Comments on *Foreclosed*
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Edited by Leah Meisterlin
Preface by Reinhold Martin
This publication is a record of what was said about *Foreclosed: Rehousing the American Dream*, an architecture exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, from April 2011 through August 2012.
The Temple Hoyne Buell Center for the Study of American Architecture was founded in 1982. Its mission is to advance the study of American architecture, urbanism, and landscape. Located within the Graduate School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation at Columbia University, it sponsors programs and research projects focusing on issues of both scholarly and general interest. The Buell Center initiative on public housing was launched in 2008. This publication represents one aspect of that ongoing project.

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How We Talk about …
Reinhold Martin

How do we talk about architecture? Housing? Cities? Culture? Politics? As the evidence collected here testifies, *Foreclosed: Rehousing the American Dream*, an exhibition that ran at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York from 15 February–13 August 2012, and was co-organized by MoMA architecture curator Barry Bergdoll and myself, offered an occasion for many people to talk about many things. Or, I should say, to write about many things, since that is what is collected here: bits and pieces of text written by a wide variety of individuals about and around the exhibition and its premise.

These comments testify to how we talk about, write about, and otherwise debate culture and politics, aesthetics and economics, design and policy. They also demonstrate, tacitly, what we do not allow ourselves to discuss, what we conveniently ignore, forget, or otherwise remove from the table. The comments were compiled by the Temple Hoyne Buell Center for the Study of American Architecture at Columbia University, a research institution that had provided a “script,” *The Buell Hypothesis*, to be interpreted by the five architect-led teams who designed new housing for five different American suburbs for the exhibition at MoMA. Details on the script, the design teams, the process, the public workshops, and the exhibition are available in the catalogue, *Foreclosed: Rehousing the American Dream* (Museum of Modern Art, 2012). The material collected here differs from that in the catalogue, insofar as here we record
what others—not the curators, not the participants, but members of different publics—had to say about the show and the issues it addressed.

We initially compiled this material, which runs from printed articles to blogs to reader comments to tweets, as a record by which to gauge our efforts. The goal of *The Buell Hypothesis* and of the exhibition was, from our point of view, to “change the conversation” about housing and suburbanization in the United States in the context of the ongoing financial crisis. More specifically, it was to put the question of public or social housing on the table in a new way, with the help of concrete architectural proposals.

As a result, we had before us a controversial and widely reviewed exhibition that we had co-organized and therefore knew intimately. Through the course of the exhibition’s run, links and references to critical reactions came in on what often seemed a daily basis. During the same period, we organized a number of follow-up events and discussions, together with MoMA and separately, as did others. So we also had before us a unique dataset of public reactions to a cultural event that touched on some of the most sensitive issues of the day. Chronologically, one might observe in these reactions a rough, uneven swing from uncritical enthusiasm to (sometimes) righteous skepticism to—gradually—deeper reflection, though I must admit that I remain personally unsatisfied about the limited extent of the latter, presumptuous as that may be.
Mirroring the contours of official discourse in the United States, the exhibition was celebrated in *The Nation* and attacked on the Fox Business Network. Nevertheless, our ultimate purpose here is not to measure public reaction, pro or con, and thereby accede to the metrics that dominate cultural and political discourse alike. Rather, it is to hold up a magnifying glass to the public sphere itself. It is to inquire into what can and cannot be discussed in public, in a variety of arenas and by a variety of stakeholders, around a subject that carries undeniable urgency and yet, is usually framed in an extraordinarily narrow and instrumental manner. If the material interests you, I therefore urge you also to note the silences, institutional and otherwise, that show boldly through the debate. And to ask: What is being assumed here? By whom? And for what historical reasons?

Other than organizing the material according to thematic categories, we have refrained from interpreting the data. Instead, we offer it to you to reflect and perhaps comment upon further. In the exhibition catalogue I noted that the overall project was conceived under the distant sign of Enlightenment, which the philosopher Immanuel Kant described long ago as “mankind’s exit from its self-incurred immaturity.” Based on the evidence here and on much else, my own provisional conclusion is that the conversation around housing in the United States, especially in the suburbs—“ground zero” of the financial crisis—is not, for the most part, enlightened. On the contrary, it is arguably quite “immature.” Changing it requires changing the common sense around which public debates are structured. But perhaps as you peruse these assembled comments,
shouts and murmurs from interested parties big and small, you might join me in discerning glimmers of hope, traces of profound thought and of profound commitment that force their way onto the page or onto the screen. It is to these traces that this document is dedicated, with gratitude to all who have helped make them visible along the way.
For the Record
Leah Meisterlin

With this collection of material, the Buell Center has compiled an archive, a snapshot of discussion and debate on topics close to home for most Americans. As Reinhold Martin notes, this compilation is largely rooted in the Center’s need to investigate the results of its attempt to “change the conversation” about housing. As such, we who have compiled and edited the contents have come to understand this project of culling and categorizing as one of data collection. To downplay our own biases, we have aimed to minimize editorial voice. After all, given our involvement in the exhibition that sparked this conversation, as well as the nature of the discussion itself, it is difficult—if not impossible—to argue that these issues are not close to home for us as well.

Fundamentally, the project seemed simple: The Buell Center sought to compile and present the conversation surrounding the *Foreclosed* exhibition and the workshops that led to it. We culled essays, reviews, interviews, and weblog posts as well as tweets, photographs, videos, and comments from the viewing and reading public. The content ranged from multipage art-world reviews of the exhibition to broader essays and broadcasts on the American economy that mentioned the show. We collected everything we could locate that was published or circulated between the announcement of the project in April 2011 through the week following the show’s closing in mid-August 2012.
Very early on, two questions emerged with implications for our attempt to avoid editorializing. The first was quite simple as we took stock of the sheer volume of material: What to include? Or rather, if necessary, what to exclude? The second question was considerably less straightforward as we pored through thousands of comments in response to hundreds of articles and began to see just how many conversations were taking place: How can we even begin to catalogue, organize, and ultimately make sense of and learn from “how we talk about” a given issue when that seemingly singular issue comprises most facets of American life?

The Buell Center’s approach to these two questions has shaped this collected dataset. Thus, some description of our decisions—the dataset’s “metadata”—is in order.

The comments and conversations are presented here in strict chronology. They constitute far more than a representative sample, but also far less than an exhaustive collection. Because the “official” perspectives of the exhibition (including those of the Museum of Modern Art, the Buell Center, the curators, and the architect-led teams) are compiled in the exhibition catalogue and on the Museum’s website, we have largely opted to highlight the reviews, responses, and reactions to the show and the conversations that took place beyond these “official” venues. As a result, many of the blog posts published on the Museum’s website during the workshop phase have been omitted, as have most of the Museum’s tweets. Likewise, many published mentions of the exhibition containing only
reprinted language from MoMA press releases have not been included.

However, the goal of focusing on the wider conversation is balanced by the need to properly frame that conversation relative to the exhibition. Thus, particularly in the early portions of the timeline, a small handful of descriptive articles and framing blog posts has been included to supply that context. Additionally, essays featured on the MoMA/PS1 blog after the conclusion of the workshop phase appear within this collection, since they include reflections by collaborators and team members and thereby bring individual voices into the discussion. In the spirit of full disclosure, it should also be said that Martin and I have each entered the public discussion at different points. Our respective essays are therefore included here: Martin’s appears within an essay-format roundtable discussion, and mine as lessons from the project based on early reactions to the show.

Further, a considerable amount of material included in this archive has been quoted or cited as well as reprinted, reposted, and retweeted. In these instances, care has been taken to indicate which articles have traveled to the far reaches of the Internet without necessarily including each appearance made by a given text. For example, where new reader comments are posted to reprinted text, those comments are presented with the original article, as are direct comments made via Twitter.

The follow-up task of organizing and excerpting the material took its cue from classification techniques used in
quantitative research methods. We looked at the compiled dataset in search of its inherent “natural breaks.” Rather than asserting an arbitrary classification system or one that would be too heavily embedded with our own assumptions, we combed through the material, taking note of the topics of discussion, aiming to let the dataset speak for and classify itself. Through the process, related topics were grouped together, as were divergent opinions on similar issues. In the end, we assembled thirty-three distinct topics of conversation woven through the discourse. These topics are applied as tags for each excerpt, comment, or tweet in this volume and summarized in its index.

The conversation topics are purposefully nonpartisan. In other words, excerpts or comments with the same tag may contain arguments and opinions either for or against a specific issue. Some topics are purely binary: Comments that veer into political name-calling, for example, generally fall into the category “Liberal versus Conservative.” Others are rather broad, made up of several perspectives centered around a common theme. For example, the label “Homeownership” is applied to a range of comments discussing the comparative values of homeownership and renting, the financial mechanisms involved in and structural barriers to owning a home, opinions on the mortgage industry or the alternative ownership models presented in the exhibition, and so on. A few topics are the result of conversational dynamics enabled by the online forum itself. For example, “Internet Banter” is used to indicate instances where commenters engage in a back-and-forth—sometimes maintaining the topic of conversation,
sometimes simply complimenting an article’s author for a well-written piece, and sometimes devolving into heated insult-laden exchanges.

What we have hoped to compile—for our own reflection and research and for any interested reader—is an archive that allows us to trace the many circuitous threads of a conversation and begin to untangle how we talk about these very contentious, personal, and public issues. These threads constitute an almost topological web or network of public discourse, with some topics converging repeatedly and others being discussed together only within certain contexts. One hope is that this archive may serve as a suitable dataset for investigating these patterns (e.g., in what contexts does housing affordability get linked to transportation infrastructure and access to jobs?). Toward this end the project’s online incarnation features robust sort and search functions to aid a reader in navigating the paths of discussion.

To reiterate: The Buell Center has decidedly refrained from drawing conclusions from any preliminary analysis of the data. There are, of course, many reasons for this, but one in particular is worthy of note: recognition of the act of deliberation. How we talk about our culture and its many related dimensions, values, and their implications is inextricably bound to the production of that culture. This compilation includes several conversations that, upon cursory glance, resemble deliberative processes. We offer this collection with some hope that its contents may be further deliberated, discussed, and debated while the conversation continues.
Foreclosed: Rehousing the American Dream is announced on 25 April 2011.

The nation’s ongoing foreclosure crisis has ushered in a new era of lending, volumes of new regulations, even a new federal agency ... and now, a new way of looking at architecture and the suburban culture.

“New paradigms of architecture, and regional and transportation planning, could well be the silver lining in the crisis of homeownership,” said Bergdoll. “This has hit especially hard in suburbs. It is here, rather than in the next ring of potential sprawl, where architects, landscape designers, artists, ecologists, and elected officials need to rethink reshaping urban America for the coming decades.”
May 2011
The Suburbs are OK

$9,245
Donated of $9,000 Goal.

No Time Remaining

This project is funded!

Donate as little as $1, or get exclusive perks for your support...

We’ve been invited by the Museum of Modern Art and PS1 in New York to undertake a summer-long workshop to re-imagine the American suburb...
We've been invited by the Museum of Modern Art and PS1 in New York to undertake a summer-long workshop to reimagine the American suburb and the American dream of home ownership in the shadow of the home foreclosure crisis. It is an incredibly important opportunity for us to have a venue at such a prestigious institution, and we hope it will be an opportunity to help shape the national conversation on what home means today. This workshop will lead to an exhibition of our work, together with that of four other teams, at MoMA in New York next January.

**We think the suburbs are OK.** They have problems and need to change but we don't want to do away with them, we just want to make them better.


