

## voices of the outward bound

Virtuous habits...home comforts (in heaven)

**Horace Bushnell, Christian Nurture, 1847**

It is strange how contentedly men can go on year after year, living like Arabs a tent life, paying exorbitant rents, with no care or concern for a permanent house.

**American Builder, 1869**

This Society was incorporated for the purpose of promoting artistic work in all branches of handicraft. It hopes to bring Designers and Workmen into mutually helpful relations, and to encourage workmen to execute designs of their own. It endeavors to stimulate in workmen an appreciation of the dignity and value of good design; to counteract the popular impatience of Law and Form, and the desire for over-ornamentation and specious originality. It will insist upon the necessity of sobriety and restraint, or ordered arrangement, of due regard for the relation between the form of an object and its use, and of harmony and fitness in the decoration put upon it.

**American Society of Arts and Crafts, 1897**

THE PEOPLE Where will they go?

**Ebenezer Howard, 1898**

The objects of this land purchase may be stated in various ways, but it is sufficient here to say that some of the chief objects are these: To find for our industrial population work at wages of *higher purchasing power*, and to secure healthier surroundings and more regular employment. To enterprising manufacturers, co-operative societies, architects, engineers, builders, and mechanisms of all kinds, as well as to many engaged in various professions, it is intended to offer a means of securing new and better employment for their capital and talents, while to the agriculturists present on the estate as well as to those who may immigrate thither, it is designed to open a new market for their produce close to their doors. Its object is, in short, to raise the standard of health and comfort of all true workers of whatever grade—the means by which these objects are to be achieved being a healthy, natural, and economic combination of town and country life, and this on land owned by the municipality.

**Ebenezer Howard, 1902**

Well-built, democratic, well-planned homes.

**Gustav Stickley, Craftsman Home Builder's Club, 1903**

Later I inspected a suite of rooms adorned with antique pictures, clocks, chests, and crockery, a delightful haunt for an artist, but

hardly the place for a weary mother and six children reared on bread and dripping. If, instead of these fancy goods, the builder had

remembered to put the gas bracket high enough to prevent one from knocking one's head against it, to make the mantle shelf lofty enough to prevent the children sweeping all the ornaments off, and to make the dresser bigger than is required for a baby's tea service, he would have made a cottage and not a doll's house.

**Manchester Chronicle, 1905** (on the Cheap Cottages Exhibition)

Some cottage designers seem to forget that washing days occasionally fall on wet days, that people are sometimes ill, that children are a factor which has to be taken into account, that people now and then come home wet through, that the more easily cleaning is done, the oftener and the better it is done, that human beings require so many cubic feet of air per hour even when dark, and that some of those human beings are six foot high. We have to think of these prosaic things in judging those pretty interiors that are sketched for us by young bachelor artists in the magazines and by amateur spinsters equally smitten by what is called the "arty crafty."

**The Country Gentlemen, 1905** (on the Cheap Cottage Exhibition)

A city will arise as superior in its beauty and magnificence to our first crude attempt as the finished canvas of a great artist to the rough and untaught attempts of a schoolboy.

**Ebenezer Howard, c. 1909**

All superfluous ornament and drapery are done away with, and homes such as these in their appointments are conducive to plain living and high thinking.

**Mabel Priestman, Artistic Houses, 1910**

History is more or less bunk. It's tradition. We want to live in the present, and the only history that is worth a tinker's damn is the history we make today.

**Henry Ford, 1916** (*attributed*)

With me, architecture is not an art, but a religion, and that religion but a part of Democracy.

**Louis Sullivan** (1856-1924)

The ultimate solution will be the abandonment of the city, its abandonment as a blunder.

**Henry Ford** (1863-1947)

Yesterday Living and Working in the Smoke

Today Living in the Suburbs – Working in the Smoke

To-morrow Living & Working in the Sun at WELWYN GARDEN CITY

**1921 advertisement**

I am trying in a small way to help America take a step...toward the saner and sweeter idea of life that prevailed in prewar days.

**Henry Ford, 1926**

To possess one's home is the hope and ambition of almost every individual in this country.... Those immortal ballads, "Home Sweet Home," "My Old Kentucky Home," and "The Little Gray Home in the West," were not written about tenements or apartments.... They never sing songs about a pile of rent receipts.

**President Herbert Hoover, 1931**

Tier upon tier, the soulless shelf, the interminable empty crevice along the winding ways of the windy unhealthy canyon. The heartless grip of selfish, grasping universal stricture. Black shadows below with artificial lights burning all day long in little caverns and squared cells. The skyscraper is responsible for the congestion, and is making the city of today impossible to use. The skyscraper piles the crowd up high, dumps it on the street, stuffs it in again, and the streets not nearly wide enough.

