore and enhance the importance of the automobile. Where possible, in order to decrease taxes and to pay for infrastructure, municipalities encouraged large-lot zoning. How many of your towns were planned for sprawl development with 701 Federal funding?

Federal New Communities Assistance Program

The New Communities Act of 1968 instituted federal loans for the infrastructure of new communities across the country. By providing more affordable housing, jobs in proximity to homes, and community services this act was seen as an antidote to the continued high cost of suburban sprawl. Unfortunately, only a few new communities were funded. The HUD New Communities Project, which I worked on as a graduate student created a prototype new community as a response to the negative impacts of the sprawl pattern and the deterioration of the economic, social and educational fabric.

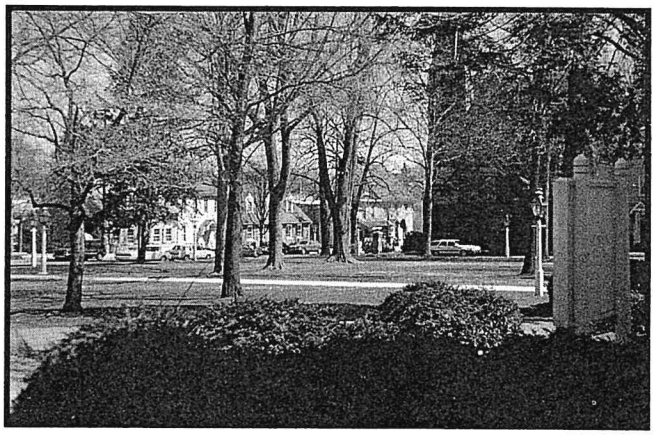
However, what evolved out of the new communities movement was the Planned Unit Development (P.U.D.). This is a generalized land-use pattern that allows multiple uses on a tract of land. A large parcel could be developed in conformity with a general plan that specifies development areas, open spaces, commercial uses, etc. Unfortunately, these P.U.D.s simply continued the separate land-use patterns of sprawl. Commercial developments in a P.U.D. are essentially strip malls; the open spaces are those lands that contain environmental constraints and so cannot be built upon; the single-family residences are located within pods; and the garden apartments and townhouses are located in different pods. It is still, primarily, automobile oriented.

A P.U.D. could be a small community if properly designed. The intent was to plan a well designed place. Unfortunately there were no clear design principles available to direct the three- and four-dimensional characteristics into a small community, rather it became, as its title suggests, Planned Unit Development.



Eight neighborhoods with a town and regional center connected by looped transit.

HUD New Community. 250,000 people on approximately 2,500 acres.

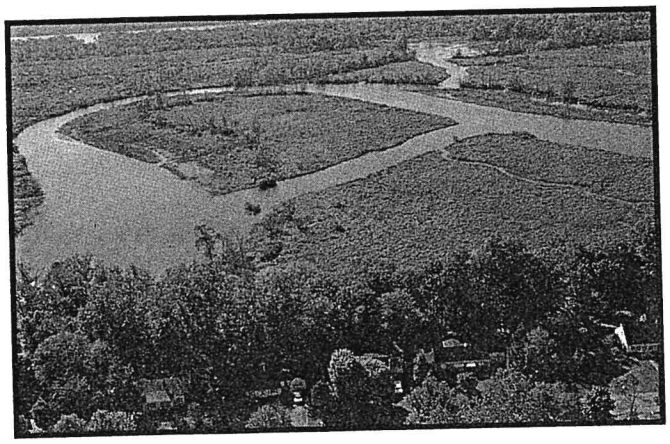


A P.U.D. could have a town green with a residential and mixed- use core.

We are now beginning to realize that most of the physical design features which make communities livable were in front of us all the time in many of our villages, small towns, and neighborhoods.