The Workshop

Role of the Museum

The formula for the project, then, is fairly standard: an analytical phase informs the development of research questions that are then put to interdisciplinary teams, led by architects, to decode into design strategies. Their strategies will later be scrubbed by Bergdoll and his curatorial team for public consumption. The structure is thus highly normative; by taking each element to its extreme, it becomes radical. Not just research, but dense research; not just architects but highly qualified architects leading teams of highly qualified professionals; not just a public audience but the very public audience of MoMA.

followed by presentations from each of the five teams. Architect Harry Cobb, of Pei Cobb Freed and Partners, briefly introduced a discussion with the architects. In asking, in his words, an “innocent question”, Cobb gave form to the latent idea in the room, “putting the architect back in the center”. This simple idea formalized and infected the discussion over the remainder of the afternoon. The idea immediately took purchase with the architects in the room, who spend much of their professional and academic lives arguing for a place at the table, let alone the pole position. Recognizing its infectiousness, Martin reminded the audience in his subsequent address, that there is “no such thing as an innocent question from Harry Cobb.” I can only speculate on Martin’s remarks, but a promising point of entry is that Cobb’s challenge begs a further question: the center of what?
invited to “get some sparks flying”. Sparks flew indeed. Bookended by moderators Martin and Bergdoll, the respective role of the historian-curator and the curator-historian in Foreclosed was rendered in high relief by their roles in the hot debate. Bergdoll, the curator, cut off the back-and-forth between Dunham-Jones and Sorkin by decoding and imparting clarity in the form of a question that anyone could understand: market-driven or not?

Martin, the historian, illustrated his role by reframing the vitriol of team leader Andrew Zago with historical precision. Zago vehemently attacked Dunham-Jones and New Urbanism for not having produced a single piece of “significant” architecture, asking when they would give up in failure. Martin illustrated the false polarization of Zago’s argument – which pitted avant-garde or “significant” architecture against the kitsch that often results from New Urbanist ideology – redirecting the attack to Yale faculty member Leon Krier and making explicit the historical embodiment of the “significant” Ivy Leagues with suburban detritus.

1. Nice to see architects throwing down for their cause.
   
   Comment by Christophe — May 24, 2011, @ 6:13 pm

2. Interesting Article.
   
   Comment by Natasha Goldman — May 24, 2011, @ 8:28 pm

3. We’ve been trying to put ourselves in the center of the debate for how many years now? Ever seen “He’s Just Not That Into You”? Get over it, girl.
   
   Comment by James — May 25, 2011, @ 9:37 am

4. Great article, passion is obvious on both sides of the argument.
   
   “Zago vehemently attacked Dunham-Jones and New Urbanism for not having produced a single piece of “significant” architecture, asking when they would give up in failure.” Probably as heated as a forum of this type could be.
   
   Comment by Chia — May 25, 2011, @ 3:29 pm

5. “Zago vehemently attacked Dunham-Jones and New Urbanism for not having produced a single piece of ‘significant’ architecture, asking when they would give up in failure.”

Andrew Zago has achieved a new level of ignorance regarding the New Urbanism. I searched the net for a picture of him and was surprised to find that he does not look quite as slack-jawed stupid as he sounds, even though appearance is apparently how he judges substance.

Now (LORD grant me patience!), “significant” architecture is not really how New Urbanists keep score. We do so in many other ways: how many cars not bought; how many vehicle miles reduced; how much transit supported; how much carbon not spewed into the atmosphere; how many children and old folk walk to their daily needs; how much infrastructure cost saved; how much less expended on the delivery of municipal services; how many HOPE VI houses cherished by their residents; how much real estate value created; how many total acres under design (either as New Urbanist communities or through form-based codes); how many downtowns revitalized; how much choice available regionally to those whom suburbia does not serve well; and so on.

But Architect Zago keeps score by other means — like securing the good opinion of about a half-dozen critics in Los Angeles and New York. Indeed, he operates in a world so marginal that I need to be reminded of its existence, monthly, by Metropolis.

That his statement was thoroughly engaged by Director Martin, rather than being ignored as the antics of a simpleton, shows what kind of emissions pass for discourse in
Foreclosed: Rehousing the American Dream

In an effort to begin a conversation on the foreclosure crisis, architecture, and suburbanism, we have just launched Foreclosed: Rehousing the American Dream, the second workshop and exhibition in the series issues in Contemporary Architecture. Like last year's Rising Currents, Foreclosed uses the model of a workshop with public open houses at MoMA PS1, followed by an exhibition at MoMA, with five interdisciplinary teams each working on designated sites.

However, unlike Rising Currents, Foreclosed addresses an issue at a national, as opposed to local, scale.

The Issue

The foreclosure crisis has led to a major loss of confidence in the suburban dream. The idea of single-family houses on private lots reachable only by car has been broken, and this new reality has hit especially hard in suburbs. It is here, rather than in the next ring of potential sprawl, where architects, landscape designers, artists, ecologists, and elected officials need to rethink reshaping urban America for the coming decades.

Foreclosed: Rewriting the Script

Maybe you’ve read about what’s been happening lately in classical Athens. Or maybe you’ve heard about legislators in our own, neoclassical capital attempting to negotiate a new federal budget that would be, as The New York Times put it, “credible enough to assure investors worldwide that Washington is getting serious about taking care of its financial health.” Whether it’s the IMF enforcing austerity in Greece, or markets pressuring Congress to cut Medicare, society’s script is being rewritten with draconian new rules.

Foreclosed is situated in the midst of this drama, which is also playing out around the “American Dream” of suburban home ownership. It asks, gently but firmly: What are the rules by which housing ought to be designed, produced, and made available in the United States? To whom? By whom? To what end? What ought to be the role of governments in these processes? Of markets? Of architecture? Of urbanism?
Because what partly makes the draconian new rules stick is everyday discourse, conversations public and private that no longer winced at the suggestion that "financial health" is built on the perverse pleasure of watching someone lose their home or their health care. The fact that this brutal feeling is just that—a feeling—suggests that the art of architecture might be a good place to start, to learn to think and feel differently about the movie now playing in a theater near you.

JUNE 23, 2011, 4:22 PM.

Unfortunately, it was a house of cards that could not be sustained because the country wasn’t paying close enough attention. We were building up debt with no R&D for our future. We got involved in expensive wars, and put off stem cell research and genetic engineering. We just sell the world fast food and entertainment now. I actually saw the crash coming, and managed to take advantage of the greed and chaos to find myself as the dust settles in very comfortable digs. I was 15 feet away from John Paulson at a gala last summer and was tempted to speak to him and mention that he and I were the only 2 that I know of that came out ahead from the whole mess. I decided to wait....

Posted by Michael Galilee

This is Very interesting...presentations are available for viewing online. Check it out. http://fb.me/17x8B51wh

"@MuseumModernArt: 5 teams rethinking the rules to design and produce housing in the US. bit.ly/kARHd9 My kinda fun architecture"

5 teams rethinking the rules by which housing ought to be designed, produced, and made available http://bit.ly/kARHd9 (via @MuseumModernArt)

"Check out Foreclosed: Rewriting the Script at MoMA bit.ly/jmfsix Thank you @museumofmodernart for posting this."

MT @brainpicker: 5 teams rethinking rules for housing design, production, availability http://bit.ly/kARHd9 (via @MuseumModernArt)

RT @brainpicker: 5 teams rethinking rules for how housing have 2 b designed produced made available http://bit.ly/kARHd9 (via @MuseumModernArt)

MoMA | Foreclosed: Rewriting the Script: http://bit.ly/jqhZn# by @addthis

Foreclosed: Between Crisis, Possibility and Revision

About four years ago, a latent pattern of unethical, self-interested and surreptitious decision-making reared its head to wreak havoc in the American housing market. Americans were living on a dream buoyed by false hope: we thought we could have it all. But as millions defaulted on mortgages with unmanageable interest rates, made on credit they couldn’t afford to pay off, the country was exposed to the networks of mistrust and corruption that came to define the zeitgeist of today’s financial system.

In an effort to harness the ideas of the creative community to provoke change, the Whitney Independent Study Program and the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) have embarked on curatorial projects that deconstruct “foreclosure” in markedly different ways. Essentially, both ask for a new, creative perspective on how to fill the vacant, unused and struggling spaces produced by the financial crisis.

FORECLOSED: BETWEEN CRISIS AND POSSIBILITY

In Foreclosed: Between Crisis and Possibility, a group exhibition and series of public programs curated by Whitney Independent Study Program (ISP) Curatorial Fellows Jennifer Burns, Sofia Otalora, Sadia Shirazi and Gaa Tedone, “between” is the operative word. Well, that and “foreclosed.” Using foreclosure mainly as a point of departure, the show and discussions posit multiple approaches to looking at and utilizing the forgotten spaces that embody the aftershocks of a declining economy and ask how artists, architects and planners grapple with a culture of crisis.

“City as Stage,” a conversation between GSAPP Professor Emeritus and planner Peter Marcuse, urban planner/architect/artist Damon Rich, Director and Chief Curator of the Sheila C. Johnson Design Center Radhika Subramaniam and artist Tania Bruguera, moderated by Sadia Shirazi, was held at The Kitchen on June 11th. The afternoon began with a screening of Beau Geste by Yto Barrada. In Beau Geste, Barrada patches a malignant hole in a palm tree in a vacant lot in Tangier, trying to thwart a developer who gouged it in hopes of killing the tree, thus allowing him to build up the lot. This guerilla-style urban intervention set the tone for the ensuing discussion on several levels: the scale was small, the action direct, and its consequence indeterminate.
The crucial question facing the arts community, the panel seemed to agree, is: what actions can artists or arts organizations take to resist the consequences of foreclosure and fight the momentum of their underlying causes by empowering marginalized populations and interrogating systems of power? "It is easier to see the consequences than the causes of foreclosure," Marcuse observed.

Where the Whitney ISP/Kitchen exhibition and discussion aimed to be open-ended, so as to allow for interdisciplinary connections at all scales, MoMA grounded itself in real sites where architecture as a specific discipline can alter an environment and thus change the course of an economic downturn spiral. The exhibition, as the title suggests, will interrogate and, one hopes, reframe the "American Dream" that has shaped our flawed housing policies and design preferences. It remains to be seen if the plans imagined by assembled firms will go farther than MoMA's walls, but the show has the potential to popularize innovative and economically sustainable design themes.

However, as the exhibition moves forward and the emerging conversation surrounding foreclosure continues among cultural institutions, the creative minds at work must be cognizant of their objectives: to truly aid those who are losing their homes and to build a new platform on which Americans, and citizens internationally, can construct housing paradigms and approaches to ownership, investment and property.

A New Conversation, Reference and Comparison, Role of the Museum

Are Museums America’s Last Hope for Civil Discourse?

With so many windows seemingly slamming shut, is it possible that art museums might be the last hope for civil discourse in America? As Robin Cembalest recently wrote in ARTnews, “Experts from outside the art world are converging to collaborate on projects that extend far beyond the galleries—and beyond conventional definitions of art.” Call it common sense or outlandish mission creep, museums as “think tanks” is fast becoming a reality, and perhaps a necessity.

