#### Rethinking American Suburbs

- How do "urbanism" and "suburbanism" differ as "ways of life"?
- What are the social consequences of sprawl?
- What are new ideas for suburban living (or not)?

#### Urbanism vs. Suburbanism

- Critiques of suburban life by intellectuals in 1950s and ever since:
  - Waste of land
  - Increased commute time
  - Higher service costs
  - Mis-use of government subsidies
  - Lack of form
  - Boring homogeneity
  - Lack of "civicness"
  - Environmentally irresponsible
  - Destruction of cities

#### Urbanism vs. Suburbanism

- Louis Wirth: "Urbanism as a Way of Life" (1939)
  - Loss of primary group relationships inevitable
    these replaced by secondary contacts and
    "representative" society that was often
    superficial, transitory and isolated
  - "A relatively large, dense and permanent settlement of socially heterogeneous individuals"

#### Urbanism vs. Suburbanism

- Herbert Gans: Urbanism and Suburbanism as Ways of Life (after Levittown, NJ research 1958-60)
  - Planners overemphasize influence of physical community on behavior (environmental determinism). People live according to class status, not environment.
  - Can't view city through "Folk Society" lens of Wirth

## What is distinctly urban?

- Size of population
- Density of population
- Occupations
- Existence of certain facilities, institutions
- Types of political organization

All within context of social and cultural conditions

# What are the social consequences of suburban sprawl?

- Suburb as dormitory
- Distance from work/leisure of CBD
- Design for auto vs. public transit
- Less dense
- Homogeneous (same as most of outer city)
- Younger, more married, higher incomes, more white collar
- Homogeneity tied to high price and newness, not house type, density, or relation to city limits

# Gans Critique

 Not true that lower middle class people, when living in city "behaved like upper middle class cosmopolites and that suburban living has mysteriously transformed them."









## Designing Small Town Life

- Traditional Neighborhood Design (TND) or New Urbanism
  - Andres Duyany/Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk
    - Seaside, FL (1981)
    - Kentlands, MD (1987)
    - Mashpee Commons, MA (1986)
    - Celebration, FL (1994)
  - Leon Krier's Critique of Zoning
    - Poundbury, England (1990s)
- Transit-oriented development (TOD)
  - Peter Calthorpe, Laguna West, CA (1990)















































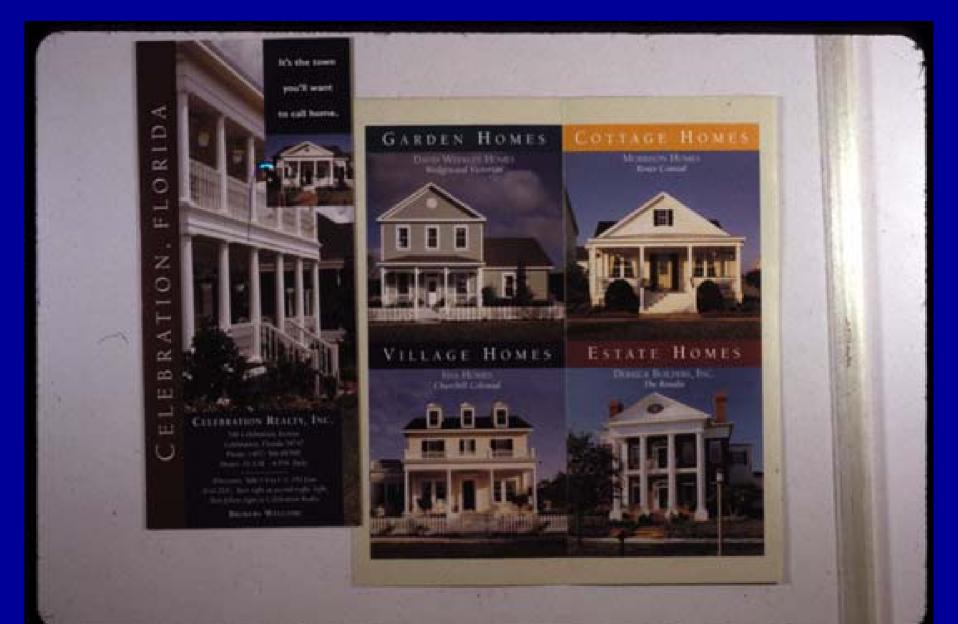


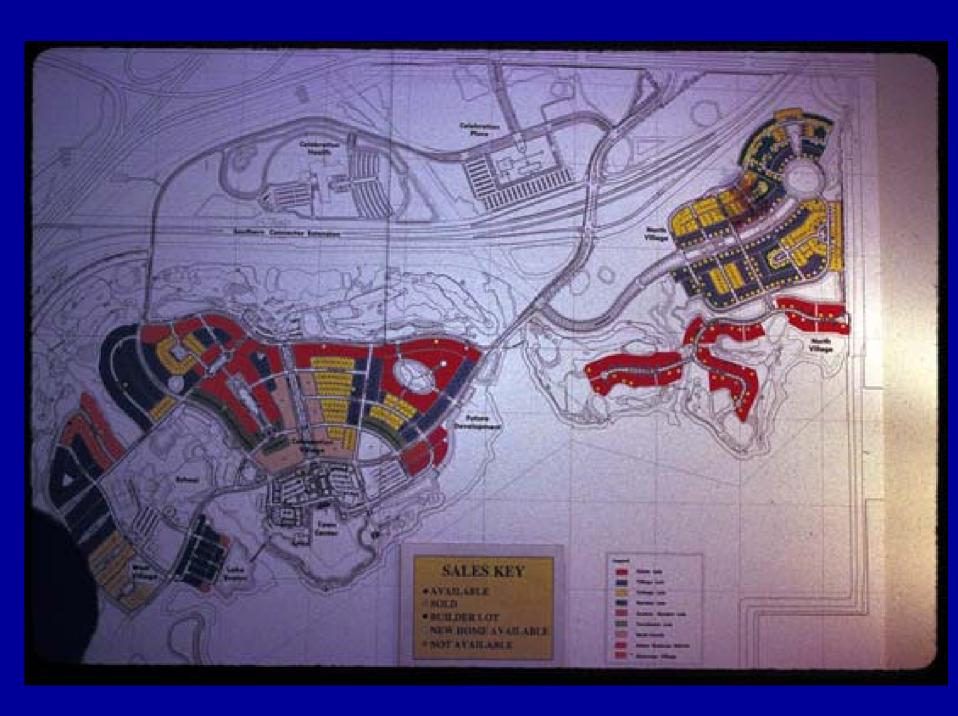
















# Shantytowns as A New Suburban Ideal (NY Times 3/12/06)

- A new vision for communities that is tied to cultural expectations and ethnic expression
- Casa Familiar in San Diego
  - 12 units of housing as prototype
  - Public loggia below
  - Housing units above
  - Interlocking rooms/units that can be broken down or massed to accommodate various family units