Environmental Movement

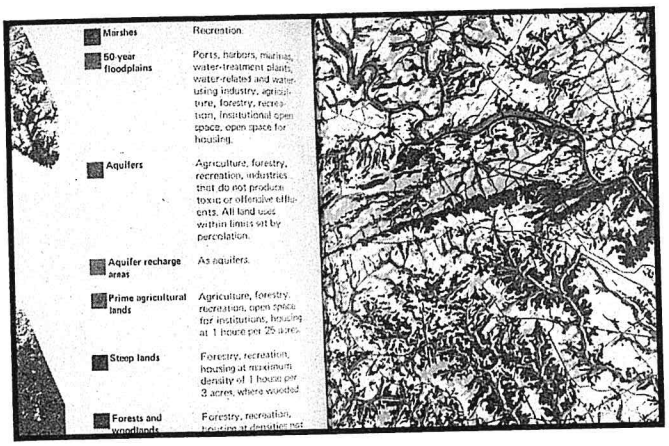
Growing environmental awareness stimulated many concerned citizens and citizen groups to pressure legislative and zoning officials to consider environmental and natural features as the basis for land-use controls. The resulting New Jersey legislation includes the Pinelands Act (which puts development controls on approximately 25% of the State of New Jersey), flood plain legislation, runoff retention and sediment control, the Wetlands Act (which sets standards for the preservation of wetlands because of the deterioration of water quality), and the Coastal Area Facilities Review Act (CAFRA).



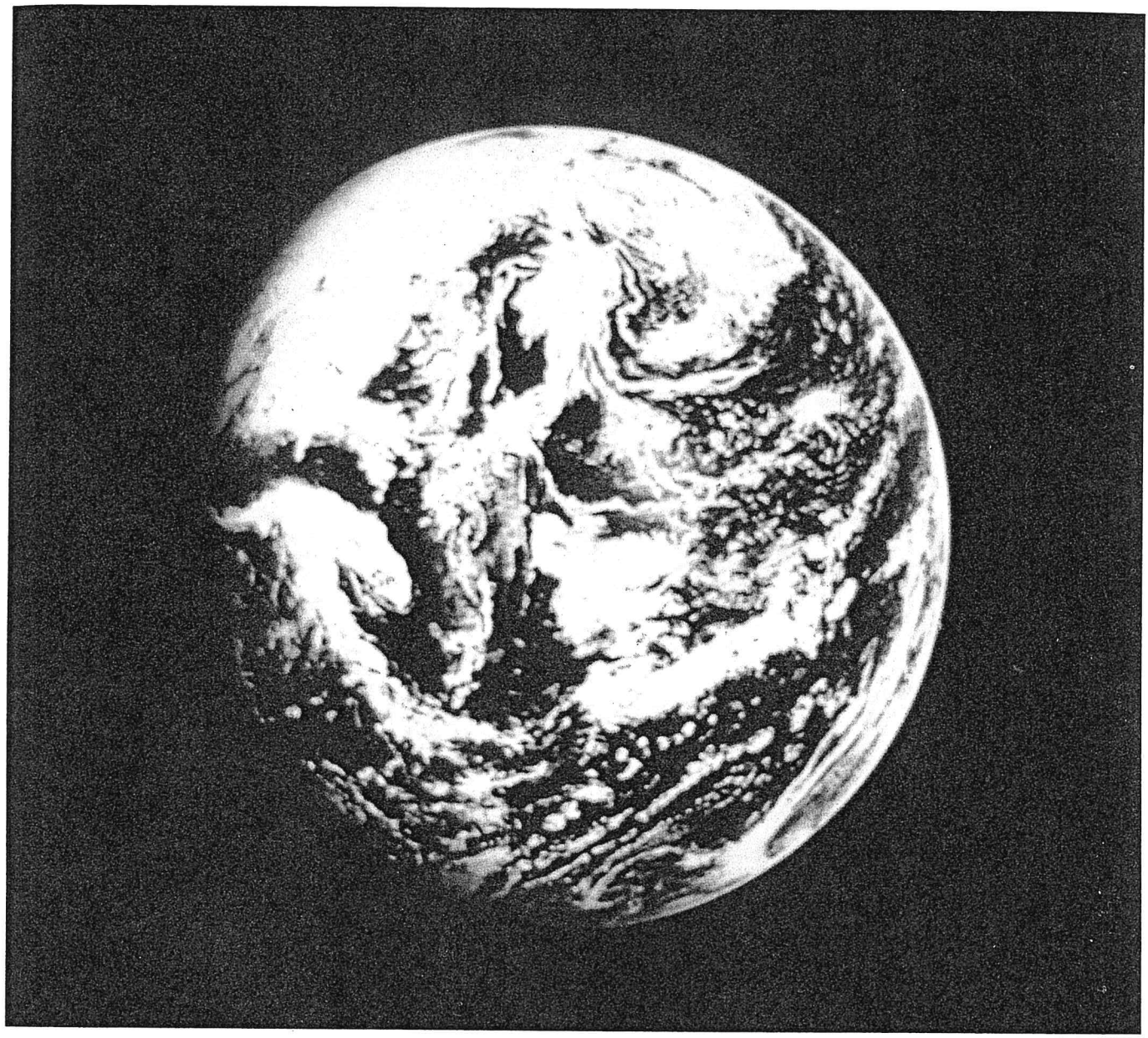
Protecting low lands, marshes, and land with high water table is critical now and in the future.