If, as Samuel Johnson famously said, “Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel” are the fine arts the last refuge of a humanist liberal? Whereas art museums once confined themselves to collecting and presenting for the edification and education of the masses, some institutions now see that education extending beyond the typical boundaries of art. “If the 20th century was primarily about collecting, I believe the 21st is about programming,” MoMA director Glenn Lowry says in Cembalest’s piece. “Our goal is not so much to be the change agent, but rather, to create the kind of conversation that might lead at some future date to change by addressing critically important problems that engage specialists within the field as well as a more general public.” A recent program at the MoMA titled “Foreclosed: Rehousing the American Dream” seems out of place in a modern art museum, but in response to the U.S. foreclosure crisis of the past few years. Les Demoiselles d’Avignon just doesn’t seem that relevant, at least directly. Lowry, and others hosting similar forums, claim not to be “change agents,” but the very act of promoting the “conversation” in a civil manner is a refreshing change.

Community Participation, Role of the Museum

There is another angle to this. Here in the UK, museums in competition for public funding are having to increase “footfall,” and the most obvious way to do that is to make exhibits more relevant to people’s lives. Museums are having to reach out into wider society. A new museum, M-Shed, in my hometown of Bristol, is dedicated to sharing with people their own history and the history of their families, workplaces and neighbourhoods. Politics, particularly in relation to trans-Atlantic slavery and modern activism is an integral part of the museum.

Role of the Museum

Having worked in museums for a large part of my life I do agree that they serve as an excellent platform to engage people’s minds in new and relevant social ideas. However, I would not say that they are the only outlet, or that they are even the best. Museum environments can often be colder and more sterile than some of their community counterparts, not entirely fostering room for discourse so much as a contemplation. It seems to me that it is in America’s community centers, art spaces and concert halls that people feel more comfortable to come together in
Comments on Foreclosed

"we believe to operate as avant-hyper-self-conscious architects." #MOS moma.org/explore/inside...

MoMA 4ur Mind from NY>> Foreclosed: Constructing an Exhibition Narrative tiny.ly/aSwsS

MoMA: "Foreclosed: Rehousing the American Dream" teams begin conceptualizing/constructing their exhibition displays: bit.ly/mXFByg

Art Gallery Untitled

August 2011
Dispatches From the Changing American Dream: Expanding the National Conversation

So in addition to stories about college graduates moving back in with their parents because they can’t find a job, and stories about foreclosures and our crumbling infrastructure, we will focus on efforts to revitalize — and even re-imagine — our communities.

One such effort is being sponsored by the Museum of Modern Art. The 1.4-month program is called “Foreclosed: Rehousing the American Dream,” and is an effort to rethink America’s suburbs in the wake of the foreclosure crisis — and spur dialogue and debate around the subject. The project is “premised on reframing the current crisis as an opportunity,” writes curator Barry Bergdoll, “an approach that is in keeping with the fundamental American ethos where challenging circumstances engender innovation and out-of-the-box thinking.”

Innovation and out-of-the-box thinking are exactly what we need right now. Among the many tragedies unfolding across the country because of the tectonic shifts going on in our economy is the horrible waste of human resources. We don’t just have a surplus of under-utilized workers, we have a surplus of untapped energy and creativity and talent.
Similarly, the institute's political allegiances: top personnel maintained close, sentimental relationship to the Soviet Union (the Institute saw its goals as higher than that of Russian foreign policy. Stalin, who was horrified at the undisciplined, "cosmopolitan" operation set up by his predecessors, cut the institute off in the late 1920's, forcing Lukacs into "self-criticism," briefly jailing him as a German sympathizer during World War II.

Lukacs survived to briefly take up his old post as Minister of Culture during the anti-Stalinist Irine Nagy regime in Hungary. Of the other top institute figures, Herbert Marcuse are typical. He started as a Communist; became a protégé of philosopher Martin Heidegger even as the latter was joining the Nazi Party; coming to America, he worked for the World War II Office of Strategic Services (OSS), and later became the U.S. State Department's top analyst of Soviet policy during the height of the McCarthy period; in the 1960's, he turned again, to become the most important guru of the New Left, and he ended his days helping to found the environmentalist extremist Green Party in West Germany.

In all this seeming incoherence of shifting positions and contradictory funding, there is no ideological conflict. The invariant is the desire of all parties to answer Lukacs' original question: "Who will save us from Western civilization?"

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Wait St not at the bourse
THE BULLS ARE LOCKED WITH THE OPPOSITE-- WE ARE DOING WELL-- IT IS NEUTRAL

Whoahox
Let's go Mets!
475 Fans
08:33 AM on 08/10/2011
Which "institute," Christine? MoMA?

HUFFPOST SUPER USER
Ron Bananas
Marketing
111 Fans
10:18 AM on 08/10/2011

Greater minds than mine are crunching the real numbers, but I can tell you here in Clearwater, Florida how things are. A huge downtown revitalization project went bust 3 years ago, beautiful new high rises overlooking the water, selling for $500k to $1M. EMPTY. 90% of downtown business storefronts EMPTY, many never leased. Small SHOPPING strip centers throughout the whole town, HALF EMPTY.

Each day, I run 3 miles through the area, hundreds of homeless people everywhere, sleeping in bushes, on benches, just horrible and sad.

My local pub has patron who are plumbers, electricians, welders, carpenters, roofers, auto mechanics... had he either lost their jobs or have had hours cut back.

This is reality here. no hope, no change.

archedes
33 Fans
10:37 AM on 08/10/2011

Arianna - You always write timely, intelligent and articulate posts. Among the most important salient points in your article today is your noting that 'we have a surplus of untapped energy and creativity and talent.' Being a creative professional myself, I do not have the words to describe the devastation myself and my colleagues have suffered during this recession - financially, emotionally and even physically. Brilliant, highly educated and experienced graphic designers, interior designers, architects, painters, artists, musicians, dancers, etc. who have made our country a better place by improving the quality of everything we see, hear, touch, taste and feel have been tossed aside. Many were self-employed and are not able to obtain any unemployment insurance or other types of assistance. Others have been forced to do work where their skills, intellect and ability are demeaned by ridiculously low pay, poor treatment and complete disregard for their talent and the positive aspects it provides. At least during the last depression, the WPA and similar programs existed to tap into these talents and provide recognition, work and intellectual relief to this forgotten segment of our society. Disregarding these talented, creative individuals is proving to be one of the greatest downfalls of our society. It's tragic, sad and truly un-American.

republicio4all
53 Fans
02:54 PM on 08/10/2011

The American Dream has always been based on the freedom to pursue your dreams and the enabler for the American Dream has always been our Constitution, the rule of law, and economic liberty. Our free enterprise system lifted more people out of poverty than any other system this earth has ever known. Government exists to protect your rights and to prevent other people from interfering with your pursuit of these dreams, free of harm. The American Dream is different for every person in this country. For some it is to own a home. For some it is to have a successful business. Whatever that dream is to be, it is achieved through your own efforts and not through the reliance on the government. For me, it is to live as a free person, not a prisoner of government regulations and controls.
When architects Sam Dufaux and Michael Etzel were tasked by the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) with re-envisioning Keizer Station, they came up with a scathing indictment of Keizer as it currently exists: bedroom community, not very diverse, aging, little local dynamic.

Whether or not residents agree with that assessment is beside the point because the re-envisioning is less about the specifics of the Keizer Station and more about what it means to alter the previous conceptions of the American Dream.
As the barriers to entry into the American Dream – interpreted as a house in the suburbs – rise, the Foreclosed project tackles the question of "what if" we could dream a bit differently. The suburb was built on the notion of the nuclear family that lived and worked within a relatively small geographic area, but, in the past 50 years, as ring upon ring of suburb spirals out into all the space zoning codes permit, residents of the suburbs are increasingly remote from the places where they work.

"The drive everywhere for cheaper and cheaper things mentality is unsustainable. It's getting more crowded and a huge portion of the income goes into transportation," Dufaux said.

"The way we think about land is skewed, we think of value in terms of size and there's a quality of land that goes way beyond what is traditionally taken into account," Dufaux said. "And everyone we've talked to chooses to live here because of the natural beauty. So, when we started the project, we decided we wanted to have the city at the front door and the country at the back door."

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Keizer's Joe says:

I like this design a lot better than our current Keizer Station layout. I almost dread going to Keizer Station because I always take the long way to get to where I am going. I just can't figure out the roads. It's confusing.

A tourist from Georgia once confronted me in the Lowes parking lot and asked me how to get to Target because he had seen it from the freeway. He seemed intelligent enough. I laughed because I told him that I live in Keizer and still can't figure it out. I gave him the best directions I could and wished him luck. He said "Thank you for the directions and hope I can find my way back to the freeway." I wished him good luck yet again.

I am dependent on my automobile to go from one store to the next. I love going to Bridgeport Village. Parking is a problem but once you park, it's a pleasure to walk from store to store. And there is such variety. I can even take in a movie after shopping. It's just an attractive place to visit. It's inviting. The footprint of Bridgeport is so small compared to Keizer Station. It's just a total waste of land. Too bad we can't just start over.

I just can't wait for the Mayor's, Chamber of Commerce's and the council's Walmart to be built. Doubt that Walmart was envisioned initially but we have to please Chuck Sides. Hey, doesn't he owe the city back taxes? Oh, he is immune to property taxes. Too bad, the city could use the money.

**It’s Not Just a Museum, It’s a Think Tank**

Art museums are recruiting experts from outside the art world to address problems in the real world and beyond conventional definitions of art.

A biologist, an urbanist, an economist, and a sewage expert walk into a museum. And they say, “Let’s get out of here and go fix some problems.”

This conversation, in so many words, has been occurring simultaneously at several New York museums, where experts from outside the art world are converging to collaborate on projects that extend far beyond the galleries—

This spring, the Museum of Modern Art, the Guggenheim, and the New Museum launched multidisciplinary, multisite, goal-oriented programs to take on such issues as housing, the mortgage crisis, and waste management, to name a few.

While these projects might seem far afield from museums’ traditional mission—to preserve, study, and show their collections—directors say they reflect a logical evolution of their founders’ intentions.

At MoMA, experts in urban planning, housing policy, ecology, landscape design, engineering, and the social sciences will brainstorm on issues affecting homeowners as part of “Foreclosed: Rehousing the American Dream.” For the first phase in the 14-month initiative, supervised by architecture and design curator Barry Bergdoll, five teams—each charged with a particular mega-region—will create proposals reflecting “new and inventive thinking about the relationship between land, housing, infrastructure, urban form,” and what the idea of “public space” even means. The workshops will be followed by a symposium and then an exhibition of proposals, opening in January.

Image Credit: Maggie Lee


Press and Links, The Workshop

Robin Cembalest, "It's Not Just a Museum, It's a Think Tank," ARTnews, Summer 2011, 44–46. Image Credit: Maggie Lee
Project Elements
The Workshop

The multidisciplinary teams working on projects for the exhibition Foreclosed: Reconsidering the American Dream have one month left in the workshop phase before the final public Open Studios at MoMA PS1 on Saturday, September 17, 2011. Here, they summarize their progress and outstanding concerns as they move towards finalizing their respective projects.

Pre-Foreclosed: August 2011

You forgot the burden on the non-existent middle class.
Posted by Janet Jenkins

AUGUST 17, 2011, 3:30 PM

I am afraid design has lost touch with the sacred. Solutions that do not revere our connection and dependence on nature are Band-Aids. Foreclosure is the result of a capitalist business model on two fronts. First, homes are built on inexpensive land that require infrastructure. Less expensive than infill, the market is sold a bigger is better value, demeaning the essence of design itself. Inexpensive, huge homes have destroyed millions of acres of farmland and aquifers and are ready to do so again after the recession is over regardless of what you do at MoMA. These homes are expensive and are deteriorating rapidly. Second, a failed industry at the core is not a position to repair itself without new revolutionary system approach only slightly identified in LEED and the Green Building Initiative.