**Frank Lloyd Wright, 1935 (on cities)**

My idea was to go just outside centers of population, pick up cheap land, build a whole community, and entice people to it. Then go back into the cities and tear down whole slums and make parks of them.

**Rexford Tugwell, c. 1935**

Every Broadacre citizen has his own car. Multiple lane highways make travel safe and enjoyable. No railroad, no streetcar. No headlights, no light fixture. No Glaring Cement roads or works. No Slum, No Scum.

**Frank Lloyd Wright, 1935**

Our typical urban environments no longer offer the possibility of a significant or healthy life. Something more genial to the human soul is desired: contact with the soil, the discipline of manual labor, more intimate companionship with one's fellows, the esthetic joys of sunrise and sunset, of passing cloud and rising moon; and in the search for these fundamental qualities many people temporarily forget that social intercourse and social co-operation are no less important. Biologically, the rural scene is more adequate; but the invasions and perversions of a dying civilization contaminate even the countryside; roadside slums are reminders of the social insufficiency of mere escapism.

**Lewis Mumford, 1945**

It has been the motivating aim to create a form which would permit open, neighborly living as a keystone to a better democracy. A place where people will breathe the wholesome spirit of our democracy; a demonstration that all this is within the orbit of the resources of free enterprise.... The cornerstone of the plan is the needs of the American Family.... Together, they make a great market of consumers.... They should become a discriminating as well as stable market.

**American Community Builders, Park Forest plan, 1946**

The crowded tenement and the smoky apartment have become symbols of our life in our great cities...the choking, destructive influences of such environment have relegated our essential centers of commerce to second rate places to live and work. The flight to the better places in the suburbs has met the urgings of relatively higher income families. This need not be...nor can it long continue without disastrous results. Our national existence is enriched by the product of our large concentrations of populations. We must bring to those centers the opportunities of the American way of life. For those who want it, this means the advantage of size combined with the simplicity of smallness.... It means access to the stimulating industry of a Chicago and to the open and easy living of a green town.... It means the opportunity to labor in the fuming and belching furnaces that make our nation strong—and to live in the tree-studded, cleansed atmosphere of a smokeless town.... It means the privilege of aiding the flow of commerce from a skyscraper and living close to the earth amidst the park blocks of modern planning. In short it means the free man's right to seek his best work opportunity without the sacrifice of his urge to enjoy healthful and wholesome living.... This is the American way of life.... To this ideal, the town is consecrated.

**Philip M. Klutznick, President, American Community Builders, 1946** (on Park Forest)

What (is) good for housing (is) good for the country.

**National Association of Home Builders**

The tenant agrees not to permit the premises to be used or occupied by any person other than members of the Caucasian race. But the employment and maintenance of other than Caucasian domestic servants shall be permitted.

**Levittown restrictive covenant, 1947**

No man who owns his own house and lot can ever be a Communist; he has too much to do. (It is) not a matter of prejudice, but one of business. As a Jew, I have no room in my mind or heart for racial prejudice. But, by various means, I have come to know that if we sell one house to a Negro family, then 90 to 95 percent of our white customers will not buy into the community. I know that if I declared for open housing, my worst enemies would be my colleagues in the building industry. Blacks are trying to do in 300 years what Jews couldn't do in 6,000 years.

**William Levitt, 1947**

We aren't interested in houses alone. We are trying to create a better life for our people. We will have failed if all we do is produce houses.

**Philip M. Klutznick, 1948**

You *Belong*

in PARK FOREST!

The moment you come to our town you know:

You're welcome

You're part of a big group

You can live in a friendly small town  
instead of a lonely big city.

You can have friends who want you—  
and you can enjoy being with them.

Come out. Find out about the spirit of Park Forest.

....

a cup of coffee—symbol of  
PARK FOREST!

Coffeepots bubble all day long  
in Park Forest. This sign of  
friendliness tells you how much  
neighbors enjoy each other's company—  
feel glad that they can share their daily  
joys—yes, and troubles, too.

Come out to Park Forest where small-  
town friendships grow—and you still live  
so close to a big city.

**Park Forest advertisements, 1952**

...A multitude of uniform, unidentifiable houses, lined up inflexibly at uniform distances, on uniform roads, in a treeless communal waste, inhabited by people in the same class, the same income, the same age group, witnessing the same TV performances, eating the same tasteless prefabricated foods from the same freezers, conforming in every outward and inward respect to the common mold.