As a by-product of the space program, we saw in 1968 for the first time a photograph of the entire planet as it appears in space. This photographic image crystallized what had previously been an abstraction: that we live on a small and fragile blue planet, and it is the only one we have. This event sparked concern for the earth as an ecological entity, and the beginning of a world wide ecological movement.

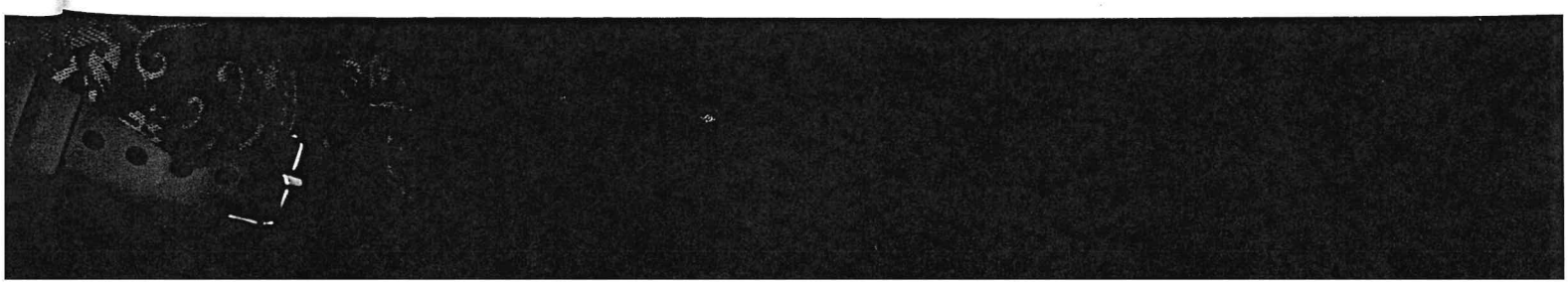
One year later, Ian McHarg created a system for incorporating ecological concerns in the planning and design process. In *Design With Nature* he illustrated an overlay-mapping technique as it applies to the environmental features of sites and entire regions. This is a technique that can be, and has been, used for identifying land that is environmentally suited for development or, conversely, land that by virtue of environmental constraints is unsuited for development. It became the basis of the current GIS system and the shocking realization that land characteristics were organic while zoning lines were typically geometric. Somehow these two characteristics needed to be rationalized.

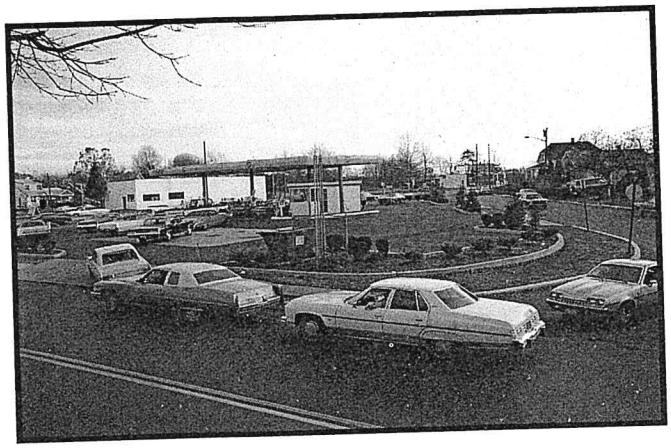


McHarg's technique revolutionized site planning by indicating which lands must be protected and which could be built on with the least constraints.