There must be a return to the building practices from the past that had one core leader in the design and delivery process. Trained as an engineer, these master builders were schooled in a natural, sacred geometric methodology that was philosophical and practical. The difference between this and our existing third tier architect, engineer and builder approach is innate conflict.

A building is a sacred thing, manifest from nature and in accordance with her underlying principles. Until we regain this relationship, any attempts to solve our nightmare of expensive, cheap, environmentally dysfunctional buildings will be superficial. A much deeper view of the problem is the challenge and the work is philosophical, spiritual, professional and health related.
Posted by Carol Gregor

JANUARY 16, 2012, 7:02 PM

It is our Post-Modern condition. We have focused so much in 'consuming' that it has made us forget about the true meaning of 'design'. Designers have forgotten about their social purpose, and have focused on the consumer driving tools to fulfill people's desires. However, not everything is lost. I feel that modernism is coming back strong once again because it is becoming a necessity of our future societies.

Posted by Mame Guter
The Art of Advocacy: The Museum as Design Laboratory

Since 2007, when I ventured out of the academy to take the reins of the Department of Architecture and Design at the Museum of Modern Art, we have traversed an unexpected set of economic, social and environmental challenges in which the centrality of the design professions has become manifestly clear, even as larger forces — in which designers are too often complicit — act to marginalize the disciplines of architecture, landscape architecture, urban planning, design and the fine arts. Having worked side-by-side with diverse professionals, I am more than ever convinced that a cooperative, multidisciplinary approach is fundamental to the future vitality of the field — and essential if designers are to contribute to solving the enormous problems of our day. At MoMA we have been trying to discover meaningful positions and prospects even as practitioners have been jolted into discussion of just where the moral compass should be set.

The End of the Starchitect

In 2007, the overlapping worlds of architecture and design, much like the worlds of politics and finance and thus of building and spatial development more generally, were very much persuaded that the old laws of cycles and periods had definitively yielded to new models of uninterrupted growth and limitless possibilities — and perhaps even the transcendence of the cyclical and sometimes violent swings of economic growth and building demand. That mood now seems hard to recapture. The neologism “starchitect” has lost much of its luster; indeed, it seems increasingly clear that the term did little service even to the handful of design talents whose works were thus lauded according to some superficial criteria of relevance largely to affluent citizens of the G20 countries. In any case, it is no longer a viable role model for future designers, given that the subprime mortgage crisis and economic crash have been accompanied by an equally impressive crash of new commissions for expensive private houses and showy museum additions, the building types that sustained the starchitect portfolio.

I am not among those who believe that we are currently experiencing a temporary downturn; nor that we need simply to wait it out. I am no economist, political scientist or financial analyst. But it is now abundantly clear — to any who follow the information revealed by each new excavation of our assumptions brought on by the global financial crisis — that there were ample signs that the old euphoria was untethered to reality long before the band ceased to play, that many of the causes are structural rather than ephemeral. We are living through a paradigm shift as fundamental as that launched in the early 1980s, when the Reagan and Thatcher revolutions in the English-speaking world set
Academic Hubris

Role of the Museum

A New Conversation, Professional Practice, Role of the Museum
Some observers have been bewildered by this new use of the museum not as a sanctuary for continually re-launching a battle in a war I believe won long ago — namely the status of architecture as art — but rather as a public forum for advocacy. But this is not really a new program for the museum. The Museum of Modern Art opened its doors to the public in November 1929, just days after the big stock market crash, and it came of age in the Great Depression. From the first its agenda was multifold. Most architectural histories have preferred to emphasize the aesthetic manifesto of Philip Johnson and Henry-Russell Hitchcock’s seminal International Style exhibition of 1932; but in fact the most sustained activity of the architecture department’s first decade consisted of exhibitions and programs advocating for better public housing. Exhibitions such as America Can’t Have Housing, of 1934, and Architecture in Government Housing, of 1936, had direct impacts on the creation of the New York City Housing Authority in 1934, and on the passage of the Federal Housing Act of 1937, with significant credit due to the activism of the young Catherine Bauer, who contributed to both shows, and the advocacy of Lewis Mumford.

Right now the Department of Architecture and Design is midway through a second design laboratory/exhibition experiment that picks up that tradition of exploring new design paradigms and new public policy approaches regarding the relationship of housing to infrastructure. In the wake of the ongoing foreclosure crisis — that symptom of the global financial crisis which most directly affects a large percentage of the U.S. population as well as the future of our national landscape — the department has joined forces with the Buell Center for the Study of American Architecture at Columbia University; we have challenged five interdisciplinary teams of architects, landscape architects, economists, and policy specialists to propose alternative physical and even financial and legislative models for the redevelopment of American suburbs.

Thank you, Barry, for helping us learn from architecture’s past and enabling us to benefit from great minds working to solve the new problems we face today. Your thought-provoking exhibitions are a service to all who are grappling with the environmental, social, financial and other issues that keep us awake at night. Thanks for providing us with forum for discussion to discover a range of solutions.

Strong wisdom, encouraging: félicitations.

MoMA project starts rebuilding the American dream, starting in Orange

If you asked your parents (doesn’t matter how old you are) to describe the American dream, they’d sooner or later talk about a house, a yard and a picket fence — a single-family home. George W. Bush, taking a line from Margaret Thatcher, called his administration’s easy credit policies "the ownership society," one in which we’d all have the chance to work hard, prosper and buy a home.

Well, here we are, eight years after the increasing value of our houses was supposed to make up for decades of declining wages and growing debt. More than $7.8 trillion in middle-class home equity was erased by the crash at the end of Bush’s two terms, 30 percent of homeowners now owe more than their houses are worth, and many of our suburbs are a checkerboard of occupied and empty houses. And that has made many long-standing critics of the American suburb — who see it as environmentally toxic, energy wasteful and just too expensive (especially because it’s paid for by taxing the cities) — call for another major rethink of the way we house our dream.

Meredith, is heading the MOS team. The exact boundaries of the MOS study have yet to be set, but the team intends to include an area large enough to include the rail station and Interstate 280, which runs nearby. "The state has promised funds to encourage higher densities within a half-mile radius of light railroad transit stations, and we wanted to be as practical as we could be."

Almost from the beginning, MoMA architects have focused on car-driven, low-density housing as both the appeal and the curse of the suburbs. Providing services — sewage, power, garbage collection, water, and so on — in such a sprawling development is both expensive and environmentally inefficient. Yet people who live in the suburbs have a strong emotional connection to their suburbs, and the idea of entering them for a weekend is a major part of American culture.
“American workers have a much more nomadic lifestyle than they did in the ’50s and ’60s. They don’t live in just one home for 30 years anymore. Rent-to-own patterns might serve a lot of people better.”

Gosh, urban redevelopment with state financing. When will we ever learn? I guess Two Ton Tony Galento would be skeptical of these plans for his old stamping grounds. Samuel Bush, patriarch of the Bushes, and a colleague of the Rockefellers, would likely be quite pleased. As the only Orangian who became part of the Federal Reserve, Old Sammy Bush would like the idea of the government borrowing money...but only if he got a piece of the action.

This sounds like a lot of over paid elitists trying to decide how everyone else should live. My suggestion is that all members of this elite team be required to move their families to this new development and reside there for at least five years as part of their contract. The most troubling is, as Fairfield Fox points out, the use of taxpayer dollars to fund this boodoggle. Who are they to declare that suburban living is dead? Then the usual outlandish lie: “many long-standing critics of the American suburb — who see it as environmentally toxic, energy wasteful and just too expensive (especially because it’s paid for by taxing the cities)” All evidence points to the suburban taxpayer as supporting the urban ghettos so your analysis is an outright lie. Abbot schools and other urban renewal activities are primarily supported by taxpayers from the suburbs.

Truth is, the Great Migration destroyed the great cities of Detroit, Cleveland, Chicago (only the Daley’s could hold this wonderfully toddlin’ town together; Rahm’s clueless), Newark, L.A., Philadelphia and NYC. They aren’t coming back. Neither are places like Orange and Irvington, the former Camptown. Parasites will use our tax dollars in a quixotic attempt to recapture history, while pocketing some easy money. Then, a thesis can be written, a PhD for someone’s daughter in Urban Planning? Sure, why not? Then, a fellowship on the taxpayers’ cuff. The rip-off.

It seems like only yesterday, that I could hop on the bus, for a dime, with friends and go “downtown”, to catch a ballgame, a movie or just mingle with the delightful crowds. Then, around 1958, that became dangerous for kids under 15....then under 20....then EVERYONE. The jostling started. The muggings, the 5 vs. 2 shakedowns. The stabbings and the shootings and the rapes. A cannonball, they said, could be fired down every “Main Street”, without injuring a soul...because everyone had fled. What a helluvia migration, as we look back over what was, and can never be again. Only yesterday.

Excellent article! Orange is the perfect subject for this study. What is needed is a larger vision that breaks free of local politics and entrenched special interests. Unfortunately, that will be very difficult.

This weekend, we had the opportunity to attend the Open Studio event at MoMA's PS1. As we mentioned earlier, this project posed the daunting question of how to re-think, re-organize and re-energize the concept of an American suburb in the wake of the foreclosure crisis.

The plan include large bands that serve as swaths of nature. We loved their amazing model which shows the diversity of their housing typologies.

The project focused on developing 2.2 miles of boulevard in Temple Terrace with housing, government offices and retail spaces. An interesting thing to note is that Temple Terrace is expected to have a 40% population gain within the next ten years, and the suburb has been trying to stop growth. Taking a radically different approach, Bell has developed a plan that can serve as an economic model to sustain growth and allow the suburb to enjoy prosperity. Plus, the model will help the region transition from a 4.5 people/acre site into a functioning 40 people/acre. The planned complex has attributes of a city and will be quite energy efficient as a way to provide an alternative solution to attract people. We loved how the architecture is designed for experiences to overlap as a person within his courtyard has a certain amount of privacy, yet can open the doors to view people in their offices lower in the complex or communicate with their other neighbors flanking their residence.
Geng’s approach truly centered around the people of Cicero, and through a series of personal interviews, she could understand the needs of the people and attempt to address them. Geng introduced the project situating it as an “Arrival City” since most of Cicero is dominated by immigrants.

When we first walked into the room, their amazing blue foam model immediately yelled at us that this would not be like any of the other presentations. As Meredith joked in the beginning, “All suburbs are not equal.”
This past Saturday, U.S. Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Shaun Donovan spoke at MoMA PS1 in Long Island City, Queens, as part of the museum’s Foreclosed: Rehousing the American Dream. The workshop and exhibition—which included an architect-in-residence studio component—examined new architectural possibilities for American cities and suburbs in the context of the recent foreclosure crisis.

Here’s an excerpt from Secretary Donovan’s speech, "From Crisis to Opportunity: Rebuilding Communities in the Wake of Foreclosure." (You can also view a video of the entire keynote here and learn more about the project here.)

These efforts make a broader point about the quality of place. In cities across the country, from New York to New Orleans, we’ve seen when artists move in, others follow—from families looking to raise their children in dynamic, diverse neighborhoods to young creative professionals with skills that are essential to the 21st-century global economy.

Bradley says:
September 23, 2011 at 8:35 am

I think nurturing an arts community is also about creating community. In an increasingly mobile society being alienated, or not feeling part of a community is a very real and common thing. The arts help bring back the community!