**Lewis Mumford** (on Levittown)

...Developments conceived in error, nurtured by greed, corroding everything they touch. .... More insidious and far more dangerous than any other influence is the housing development's destruction of individuality...we're constantly being badgered to look around us and make sure we're doing and saying and thinking what the mass of our neighbors will accept. The closer we huddle together, the greater this pressure for conformity becomes....breeding swarms of neuter drones.... When all dwellings are the same shape, all dwellers are the same shape.

**John Keats, 1956** (on Levittown)

Always, they will be moving on. For most of its renters Park Forest is a sort of way station, a phase of life, and beyond a certain point continued residence can carry overtones of failure. ...It is a retrograde point of view that fails to recognize that these similarities (in architectural design) are in great part a consequence of making the benefits of our civilization available to more people. The monotonous regularity of ranch-type houses that can so easily appall us is not the product of an inner desire for uniformity so much as the fact that modular construction is a condition of moderate-cost housing. This kind of housing is no more or less a pressure for conformity than the rows of identical brownstones of the 1890s or, for that matter, the identical brick fronts of the 1700s. .... Undeniably, places like Park Forest do tend to spoil one. ...It is somewhat unsettling, for example, to hear the way some residents of the new suburbs refer to "the outside." Frequently, alumni of package communities go considerably out of their way to seek out a similar community when the next moves comes up.... I am not trying to argue that more places just like Park Forest are to be the pattern of the future, or should be. I do believe, however, that the kind of rootedness it illustrates will be. ...Though they have left one world—the close-knit society of the *padrone*, for example—they have not quite joined another, and the influx of Negroes into the houses they left behind is a specter they do not for a moment forget. Except for the older people, for whom such neighborhoods can be ideal, suburbia is the dream, and the neighbor who puts the "For Sale" sign up as he prepares to move to suburbia does so with a feeling that he has made it. .... The classlessness...stops very sharply at the color line. Several years ago there was an acrid controversy over the possible admission of Negroes. It threatened to be deeply divisive—for a small group, admission of Negroes would be fulfillment of personal social ideals; for another, many of whom had just left Chicago wards which had been "taken over," it was a return of a threat left behind. But the people who were perhaps most sorely vexed were the moderates. Most of them were against admission too, but though no Negroes ever did move in, the damage was done. The issue had been brought up, and the sheer fact that one had to talk about it made it impossible to maintain unblemished the ideal of egalitarianism so cherished. .... It has been said that dominance of the group is the wave of the future and that, lament it or not, (one) might as well accept it. But this is contemporaryism at its worst; things are not as they are because there is some good reason they are. Nor is the reverse true. It may one day prove true, as some prophets argue, that we are in a great and dismal tide of history that cannot be reversed, but if we accept the view we will only prove it. Whatever kind of future suburbia may foreshadow, it will show that at least we have the choices to make. The organization man is not in the grip of vast social forces about which it is impossible for him to do anything; the options are there, and with wisdom and foresight he can turn the future away from the dehumanized collective that so haunts our thoughts. He may not. But he can. He must *fight* The Organization. Not stupidly, or selfishly, for the defects of individual self-regard are no more to be venerated than the defects of co-operation. But fight he must, for the demands for his surrender are constant and powerful, and the more he has come to like the life of the organization the more difficult does he find it to resist these demands, or even to recognize them. It is wretched, dispiriting advice to hold before him the dream that ideally there need be no conflict between him and society. There always is; there always must be. Ideology cannot wish it away; the peace of mind offered by organization remains a surrender, and no less so for being offered in benevolence. That is the problem.

**William Whyte, Jr., 1956**

...Row on row of identical small boxes marching across a denuded landscape, sprouting TV aerials like insect feelers.... Probably never in history...has a culture equaled ours in the dreariness and corrupted fantasy of a major part of its building. (The people living there) are eminently satisfied with the established ugliness. They do not even know it is ugly.

**Mary Mix Foley, Architectural Forum, 1957 (on Levittown)**

CANTILEVER SKY-CITY – 528 STORIES – TRIPOD IN PLAN – ONE MILE HIGH FROM GRADE TO TOP FLOOR, DIVIDED INTO FOUR SECTIONS – EXPOSED MEMBERS ALUMINUM OR STAINLESS STEEL – ELEVATORS ESPECIALLY DESIGNED TANDEM-CABS RATCHET-GUIDED TYPE, ATOMIC POWER – ESCALATOR SERVICE BASEMENTS AND FIRST FIVE FLOORS – FOUR QUADRUPLE-LANE APPROACHES TO EACH OF THE FOUR ENTRANCES – ONE ENTRANCE AT EACH CORNER – PARKING FOR ABOUT 15,000 CARS AND LANDING DECKS FOR 150 HELICOPTERS

**Frank Lloyd Wright, 1957**

That Levittown has its faults and problems is undeniable...physical and social isolation, familial and governmental financial problems, insufficient public transportation, less than perfect provision of public services, inadequate decision-making and feedback processes, lack of representation for minorities and over-representation for the builder, and the entire array of familial and individual problems common to any population. Many of them can be traced back to three basic shortcomings, none distinctive to Levittown or the Levittowners. .... One is the difficulty of coping with conflict. .... The second shortcoming, closely related to the first, is the inability to deal with pluralism. .... The third shortcoming of the community...is the failure to establish a meaningful relationship between the home and community and reconcile class-cultural diversity with government and the provision of public services. ....