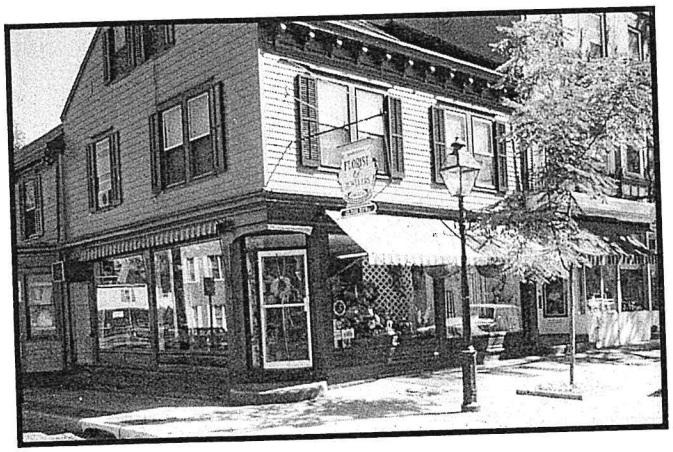


This photograph by NASA provided the unified vision which has been used by the environmental movement around the world. The photographic reality transformed the abstraction of place. We are all living on one small blue planet, our home, Earth.





Cars lined up for gas in 1973.



Classic mixed use on main street Bordentown, NJ.

The Costs of Sprawl Report and the Energy Crisis

In 1974, The Real Estate Research Corporation published a report detailing the inefficiencies of sprawl development. The report was a rallying cry for some, but its effect has been short-lived. Sprawl and a crowded highway are lucrative short-term money makers for financial institutions and developers who resist the kinds of controls needed for long-range planning for small communities.

The energy crisis in 1973 required that the United States rethink its priorities about the consumption of its natural resources. In response, the size and weight of cars was reduced, as was the speed limit on the interstate highways. For the first time energy efficiency became a matter of concern. It became clear that oil, a non-renewable resource, would become more expensive and, perhaps, less obtainable. People began to understand that burning oil substantially contributes to air pollution and, therefore, a community with a more compact development pattern could reduce transportation demands, and consume less energy--oil. The life-style of the average American requires more fuel consumption than people of any other country anywhere else in the world. Should our patterns of development be examined in the light of these factors?

Municipal Land Use Law (MLUL) and the Historic Preservation Act

The State of New Jersey enacted the MLUL in 1975. This act takes a major step toward the proper regulation of land. The MLUL also legislated, for the first time, the importance of aesthetic considerations with the following statement: "to promote a desirable visual environment through creative development techniques and good civic design and arrangements." The MLUL is a positive tool, but it still encourages sprawl.

The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 helped in the rediscovery of historic patterns and traditional building and streetscape forms. Tax credits offered an incentive to preservation and spurred acceptance of the Act. The typical analysis of a historic district reveals that its functioning, building fabric and streetscapes present a significant contrast to the typical modern sprawl pattern. It is a promising development in the education of the electorate, focusing as it does on maintaining and preserving our heritage. It also offers models from an earlier time, models that are relevant

to some of today's problems. These models offer a different perspective on the issues regarding the location of development and what directions those developments should take.

Mount Laurel and Mount Laurel II

The 1978 Mount Laurel Decision, by the New Jersey Supreme Court, states that all municipalities must accept their fair share of low and moderate income housing. This decision requires many municipalities to revise their master plans and zoning ordinances. The decision helps to define the categories of low and moderate income, and creates a formula for calculating each municipality's fair share. A builder's remedy establishes that 20% of any new development must be affordable. Consequently, many municipalities have begun to rethink the kind of master plan that encourages urban sprawl, a building pattern that discriminates against lower income people because of the high cost of land as well as the concomitant reliance upon the private automobile. Planners must recognize that such housing is to be integrated within communities where zoning is not single use exclusionary. Furthermore, people of low and moderate incomes frequently need transportation to jobs and other services, consequently transportation issues must be considered in the location of this housing. Such factors have made neo-traditonal planning more attractive. Its principles address these problems. In 1983, the New Jersey Supreme Court strengthened its 1978 decision after determining that communities were ignoring the original mandate. Mount Laurel II has become the impetus for the development of a state plan.