Otslabvane says:
October 3, 2011 at 2:26 pm

Yes, you are right! The community should be brought back!

In May, New York’s Museum of Modern Art kicked off a nearly yearlong series of presentations, workshops, and public symposia on the topic of America’s ongoing foreclosure crisis. Out of this dense thicket of discourse will emerge a new exhibition, “Foreclosed: Rehousing the American Dream,” scheduled to open early next year.

Each team took as its subject a specific locale affected by the real estate collapse. Studio Gang, together with a multidisciplinary team of experts that included writer Greg Lindsay and urban designer Rafi Segal, took on the problem of “arrival cities,” towns that act as ports of entry to immigrants from around the world. “These places can work—or they can turn into slums,” noted Ms. Gang, whose speculative plan for immigrant-heavy Cicero, Illinois, would turn abandoned industrial facilities into integrated live-work environments.

NEARLY 100 ARCHITECTURE aficionados crowded into the steamy third-floor rooms of MoMA/PS1 last June to hear five architect teams discuss their latest projects. Their mandate: solve the country’s housing crisis.

“Foreclosed: Rehousing the American Dream,” an ongoing series of workshops that will culminate in an exhibition at MoMA in February, aims to do nothing less than provide new models for how metropolitan areas—specifically large suburbs in five areas around the country—might be improved. “The projects are not meant to provide solutions to the immediate site,” says Barry Bergdoll, MoMA’s chief curator of architecture and design. “They are meant to provide ideas for fundamental change.”

Bergdoll is not alone in his quest to have his institution spur new thinking in urban planning by engaging in it. Recently, museums have been considering cities and their challenges in exhibitions, festivals and symposia. And they want to make a difference, inspired perhaps by artists with similar concerns and by the seismic jolt delivered to their own neighborhoods as development dried up around them following the recent mortgage crisis.

As they do so, museums are running into some challenges themselves, particularly in determining the difference between public programming (within the institution) and community outreach (activism).
The Open Studios were followed by a keynote address, titled "From Crisis to Opportunity: Rebuilding Communities in the Wake of Foreclosure," by U.S. Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Shaun Donovan. The closing panel discussion, with Mohsen Mostafavi, Dean of the Harvard Graduate School of Design, and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, Dean of the Miami School of Architecture, was moderated by myself and Reinhold Martin, Director, Temple Hoyne Buell Center for the Study of American Architecture at Columbia University.

This is important work but keep the focus on energy demand reduction. Affordable Housing that is inexpensive to build but costs too much to operate is a cruel joke on the residents. Encourage Mass Wall enclosure technology (using light weight Autoclaved Aerated Concrete is the best starting point), then ERV (Energy Recovery Ventilation), and then alternative energies (solar HW and Geo-Thermal) make economic sense because you don’t need to produce that much.

Posted by George Vasilone

Pre-Foreclosed: October 2011

Orange NJ: A Model for the Future. MoMA joins local nonprofit HANDS in recognizing a bright future

Founder and Director Patrick Morrissy. The nonprofit’s creation of affordable live/work spaces has attracted artists, further stimulating growth and development. Now, a world-renowned arts organization has validated HANDS vision. The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) has selected Orange; the only one of the five cities chosen that is on the east coast, to be part of “Foreclosed: Rehousing the American Dream,” an exhibition opening in January 2012 that examines possibilities for American cities and suburbs.


American Dream, A New Conversation, Reference and Comparison

Civic Action and Long Island City

Foreclosed, Suburbia, and the American Dream

As New York City was coming out of its darkest years, art did not exactly lead the way. Who would have asked it to try? Now two institutions have joined forces to do just that. The Noguchi Museum, in collaboration with Socrates Sculpture Park, offers "Civic Action: A Vision for Long Island City."

"Change the dream and you change the city." The line could describe their hopes exactly. Instead, it helps introduce five other plans for suburban America, each with a commitment to cities and to dreaming. The Museum of Modern Art calls the show "Foreclosed: Rehousing the American Dream." Yet the curators are not looking for new architecture to house an older ideal. Rather, they want to change thinking, the kind that brought the
November 2011
Broken Homes

TWO INTERRELATED CLAIMS provide the premise for “Foreclosed: Rehousing the American Dream,” a recent workshop and forthcoming exhibition organized by the Department of Architecture and Design of the Museum of Modern Art in New York. The first is that the foundation of the American dream, particularly as it has evolved over the past century, is ownership of a single-family suburban house; the second is that America’s current foreclosure crisis should force a wholesale rethinking of this dream.

Because the goal of the exhibition is not to critique but to fundamentally reimagine suburbia, its stakes for architecture are doubly high. First, in seeking to address the underlying social and economic systems behind suburbia, the show tests architecture’s capabilities and boundaries as a discipline, along with its continuing relevance as a guiding voice in the development of America’s spatial and social geography. Simultaneously, because any treatment of suburbia has to address the problem of housing, the show must confront the house itself: that remarkable reminder of architecture’s ability to put something as ineffable as the American dream into specific material terms. So the show will also test architecture’s capacity to symbolize, the ways in which it structures and embodies meaning.

But in retrospect, Venturi and Scott Brown’s characterization of suburban sprawl as “the current vernacular of the United States,” or the “people’s architecture as the people want it,” was naive. (Both descriptions are from the revised 1977 edition of their classic book Learning from Las Vegas, which included their work on Levittown.) Suburban architecture was a travesty of the American vernacular, driven not by local tradition or individual expression but by the house’s new status as a mass-produced consumer product. The artist Dan Graham had already made this point in 1966, with his legendary Homes for America, a spread for Arts Magazine, in which he pointed out that beneath their symbolic appliqués, suburban homes exhibited the same monotonous repetition as any other artifact of industrialized capitalism.
And despite the fact that interpretations of Matta-Clark’s work have tended more toward the sculptural and kinesthetic than the semiotic, his building cuts can be understood in the context of a similar interest in the commercialized symbolism of the suburban house. “Architecture is a big business,” he told an interviewer in *Arts Magazine* in May 1976, going on to criticize an “industry that profligates suburban . . . boxes as a context for insuring a passive, isolated consumer.”

Bergdoll and Martin describe their directive to the teams as “not to redesign the house, but to redesign the dream.”

All five teams have responded to this directive to some degree by proposing social and infrastructural systems that attempt, on a large scale, to align with the new cultural desires and economic realities of American suburban living. Amaele Andraos and Dan Wood of WORK Architecture Company, working on Salem-Keizer, Oregon, propose a contemporary update on the notion of a garden city, addressing a range of ecological issues. Hilary Sample and Michael Meredith of MOS, analyzing the Oranges, New Jersey, explore the potential of suburban streets to offer a new kind of civic space in a less car-dependent future. Jeanne Gang of Studio Gang, focusing on Cicero, Illinois, seeks a new flexibility in housing that will accommodate the rapidly shifting immigrant populations in the suburbs outside Chicago. Andrew Zago of Zago Architecture, studying Rialto, California, subverts the strict hierarchies of property boundaries that have traditionally structured suburban space. And Michael Bell of Visible Weather, examining Temple Terrace, Florida, considers the relationship between relatively homogenous Florida suburbs and the more diverse and less prosperous neighboring urban communities.

On the other hand, to reinvent, rather than critique, as he seeks to do with the California Method, seems to be a uniquely architectural capability. Matta-Clark once referred to *Splitting* as a “theatrical gesture.” Theatricality has its place, but today we need more from our architects. ☐

Foreclosed: MoMA Takes on Suburbia

The severe effects of the current economic crisis on suburbs across America make it more urgent than ever to rethink the designs of our suburban landscapes. Disconnected single-family homes requiring private automobile transport seem to form a less and less viable pattern of settlement.

Early next year, MoMA’s Foreclosed exhibition will take on major issues in suburbia that have been under-examined for decades—themes that were explored through two other notable exhibits at The Museum of Modern Art in the past. 1973’s Another Chance for Housing: Low-Rise Alternatives presented a housing prototype designed to combine the best aspects of suburban and urban living, while the 1944 traveling exhibition Look at Your Neighborhood advocated for public spaces within suburbia.

MoMA has historically used its position of influence to call attention to issues in suburbia and housing. Collaborating with government agencies, as well as with architects, the Museum has framed arguments on new ways of living. In this tradition, Foreclosed, which is co-organized by MoMA and Columbia University’s Temple Hoyne Buell Center for the Study of American Architecture, will present five architectural teams’ re-imaginings of the American suburb.

Foreclosed asks its design teams to consider what is “public” about today’s cities and suburbs.” The question recalls the central theme of MoMA’s very first exhibit on community planning and suburbia, 1944’s Look at Your Neighborhood Less about design and more a call to civic action, the bare-bones show declared, “Your neighborhood needs you... Organize a neighborhood planning council.”

This fall, BMW funded a Guggenheim lab on the Lower East Side that will travel—along with a lot of forward-thinking programs and events—to nine cities around the world for the next six years. Earlier this year, Audi funded the New Museum’s Festival Ideas for the New City on the Bowery which the museum plans on staging every other year. And in May, Volkswagen announced a two-year partnership with MoMA to fund online educational programming, on-site “labs,” and an exhibition of socially conscious international work at PS1.

Major museums and cultural institutions are jumping on the social activism bandwagon as never before, launching urban research projects, participatory art festivals, and engaged urbanist exhibitions that were once the primary engagement of only the most committed nonprofits and independent producers as tools of social action. In organizing these shows, curators are embracing an idea in the vanguard of contemporary art and design, and getting German luxury car companies to foot the bills. What’s going on here, and who’s really the beneficiary?

Speculating about ideas for the urban environment has become a new parlor game for the college-educated elite. At a certain point there are only so many of these festivals of ideas you need. Someone needs to go and do the socially valuable work itself.

How do we parse socially engaged art and urban interventions when they are simultaneously museum programming and automobile branding? Business investment and corporate philanthropy have long been important to the American way of life, but the placement of company names in the public realm has also come to embody the powerlessness of ordinary citizens to exercise control over public processes. The capture of these practices by elite cultural institutions threatens to empty them of their socially engaged function and turn them into a sideshow. At the same time, museums have the capacity to provide much-needed access to resources for this type of work and apply it usefully to their own communities. One only needs to look back on MoMA’s legendary postwar exhibitions on housing and modern architecture to see the power of this kind of involvement.
Early in the game, Barry Bergdoll’s activist exhibition and urban research streak at the Museum of Modern Art’s architecture department, alongside former curator of contemporary architecture Andres Lepik, were especially successful at making arguments for sustainability and social practice within the field—without the help of any car companies.

The critical problem for museums’ efforts to activate socially engaged practice is how to displace the work from its original context without denaturing it. Social art and urban interventions are different from static art forms like painting and sculpture—at least in their materialized, pre-social versions. To be adequately experienced and to realize their intentions, they have to act in the world and be put to good use.

Foreclosed: Buying into the “American Dream”

Some mortgage industry analysts are now predicting that one out of five mortgages will eventually end in default if our elected officials don’t take action. The surge in Occupy Wall Street demonstrations is a powerful signal that growing numbers of people want radical change to the status quo. And four years into the crisis, government officials have been unable to effectively deal with the extensive blight in communities affected with high rates of foreclosure.

Foreclosed calls into question the American Dream of home ownership and the way it was packaged and sold in the form of a single-family house in the suburbs. It bes the current foreclosure crisis to unsustainable trends in housing and planning that go back to the days of Frank Lloyd Wright and his Broadacre City. The exhibition also demonstrates how prevailing models for suburban development are not only environmentally unsustainable, but also financially unsound.