The strengths and weaknesses of Levittown are those of many American communities, and the Levittowners closely resemble other young middle class Americans. .... The community may displease the professional city planner and the intellectual defender of cosmopolitan culture, but perhaps more than any other type of community, Levittown permits most of its residents to be what they want to be – to center their lives around the home and the family, to be among neighbors whom they can trust, to find friends to share leisure hours, and to participate in organizations that provide sociability and the opportunity to be of service to others. .... In viewing their homes as the center of life, Levittowners are still using a societal model that fit the rural America of self-sufficient farmers and the feudal Europe of self-isolating extended families. Yet the critics who argue about the individual versus mass society are also anachronistic: they are still thinking of the individual artist or intellectual who must shield himself from a society which either rejects him or coopts him to produce popular culture. ...It is striking how little American culture among the Levittowners differs from what de Tocqueville reported in his travels through small-town middle class America a century ago. .... What seems to have happened is that improvements are added to old culture patterns, giving affluent Americans a foot in several worlds. They have more knowledge and a broader outlook than their ancestors, and they enjoy the advantages of technology, but these are superimposed on old ways. While conservative critics rail about technology's dehumanization of modern man, the Levittowners who spend their days programming computers come home at night to practice the very homely and old-fashioned virtues these critics defend. ...The Levittowners have only benefitted from the changes in society and economy that have occurred in this century, and if they were not given to outmoded models of social reality, they might feel freer about extending these benefits to less fortunate sectors of American society. But whether people's models are anachronistic or avant-garde, they are rarely willing to surrender their own powers and privileges to others.

**Herbert Gans, 1967**

To accept Keats in his time...one had to agree with him, for example, that there was some logical connection between uniformity of architecture and sterility of thought. Nobody had argued this seriously about the working-class row houses of South Philadelphia, or, for that matter, about the upper-class row houses of Philadelphia or Boston. The evil influence of architectural standardization upon the human personality was, to say the least, a point that remained to be proved. .... As did the larger notion that the residents of these new suburbs were somehow miserable without knowing it. They did not sound miserable; they sounded grateful for a modicum of physical comfort after two very rough decades. .... What strikes most of them as remarkable about the early days, looking back forty years later, is what an adventure it all was, what pioneers they all felt like in their new brick boxes. "Everybody had the same problems," Peggy Franz recalls.... "We didn't have much money. We relied on each other." .... One does, however, have to concede a point to Whyte and the other critics.... Participating in group social life was a requirement that young suburbanites ignored at the risk of virtual ostracism. .... But all these years later, when a new generation of suburbanites seems to have time for very little except working and retreating into a private world at home every night, one is tempted to say that artificially created community is, at least, a form of community. .... It is difficult to be quite as caustic about suburban values as the social critics of the 1950s were at the time.

**Alan Ehrenhalt, 1995**

The American metropolis at century's end is vastly different than what many expected just 50 years ago. At Mid-century, seers envisioned a clean, rationally planned city of the future, free of long-standing problems such as traffic and poverty. The reality is more complex. We built a new metropolis that addressed some major problems while simultaneously creating a host of new ones.

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The top 10 influences on the American metropolis of the past 50 years are as follows:

1. The 1956 Interstate Highway Act and the dominance of the automobile (906 points)
2. Federal Housing Administration mortgage financing and subdivision regulation (653)
3. Deindustrialization of central cities (584)
4. Urban renewal: downtown redevelopment and public housing projects (1949 Housing Act) (441)
5. Levittown (the mass-produced suburban tract house) (439)
6. Racial segregation and job discrimination in cities and suburbs (436)
7. Enclosed shopping malls (261)
8. Sunbelt-style sprawl (2242)
9. Air conditioning (234)
10. Urban riots of the 1960s (219)

**Fannie Mae Foundation, Housing Policy Debate, 2000**

I thought I'd bought a home in Pleasantville. I never imagined in my wildest dreams that stuff like this would happen.

**Laura Talbot, 2008** (on crime in Windy Ridge, North Carolina)