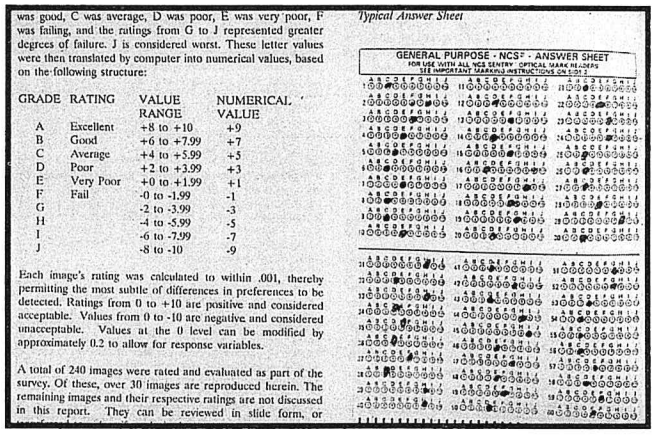
Visual Preference Survey ™

I first used the Visual Preference Survey ™ technique in 1979. Initial surveys indicated an almost universal negative reaction to sprawl and a positive response to traditional settlement patterns. The technique has since been applied to master plans, redevelopment plans, and town-center design plans, and is now being used for vision planning across the country. The mandate is clear; citizens who are concerned, who participate in the Visual Preference Surveys™, see sprawl and urban deterioration as the primary land-use evil.

What is a Low and Moderate household?

Low: a household having 0-50% of the regional median household income.

Moderate: a household having 50.1% to 80% of the regional median household income.



was good, C was average, D was poor, E was very poor, F was failing, and the ratings from G to J represented greater degrees of failure. J is considered worst. These letter values were then translated by computer into numerical values, based on the following structure:

GRADE	RATING	VALUE RANGE	NUMERICAL VALUE
A	Excellent	+8 to +10	+9
B	Good	+6 to +7.99	+7
C	Average	+4 to +5.99	+5
D	Poor	+2 to +3.99	+3
E	Very Poor	+0 to +1.99	+1
F	Fail	-0 to -1.99	-1
G		-2 to -3.99	-3
H		-4 to -5.99	-5
I		-6 to -7.99	-7
J		-8 to -10	-9

Each image's rating was calculated to within .001, thereby permitting the most subtle of differences in preferences to be detected. Ratings from 0 to +10 are positive and considered acceptable. Values from 0 to -10 are negative and considered unacceptable. Values at the 0 level can be modified by approximately 0.2 to allow for response variables.

A total of 240 images were rated and evaluated as part of the survey. Of these, over 30 images are reproduced herein. The remaining images and their respective ratings are not discussed in this report. They can be reviewed in slide form, or

Typical Answer Sheet

GENERAL PURPOSE - NCS² - ANSWER SHEET

Response from a Visual Preference Surveys ™.

Applying the concept of the small neighborhood community to existing suburban areas.

State Planning Act and the Fair Housing Act

New Jersey passed the State Planning Act in 1985. This Act calls for a state-wide master plan for growth that includes the development and redevelopment of our cities and suburbs. The process of cross-acceptance (a process that calls for municipalities to be involved in the plan's development) is mandated to assure that all levels of government, as well as the general public, participate in preparing and adopting the plan. The plan supports managed growth in centers and seeks to abate sprawl.

The 1985 Fair Housing Act grew out of the Mount Laurel decisions as well. The growth management considerations of the State Plan became the basis of fair share calculations under the Fair Housing Act, legally connecting the two acts.