Donovan told the audience that the foreclosure crisis disproportionately hit low-income and minority household in the suburbs. He noted how in some of these communities the majority of people receiving mortgages during the housing bubble were given subprime loans when many of them qualified for prime ones. And he cited a study that showed that Latinos in this country lost two-thirds of their wealth between 2005 and 2009.
Community Participation, Infrastructure, Scale, Sustainability

Circulation, Family, Land Use and Density

Homeownership

Government and Policy

Reference and Comparison

Homeownership, Professional Practice, Reference and Comparison

Press and Links

Foreclosed: Thoughts on Cicero and Collaboration with Jeanne Gang

What does an artist interested in blight and the reactivation of space in under-resourced neighborhoods offer an architectural team taking on the failures of suburbia? How could my team (Charlie Vintz, Elizabeth MacWillie, and Hailie Chen) and I think hard about complementing an already amazing team of thinkers and doers? In the beginning of this monolith of a project, when all the decisions and turfs were being laid down, it was quite hard to figure out where we fit. The language of architecture and its creative and pragmatic loci were very different from the ways that I worked as an artist, especially as I'm interested in particulars of people as much as places and things.

"Outsiders"

"Outsiders" tear up things, they've messed up the city, they don't want to learn. Cicero was an immigrant enclave with proud and strong working-class people who, with opportunity, moved away and were replaced by another proud and strong working-class community of a different ethnicity and cultural need. Some things, however, were common: a desire to have their children receive the best education, to work and become American, to benefit from this strange new gateway.

It was the stories that really made this project important for me. We asked simple questions, like, How'd you end up here? What kind of home did you come from? How would you like to live? People's responses were candid and clear. Their thoughts indicate that not only was there a housing problem but a lack of advocacy for the needs of migrant and immigrant communities and the poor.

American Dream, Populations and Demographics

Community Participation, Quality of Life

Art and Architecture
implicit in the notion of reverse engineering is that the subsequent iteration of the target construct is superior to its predecessor. The method utilized over the course of the development of Visible Weather's contribution to the Foreclosed exhibition was oriented in the application of multidisciplinary techniques within a consolidated process that balanced notions of generation and analytics in its outcome. Grounded in the integration of the design, financial, and regulatory disciplines, the method provided a mechanism for testing and analyzing design interventions. The utility was not only that any given massing and program could be tested for its financial and regulatory feasibility, but that optimal combinations of variables could be developed to keep the vision of the designer within the bounds of reality and subject to its highest utility. In this regard, the rhetoric of sustainability could be applied to a much broader notion of the built environment, one which was inclusive of financial and environmental values.

Intuitively, a designer may find this method subject to the emotional and psychological complexities of object creation as a matter of art. Contrary to the division of art and science, it should be noted that this applied grounded-theory method does not, in and of itself, create discrete knowledge and, as such, is as much of an art as it is perceptively a science.
From 1947 to 1951, Levitt built more than 17,000 homes in Levittown. The U.S.
Federal Housing Administration encouraged the boom by backing the mortgages of
returning veterans, allowing them to put virtually no money down.
That let Dwyer and her husband chase a new American dream.

Her son-in-law and two of her grandchildren are out of work because of the Wall
Street crash a few years ago. Right now, amazingly, all of her 15 grandchildren and
27 great-grandchildren live within a 10-minute drive of her home. But she fears that
will change.
The suburban dream isn’t the same for them, she said.
"It’ll never happen again," she said of the suburban boom.
And that’s too bad: “It was a much nicer way of living.”

"You might find more diversity in suburbs than in center cities in some places,"
perticularly because immigrants are increasingly moving straight to the suburbs
instead of to the inner city, said June Williamson, an associate professor of
architecture at the City College of New York and author of the book "Retrofitting
Suburbia."
Brookings’ William Frey said suburbs used to be associated with the white middle
class. That’s no longer the case: “The suburbs are kind of a microcosm of America.
It used to be, when you said you lived in the suburbs, you were telling somebody
something about who you are demographically, and now you’re not telling anything
about who you are.”

Something has to change, said Barry Bergdoll, MoMA’s curator for architecture and
design, or we will "roll the suburban carpet across all the open land that is left."
"It’s just irresponsible to have a model that encourages moving out onto green
fields and leaving behind decaying rings of an ever-fattening tree," he said. "I’m
interested in not just letting the path of least resistance exist. It’s cheaper for a
developer to build on virgin territory, but it’s not cheaper for people to live on it or
get to it."

Hank Lauritzen
One of many things that would not have happened without "Big Govt" backing. They are the job creator, behind our progress
in my lifetime of depression kid, WWII vet, GI bill etc.
December 20, 2011 at 11:06 am | Report abuse | Reply

Brian
While true, but the original idea was private business. The government played a reserve role, one that they did
wonderfully at.
December 20, 2011 at 11:57 am | Report abuse | Reply

musings
Decisions were made after WWII to create a consumer society around suburbs, cheap gasoline and “national
defense highways”.

But there were real suburbs long before most people drove cars: streetcar tracks were everywhere in LA and
in the East they coordinated with commuter trains. This phenomenon dates back to the 1880s. I live in such
a neighborhood and it still works much better than the one I grew up in, Anaheim, California (a typical 50’s
suburb).
Suburbs would be great if there was a lot of public transportation that linked them efficiently with cities nearby.
I love my Boston suburb and it is much simpler to get downtown than it is if you live in LA and have to sit in
traffic on the freeway. I keep sampling and comparing the two since my family still lives in LA: Boston wins.

December 20, 2011 at 12:13 pm | Report abuse | Reply

KCRick
We all lived in the same kind of houses in the 50s. My version was in a Pittsburgh suburb. Our attic was finished and man
was it hot up there in the summer. Used to put fans in both windows. You could not hide in that house. One TV, homework
on the kitchen table, one bathroom, and if you were lucky an unattached garage for one car.

December 20, 2011 at 11:25 am | Report abuse | Reply

Marcus
Exactly. And somehow, we survived and even thrived. Now these yentas need to have a 3,000 square foot
house with 5 bedrooms and 4 bathrooms for 1 or 2 children. They won’t consider less, even though they can’t
afford it. It makes me sad. It’s the American dream turned on its head.
December 20, 2011 at 10:08 am | Report abuse | Reply
KPMCO

I would not make assumptions like that. Marcus is single, no children, and bought a 4 BR house. Know why? ROOMMATES! Do you realize how little I pay out of pocket every month for my mortgage and utilities? I put my extra money toward the principal to pay the house off faster. Sometimes it's not about keeping up with the Joneses. It's about financials and being smart enough to know what I am able to afford alone...and then maximizing it so I can pay it off as fast as I can.

My roommates help with housework, maintenance, and even watching the dogs when I am not home. It's like a small family here. I expect to have this house paid off within 6-10 years if I can do it. Can you say that?

December 20, 2011 at 3:13 pm | Report abuse | Reply

Jim P.

"The word "suburb" didn't even exist back then, in the late '40s and early '50s"

Yes it did. The word was in use in the 1890's certainly and possibly earlier. Heck, the Chevy Suburban has been made since the 1930's I think...1935 to be exact.

Bad writer, no cookie!

December 20, 2011 at 11:54 am | Report abuse | Reply

musings

Why CNN does not teach American Studies. The first suburbs were "Streetcar Suburbs" NOT car suburbs. I live in one, and believe me, it is mostly houses -- but they are from the 1880's and they were built to coordinate with the streetcar (now subway) system. Los Angeles was built up in the same fashion long before everyone drove cars.

So those songs about ticky tacky boxes -- well that historical revisionism.

December 20, 2011 at 12:00 pm | Report abuse | Reply

vintage274

It too, was reared in the same streetcar suburb as my mother. Housing was a mix of single family and apartment buildings with many more trees than the city. Houses varied from some streets that contained row-type houses to others with spacious Victorians. Each of those suburbs had a main street with needed businesses, but most men went into the city or off to the industrial section for daily work. Our family home was built just after the change of the century. In the 1950's the "real" suburbs popped up on the edge of the farms. They had no apartment buildings, no main streets. Each single family home had both a front and back lawn and a garage. They were typically smaller than the streetcar suburb houses, but boasted modern conveniences. Strip malls were the rage (though limited to one complex for every ten or so communities) and contained a branch of at least one large downtown department store, a family shoe store, and a pharmacy of some sort. Large groceries were nearby, but not a part of the malls. In the 60's large indoor malls became the rage as well, and big cities boasted one in each geographical direction. Although Levittown is a suburban icon in America, it was not the model all over the country. The suburb I lived in as a teen in Pennsylvania (built in the 1940's) offered larger houses than the Levittown model (usually 3 bedroom) which were generally built of brick and offered in a variety of architectural styles - ranch, Cape Cod, two story, split level - carefully interspersed to add variety to the neighborhood.

December 20, 2011 at 12:51 pm | Report abuse | Reply

Urbanista

Yes and no, while the word suburb had existed for about a century to denote such a place, it did not really define a specific place to live for Americans until post-war. You either lived on the outskirts of the city proper (streetcar suburbs) or in an actual town outside the city (commuter town). The distance and general cost factor would have prohibited many people, even well-off, from considering the pre-war suburb. This is because then, most economic activity, jobs, retail, etc happened near the core (downtown). You also have to consider, today a suburb indicates a politically independent place with a large land mass, whereas back then many suburbs eventually were annexed into the major city.

December 20, 2011 at 1:59 pm | Report abuse | Reply

Will

Want to know why young people aren't buying houses any more?

"They put $100 down on the $8,500 house (about $75,000 in today's currency)."

What house can you buy that'd even be habitable, and that's not in a slum or 50 miles away from the nearest city, for $75000? How much would a comparable house sell for on Long Island now, $350000? Forget buying a house if you have anything less than a graduate degree, much less if you're a blue collar worker. If you aren't a doctor/stockbroker/lawyer/engineer, you're f**ked, no matter how hard you work.

December 20, 2011 at 12:46 pm | Report abuse | Reply

Brad

That is not true at all, I live in an area were housing is cheaper, I got a nice house for 70k, and paid it off really early but not spending my money on other things. It's all about priorities. If you want it enough, you will work for it and put off other things for it. In the long run, a house is cheaper then an apartment.

December 20, 2011 at 1:08 pm | Report abuse | Reply
Comments on Foreclosed

KPMCO
I think you're very sadly mistaken. My mother had a high school diploma, was divorced, and still saved to purchase her own home in Houston. I moved to Florida, and after 10 years of saving, and waiting for the right opportunity, I have also purchased my own home. I have a bachelor's degree in English... and have worked in call centers among other places, to earn a living. Stop thinking that you have to be extremely wealthy to own a nice home. I saved a lot up to 20% of my income... didn't buy a lot of electronics or fancy clothes, new cars, or ate out as much as my friends do. I still socialize, but in simpler ways... a video, card games, pot luck social dinners. All things are possible, but you need to prioritize and make choices to achieve your goals.

December 20, 2011 at 1:06 pm | Report abuse | Reply

Houstonian
You can get a decent house in any Houston suburb for $75,000 today. Much more than 750 square feet too. The economy did not take as much of a hit as the rest of the country here, but it still took a hit. So, there are jobs here as well. I grew up on Long Island and now live in a Houston suburb. Not sure why so many people still stay in New York, when it is unrealistically expensive.