National Building Bust

In the late 1980s the economy began to slow, and a recession loomed. Between 1980 and 1989 more sprawl development was created than at any time in the our history, a boom fueled by the deregulation of the banking industry. One consequence of this overbuilding is a high vacancy rate in offices and retail centers and high numbers of approved, though not yet built projects. Buildings are sitting empty all over the state. Another, is that in the early 1990's building starts are at their lowest point since World War II. Economist believe that the growth sector of the spiral is over and that we are going to have to become more efficient, to modify our life styles. James Dale Davidson and Lord William Rees-Mogg in their book, The Great Reckoning, state,

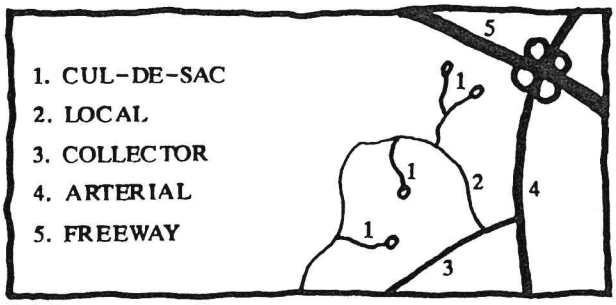
> *Consumerism cannot be the center of life for long. It is always shallow because it relates to the creation in people's minds of wants that suit the manufacturer rather than the consumer of goals.*

A new opportunity to plan emerges. We have time to take stock of what we have and how to maintain or, better yet, improve it. It is time to ask the people for a collective vision, to revise our master plans and zoning ordinances. Boards that have approved plans permitting sprawl should reconsider these decisions; perhaps they can offer incentives on unbuilt projects so that land will instead be developed to create small communities. To do nothing is to continue the sprawl pattern; neither the county nor the common man can continue to afford that.

New commercial/retail under construction, too much is still empty.

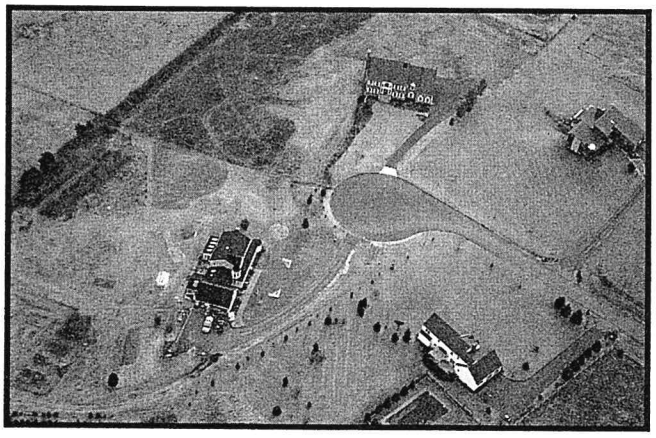
The Negative Effects of Sprawl

The effects of sprawl are visible everywhere, for sprawl consumes valuable land and resources. Between 1950 and 1980 New Jersey lost 50% of its farmland to development. Of course, speculators, transportation engineers, bankers, real estate brokers, and many farmers approved and supported this development. Many politicians saw nothing but ratable dollars to build new town halls, bigger police departments, and bigger public works departments, and the potential to assume more power and influence. In the process, we have compromised the quality of life and of the environment for many. This is not to say that we should not have accommodated growth. On the contrary, I am only criticizing the way in which growth proceeded.



In the sprawl pattern, goods and services are scattered throughout the region. This arrangement requires elaborate road systems to link all areas. The conventional sprawl road-system relies on a hierarchy that begins with small, local roads and cul-de-sacs that feed into collectors which, in turn, dump traffic onto multi-lane arterials and major highways. This system, that lacks centers, produces excessive congestion and waste. Furthermore, because retail establishments are located along major arterials, the automobile is necessary for even the most basic of daily requirements, a quart of milk or a loaf of bread. Nearly all of the landscape is developed, even if the population remains sparse.

Automobile dependence results in air pollution; therefore, it is not surprising that much of the State of New Jersey fails to meet Federal clean air standards. The Federal Clean Air Act and the New Jersey Rand Bill target automobiles as significant contributors to air pollution, and mandate that New Jersey create a plan to reduce dependence on the automobile. Low-density sprawl feeds on over-use of the automobile and makes transit impossible. Without logical centers or concentrations of mixed use, transit cannot be efficient and effective.



A typical cul-de-sac without the parks, open space, and pedestrian connections envisioned by Radburn.

Sprawl is characterized, in part, by an economic mindset that, often times, places taxes and ratables above everything. Municipalities need to expend funds for the planning of small communities so that land use plans can be more efficient and economical for the user and the town. Somehow, there is seldom enough money for planning. Municipalities continue to engineer and build or repair roads, but

fail to understand the necessity of planning parks, community centers, public spaces, and buildings which could enhance the sense of community and place. Roads and sprawled office parks and strip malls are good ratables. As one planning board chairman recently noted, "We don't want any single family houses because they generate kids, and we cannot afford to have any more kids in this town." Another chairman said, "We only want large expensive houses in this town. They're good ratables."

This image depicts a separation between residential and commercial uses making them accessible by caronly. The positive feature of this image is the proximity to the school.

Sprawl does not create a balanced community, rather, sprawl discourages it. Jobs can be well integrated with housing. A balance between jobs and housing would allow a percentage of the population to walk or ride a bicycle to work, saving $5,000 in personal cost and $10,000 to $15,000 in public costs per year, but this is seldom considered. Imagine what $5,000 more each year to spend on the house or to save for that special need would mean to householders.

New Jersey's demographics are changing. Families are becoming smaller and less traditional. There are more single parents and dual income families whose work schedules make chauffeuring children to after-school activities and medical appointments a hardship. The sprawling suburb no longer responds to the needs of its population. Instead it makes the activities of daily life burdensome. Once attending a child's performance in a play or sporting event was a pleasurable part of life; now it requires a level of scheduling that characterizes a military campaign. How many parents can walk over to the playing fields when a child is playing on the soccer team or even come to watch the soccer game because they have no time? How many sons or daughters can walk to a job downtown?

The modern, underutilized parking lot with 5% to 7% landscaping.

Many individuals, corporations, and organizations think that the period of steady economic growth that began in the 1950s was an extremely prosperous one, the embodiment of the American dream, the consumer society. The standard of living, based on the number of cars, televisions, and the size of houses (number of rooms per person) did indeed increase dramatically for most people during that period of time. But it is clear the quality of public spaces--communities, neighborhoods, and streets--and the spiritual and social quality of life, showed no commensurate improvement. In fact, based on survey work we have done in New Jersey and in other municipalities across the country, the public

place has deteriorated physically, emotionally, and financially.