December 20, 2011 at 1:15 pm | Report abuse | Reply

Ziggy Stardust
Houston is a dump with the worst weather on the planet next to the miserable jungle in Vietnam. They also appear to have no zoning there, you often see a body shop or dry cleaners next to a home in what appears to be a residential neighborhood. What hicks in the rest of the country don't seem to understand about living in the Northeast is the opportunity to make big money here. I worked in Venture Capital for 15 years in NYC, made a boatload of money, had a big house in CT, cars, the dream. Then it all came crashing down in 2008. I sold everything I could and moved to Wyoming where I now work as a tile setter (my dad taught me the trade when I was a kid). I couldn't be happier. I miss all the toys, but life is good. Wyoming is breathtakingly beautiful Houston is just breathtaking (FROM THE STENCH)

December 20, 2011 at 1:21 pm | Report abuse | Reply

Lesley
I’m a 23 year old homeowner. I live in a 1400 sq ft house on 2 acres with an inground pool in mid-Michigan. We paid $79,700 for it because the housing market is so bad in Michigan. I am an insurance agent and my husband is a factory worker (no degrees). The only reason none of my friends have a home is because THEY RUINED THEIR CREDIT. Even the ones with college degrees. Our house payment is $605 a month. I could work part-time and my husband could lose his job and we would still afford it. it’s all about living within your means.

December 20, 2011 at 1:34 pm | Report abuse | Reply

Rod C. Venger
I’ve never made more than $7 an hour in my life... was retired by cancer in 1999... but picked up a nice home (to me) in a 30 year old subdivision in Colorado Springs back in 1986 for just under $50,000. Price have gone up but so have wages. If I sold my 850k home in L.A., 1700 sq ft, I could buy 4 of those here in Bryan Texas with the same money. This isn’t a small town...Bryan/Collage Station together add up to close to 250,000 people. Dump your toys with their 2 year plans and save that money instead. Realize too that most of the US is nothing like NYC or LA. Oddly there’s a link between liberal cities and absurdly high real estate. There’s more to the US than the place you wake up to every morning. Opportunities are everywhere.

December 20, 2011 at 1:44 pm | Report abuse | Reply

guest
actually, you are wrong about who can afford these houses. I live in another central long island suburb and I can tell you that the only people who can afford houses now are plumbers, electricians, any other skilled blue collar workers, and central american or south asian immigrants who are shopkeepers. most “white collar” people are earning far less money and can’t afford to move here.

December 20, 2011 at 2:21 pm | Report abuse | Reply

Marly
Where we live (the Dallas area) housing is not terribly expensive. My daughter has a house that would cost about 80-85k, and the schools are very good, the shopping is great, and there is public transportation not only in our city, but pretty much anywhere in Dallas. She could live in a bigger, nicer house if they were more careful in their spending, but the one they have is 3 bedroom, 2 bathroom. They prefer to spend their money on traveling and “stuff”, their choice. People today also think they have to have 3000 sq ft for 4 people, and back in the day, we grew up in 700 sq ft, and didn’t think it was too small for 4 people. Focus on what you are spending on, and think about what your priorities should be.

December 20, 2011 at 2:36 pm | Report abuse | Reply

Bill
I'm a high school dropout and have already owned 3 homes. I now live in Orlando, work at home on my 3 dozen websites and will buy another home in 2012 before they go up again. How much you make or how successful in life you depend on you, not what school you went to.

December 20, 2011 at 3:01 pm | Report abuse | Reply

John
See, Bill learned a skill and became successful. Notice he is not occupying anything crying responsibility.
Prefab expert

While there may be some duplicated designs, the Levitt models are a good model that would lower construction of house by over 20%. A house can be built in 30 days with much less wasted raw material and is always a cost-saving and good environment advancement. The US construction is too lazy to learn more from the Levitt model.

December 20, 2011 at 12:36 pm | Report abuse | Reply

Urban History

Actually, I think the a major part of the whole Levitt phenomenon was that they invented this easy, fast way to build inexpensive homes. There was a huge housing shortage in the country at that time, and that problem could have been solved, and houses would have been less expensive today, had the concept been allowed to expand. However, the building industry was horrified at the idea of "prefab," since it didn't want to have its profit margin cut, and worked to stifle the Levitt building concept by lobbying the government to enact legislation against "prefabricated".

December 25, 2011 at 2:05 am | Report abuse |
American Dream, Government and Policy, Responsibility, Top-Down and Bottom-Up

Government and Policy, Jobs

Sustainability

Internet Banter, The Market, Sustainability

Internet Banter

Circulation, Family, Populations and Demographics, Quality of Life

Affordable Housing, Homeownership, Internet Banter

Internet Banter

Internet Banter

Cities and Suburbs, Reference and Comparison
Levittown was the first fully planned suburban community – it was by no means, the first suburb. Not by a long shot.

Levittown wasn’t even the first fully planned suburb. Try Llewellyn Park in 1857, Or Riverside in 1858. Or Country Club Estates in about 1910. Levittown became famous mainly because its low prices made it affordable to a new class of homebuyers, not because it was first in anything.

My daughter, a Levittown graduate, attends Harvard and seminars at MIT. Levittown schools worked with me to groom her and remediate a learning disability she had. So whenever said nobody from Levittown becomes a professional is WRONG. I’m surprised the writer of this article missed mentioning the excellent schools.

As for the Village Greens, it was also missed by the writer and in comments that libraries are often found at the Village Greens. And each family got a pool pass so they could swim FOR FREE all summer long. The Greens still have concerts during the summer, and have little shops. Levittown has some very nice parks.

I left after my family was raised, and after Nassau County reassessed my property taxes and TRIPLED them over a period of three years. But dollar for dollar, Levittown served its purpose for me. My child got an excellent education in a non-violent, quiet, fairly unsupervised and unpretentious community. Oh, and for the record, the “white trash” element hasn’t been able to afford to live in Levittown since the 80s.
Foreclosed: The Role of the Team in the Design Process

Respecting the location of foreclosures largely on the outskirts of urban areas, the task was to work through design interventions and enhancements, rethinking human-nature relationships given the suburban adjacency to the hinterlands.

The concept builds on the knowledge that large predators are often instrumental in maintaining the structure, resilience, and diversity of ecosystems through initiating "top-down" ecological (trophic) interactions. In turn, they require resources, including nesting and foraging areas and water sources along with large cores of protected landscape and connectivity to insure long-term viability. This re-wilding would be achieved by employing the zoological park as a suburban amenity. In a collaborative endeavor between the developer and federal government, the government would finance habitat links to the suburb, and in return the development would incorporate knuckles with intensified habitat zones and productive ecosystems, providing jobs, public amenities, and regional habitat resources.
In the design process, the architect is the principal actor in the processing of concepts into the form and aesthetic of a proposal. The impact of the concepts will therefore depend largely on the extent to which the architect determines their conformity with the overall design concept. Collaboration in this context occurs merely on the periphery of the design process and is thus constrained. At the outset of the process, the architect embraced the proposed ecological design strategies. However, in the course of the translation of these strategies into a design aesthetic, a sustained process for facilitating input from the ecologist was never fully developed or attempted, with mixed results in the extent to which the architect was able to effectively capture the ecological concepts. Consequently, while the final proposal of misregistration provides a compelling aesthetic, its actual ecological functionality remains open to question.

DECEMBER 27, 2011, 10:36 A.M.
Thank you for critiquing the collaboration process. As President of the Board of Directors for The Wildlands Network, we applaud your efforts in attempting to include ‘rewilding’ into this concept. And while it is encouraging that the design team included an ecologist, it is most unfortunate that the execution did not respect your input. We see this time and again, where some sort of abstract design aesthetic is forced onto the landscape, marginalizing or worse yet, ignoring the basic tenants of ecology, and then champions in the name of ‘sustainability’. Once again, it goes to show that many architects [and landscape architects] talk a good talk about ecological issues but rarely understand the science and almost certainly don’t know how to fully integrate sound ecological principles into their work. The two are not mutually exclusive.

Posted by Keith Bowers

FEBRUARY 15, 2012, 9:11 A.M.
The animal diagram has the horse incorrectly labeled as a tapir (in the Linnean taxonomy).

Posted by Evan

MARCH 7, 2012, 3:40 P.M.
Following up on KB’s Dec. 15 comment and the article: Ecological principles may not be mutually exclusive with human habitat, but that is not the key issue. The most sustainable approach is to make the human built environment as dense, livable and compact, while leaving the hinterland and wilderness as intact as possible – not the agonizing compromise of low density settlements on the periphery of cities. This suburbanized nature, even with rewilding, is neither feasible or sustainable for the 7 B people on the planet – or any number close to that.

Let’s build good, tight cities and leave as much untouched habitat as possible for other plant and animal species. Introducing green design into the urban environment is fine, but not the ox of the ecological benefits of urbanism.

I sense the MOMA exhibit missed the point to a large extent.

Posted by Doug Kelbaugh

MARCH 21, 2012, 12:40 P.M.
First, I really appreciate the commentary from both KB (12/15) and DK (03/07) regarding the rewilding concepts in relation to suburbanization. I would like to respond first to DK’s point of building dense and compact cities and leaving the “hinterland and wilderness as intact as possible” is the ideal and I certainly do not disagree with this position. That said this is not what is taking place on the ground. Urbanization is continuing to spread into the hinterlands here in the US, in China, India, and Brazil and around the globe. The proposal here is to consider the potential for these exurban developments to adopt an ecological mandate.

The focus on the MOMA exhibit and analysis is also very specific and thus the proposal needs to be seen in its context. We were specifically tasked with looking at foreclosure housing projects and how as designers and scientists we might bring federal funding to address some of the issues faced. Thus the site was selected for its potential to contribute to the conversation on sustainability.

Posted by Doug Kelbaugh
One of the entries ("misregistration") includes the concept of 'rewilding' what's left of suburbia. Rewilding is the idea that we should set aside vast amounts of unproductive land to allow large predators to rehabit North America. This idea has a lot of merit, given that large predators are a keystone species regulating the health and resiliency of our ecosystems. This idea makes a lot of sense given the population shift toward urban areas and the need to safeguard ecosystem services (healthy soils, clean air, fresh water, food production, flood control, etc.) for future generations.

Felson, a member of Andrew Zago's team.

What is most interesting, and hauntingly familiar, is the ecologist's critique of the final proposal:

"However, in the course of the translation of these strategies into a design aesthetic, a sustained process for facilitating input from the ecologist was never fully developed or attempted, with mixed results in the extent to which the architect was able to effectively capture the ecological concepts. Consequently, while the final proposal of misregistration provides a compelling aesthetic, its actual ecological functionality remains open to question."

We see this time and again, where some sort of abstract design aesthetic is forced onto the landscape, marginalizing or worse yet, ignoring the basic tenants of ecology, and then championed in the name of 'sustainability'. Once again, it goes to show that many architects (and landscape architects) talk a good talk about ecological issues but rarely understand the science and almost certainly don't know how to fully integrate sound ecological principles into their work. The two are not mutually exclusive.

The Exhibition, The Workshop


Press and Links

The Workshop
Comments on Foreclosed

I am hopeful that the work done by these five teams will demonstrate the true value of introducing and seriously considering the needs of intrinsic building characteristics, such as structure, infrastructure, and the mechanics of an optimized internal environment.

For A Regular Guy

(Written after reading the story in L.A. Times of a dead man found in a foreclosed home in Westchester, CA on 7/20/2009 by a real estate agent preparing to show the house to a prospect.)

Three bedroom 2 bath garage backyard lawn rambling family style home for kids pets. 1957. Needs work refinancing available forbearance provided for small fee.