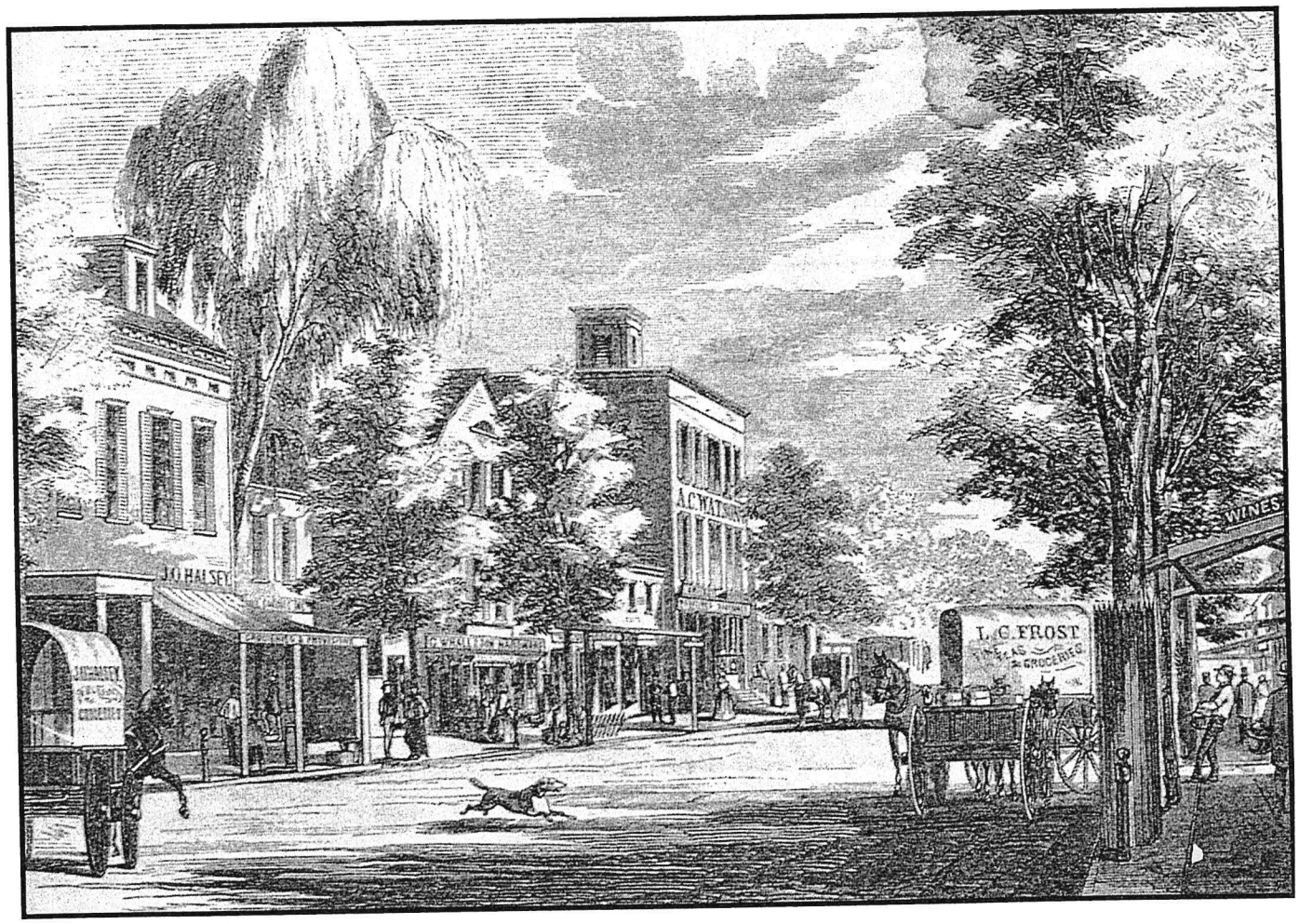
People are aware of the biography of the past fifty years, and concerned about the deterioration of the environment, the disastrous effects of traffic, and the high social costs that have come with rampant sprawl. People are becoming increasingly anti-development. Fear is fueled by an apprehension that future development will be as socially and environmentally destructive and negative as existing sprawl. They fear more of the same, and find that the same is unacceptable. What people want is an alternative that incorporates the features and financing of modern life with a greater sense of community, of place, of neighborhood: a place that is more affordable.

Unfortunately, this alternative is not available in most presently approved forms of development. Master plans must be amended to encourage it; zoning laws must be written and illustrated to allow it. Submission processes and application documents must be simple and comprehensive to allow rapid passage and assurances of quality small communities. We have realized the vision set forth in the 1930s and what was good then and through the 1980s seems not to be appropriate now. We require a new vision for future spatial evolution; an updated vision in which we will learn from our problems, the biography of our collective past, the potentials of technology and community, and design a more life-enhancing environment.

The basic small community design in model form created by ordinary people.

The results of Visual Preference Surveys ™, and Hands-On Model Building workshops from all over the country indicate a clear mandate to re-think sprawl. A new planning model is emerging, a physical, social, and financial four-dimensional plan for the development and redevelopment of the future. It is time to design small communities built on valid contemporary human and ecological considerations, not on outdated social and economic policies. It is a form of development modeled after more traditional communities and neighborhoods, but updated for the twenty-first century.

We are a product of our past, our present, and our vision of the future.



The historic fabric which has survived the test of time, provides an excellent opportunity to understand positive visual and spacial relationships.