A sunny southern Cal kind of Monday in Westchester. Realty Modern shows same home once bestowed with bank notes loans interest rates derivatives credit-default swaps. Brokender down by adjustable rates pre-payment penalties. Now liberated by the free market.
The CRIT: Thoughts on MoMA's Foreclosed: Rehousing the American Dream

“Make no little plans; they have no magic to stir men’s blood and probably themselves will not be realized. Make big plans; aim high in hope and work.”
— Daniel Hudson Burnham (1846-1912)

To be clear, the mission was not to solve the current foreclosure crisis [4]. Instead, the teams were charged with catalyzing, rethinking, and conversing about it. And they were asked to do this on a massive conceptual scale. Given the enormity of the task, it’s understandable if the architectural results are big. How could they not be?

The Hypothesis (worth reading in full) seems to have taken on the status of operating system, the underlying code for how to perceive and frame the “problem” of the suburbs. Its influence can be read in all the projects. But so can the influence of architecture as a discipline—being somewhat institutionally slanted toward envisioning the American suburb as an intellectual and spatial problem.

"yes i was wondering how i go about not losing my house it has been in my wifes family for over a hundred years my wife was layed off the mortgage company wouldnt talk to us because she was layed off and now we are so far behind we cant get caught up so now we are loosing our home is there help out there for me"
— unedited comment from MoMA workshop blog (2011)

The paradox—and the conundrum for the architects—is that when the Buell Hypothesis is deployed as a theoretical basis, it becomes almost impossible to escape the trap of replicating the fantasy they are critiquing. Additionally, no matter how compelling the substitute fantasies may be, they run the risk of falling flat in the midst of the larger cultural moment going on outside MoMA’s galleries [6]. So not only do these architects have to contend with addressing real problems, they must also responsibly navigate the terrain between the real and dream states set forth by the Hypothesis [7].

Foreclosure might then be viewed as a framework for re-envisioning the American Dream and architecture’s role in that dream.
But really big plans give rise to contradictions. Their bigness and drama and complexity are also problematic, challenging, and even disturbing because they bring to the fore the drastic steps required to address current problems. You have no choice but to send Captain Willard upper in a boat, to sanity’s final station.

These totalizing impulses, common to architectural discourse, strive to encompass all possible...
These totalizing impulses, common to architectural discourse, strive to encompass all possible contingencies by re-defining suburbia along the lines of dense ideal urbanities. Questions of audience aside, such gestures could be taken to be constructive. And quite possibly, we need such gestures, the insinuation of the new (no matter how fantastic) in order to see our way to potentials hidden in the midst of what we are currently stuck with. Yet in this process, the inherent heterogeneity of suburbs become flattened. They become objects upon which total transformations are imposed.

The imposition of professional, taxonomical knowledge obscures the complex social, spatial, economic, and cultural aspects of these territories. The realities of the suburbs—their spatial and cultural resilientities, their persistence (not to mention formal mechanisms of governance)—suggest that big plans cannot rule the day. Foreclosed can thus be contextualized in the history of urban renewal, slum clearance, public housing, and other such large-scale, top-down housing policies that have failed. History seems to demonstrate that micro-transformations, house by house, lot by lot, bottom-up renewal, will most likely define the limits of suburban change [8].

As one example, MOS Architects (undoubtedly under the influence of The Bell Hypothesis) dismisses the street, the block, and the playground as spatial mythologies. They probably didn’t mean it the way it sounds. However, as indicated earlier, their solution reaffirms the same trope by superimposing Constant’s New Babylon-redux upon the old neighborhood—a new fantasy in place of the old.

Maybe the interdisciplinary teams should have included a representative from the respective communities. Oh, but they don’t know what they want or they want the wrong things. So, this would have caused trouble.

Of course, there are expectations for drama that come with anything associated with MoMA. These are proposals designed to stir audiences. What comes across in some of the videos, however, is a mixture of boredom and malaise. The bored might be the archi-geeks who have already seen such things in countless presentations. Those appearing baffled are probably members of the lay public wondering why architects are making such radical, disconnected proposals and why they have never seen anything like this out in the real world. To them, this is further evidence of the irrelevance of what architects have to offer in terms of solving real problems. Not good for marketing, that.
Thus for example, would people really favor cooperative over individual ownership, or is that being proposed because one proposal assumes the American Dream is already gone? Is the detached dwelling on a postage stamp lot to be done away with for sustainability reasons or is it simply a case of detached homes being conceived of and sited in the wrong ways? Should we all be farming, riding bikes, and taking light rail? This doesn’t take into account patterns of employment and assumes people can afford to live close to where they work. One of the dominant forces that drove the suburbs was affordability, not just a flight from urban congestion, pollution, and crime. People keep moving further and further out because of the lure of ownership that is affordable, not because they are necessarily escaping something. To make any of these proposals tenable the economic system that has been eroded for the last thirty years has to be re-built. That dirty word, socialism, could get them off the ground!

Foreclosed: Rehousing the American Dream

Open Studios
MoMA PS1
June 18, 2011

Hilary Sample and Michael Meredith
MOS
Site Location: The Oranges, New Jersey

Jeanne Gang
Studio Gang
Site location: Cicero, Illinois

Andrew Zago
Zago Architecture
Site location: Rialto, California

Sam Dufaux
WORKac
Site location:
Nam Henderson
Jan 30, 12 11:04 pm

I read the first version of this essay that was “accidentally” released and seems there is a much more critical (although not necessarily negative) vibe to this newly released version. I like it more....

As for the proposals outlined above, granted I haven’t seen the exhibition or read the book but from what you describe and what else I have read it seems that there is a lack of strategies or tactics proposed to address housing crisis. Which would seem more appropriate than the formal projects that are presented. Maybe it does have to do with the brief, but it seems like there is a focus too much on the suppositional and not enough on the mundane nature of actually tackling all the empty lots. “Rethinking” suburbia isn’t same as developing tactics for re-housing or repurposing foreclosed housing.

What would something like #whownspace or other forms of spatial activism for foreclosed properties look like i wonder.....

Additionally, in light of all the ongoing talk in our forums re: the future of the profession it seems illuminating that you wrote “ironically, most of those are contained in the boring data taken from economists and social scientists. Were the architects trying too diligently to spatialize the data?”

What does it say that an exhibition whose goal is to articulate how architecture can address key contemporary issues, clarifies that non-architects/design are perhaps better equipped to illuminate these same issues?

Guy Horton
Feb 5, 12 12:37 am

That’s because you saw the first draft that was accidentally put up instead of the final! Glad you like it. Would like to hear what people think about the exhibition once it opens in NYC. I have a suspicion architects have very little to do with the solution side of the crisis are are merely along for the ride. If architects had more power in Washington it might be a different story. But then, rethinking things is probably not enough.
This Week’s Jumble – Jan 30, 2012

Ani says:
February 24, 2012 at 3:14 am

Ultio The fact that loans are neittesg in the near term is completely irrelevant. First of all, you make the assumption that just because loans are neittesg, people are unable to cover any change. Second and most importantly, you clearly have forgotten that many of these adjustments are going to be lower. Every single major rate that they could possibly be tied to (LIBOR, 11th District, Prime, etc) are at all time lows. The “shadow” inventory of foreclosures that you keep referring to are of questionable existence, at best. Banks, by charter, are not allowed to be long term holders of real estate. They have been rapidly selling bulk REOs to vulture funds directly. The absence of these shadow foreclosures hitting the market in the last six months is further proof of this. Supply/demand? Supply is off more than 70% in 18 months and demand is very steady. A 6 month inventory of homes is generally considered the goal and currently San Diego hovers at 3 months. Sounds like their is an inverse supply/demand curve situation at the moment. Pretty feeble insight provided here in the original advice.
Foreclosed: Rehousing the American Dream is an exploration of new architectural possibilities for cities and suburbs in the aftermath of the recent foreclosure crisis.

This exhibition features proposals for the future of cities by Studio Gang, MOS, WORKac, Visible Weather and Zago Architecture. All conceptualized large-scale proposals for specific regions in the nation. The nature of the task inherently requires a top-down approach, which immediately leads to issues in terms of feasibility. Therefore, it is necessary to view these projects less so as solutions and more as catalysts of change. Spatially, I expect to see extensive transportation infrastructures and dense high-rise apartments. With the expertise of interdisciplinary teams, I am interested to see the proposed governmental and environmental policies.

MoMA rethinks architectural possibilities around foreclosures

"MoMA has always aspired to be a showcase for the most significant and creative architecture and design work being done today. But there are times when it can also take the lead to serve as a catalyst to invite architects and designers to work in new ways on the most pressing issues of our times," said Barry Bergdoll, MoMA’s Philip Johnson Chief Curator of Architecture and Design, who co-conceived the exhibition. "Often these challenges are not posed by everyday commissions. Foreclosed: Rehousing the American Dream invited new dialogues between the disciplines that shape our environments in suburbs and cities, as well as between the financial and physical architectures of housing, transport, and daily life. Questioning outdated assumptions, the designs in turn invite new discussions about a territory too often ignored by the design professions and too often leapfrogged by developers—the first ring suburbs of major cities. These projects suggest more sustainable, more equitable, futures, filled with optimism for places where that is often in short supply."

"The foreclosure crisis revealed a crisis of the imagination that has delayed an urgently needed conversation about the default settings of the 'American Dream' and its most visible symbol: the suburban house. These projects can help start such a conversation," said Reinhold Martin, Director of Columbia University’s Temple Hoyne Buell Center for the Study of American Architecture, who also co-conceived the exhibition.

In the early weeks of the workshop phase, the teams spent time in their assigned megaregions-visitng potential sites for intervention, meeting with local residents and officials, and considering what type of architectural program would respond to the local needs and realities of the existing population. As a result, the proposals developed for the five sites provide radically different visions of a rethought suburbia.

At the center of the exhibition are models, drawings, renderings, animations, and analytical materials produced by the five teams developed during the workshop period. In addition, the research presented in The Buell Hypothesis will be shown with contextual material in the gallery as background to the proposal.

Cicero, an aging inner-ring suburb set on the edge of metropolitan Chicago, has lately become an arrival point for new immigrants to the region. Built for a previous generation, the original single-family houses have often been repurposed as multifamily dwellings by more recent residents. Presently Cicero is experiencing a high rate of foreclosure of industrial as well as residential properties, which has prompted the team led by Jeanne Gang of Studio Gang to develop a proposal with a distinctive feature that concerns the dialogue between architecture and both human and natural ecologies, interweaving a response to both situations.

The team identified three challenges affecting Cicero, common to a majority of suburbs: industrial decline, rising unemployment coupled with high poverty rates, and environmental conditions. The team turns these problems into potential opportunities by taking on both the urban fabric of the town and the financial architecture of living and working there. The team's approach was to design a series of interventions that would address these.
Reinventing British urbanist Ebenezer Howard’s classic term “Town-Country,” WORKac’s proposal Nature City integrates a wide variety of housing types across a range of affordability with publicly accessible nature, including ecological infrastructure, sky gardens, urban farms, and large swaths of restored native habitats. Bringing a higher density and more sustainable living to the metropolitan edge, where the greatest development pressures have long existed, the proposal also provides larger economic growth for the city and the site.

A wide range of ecological functions make a city infrastructure that promotes sustainable living as a shared individual and communal undertaking, and also generates new living experiences and new kinds of public spaces from its various components.

Despite being well served by a regional transit system that includes both trains and buses, there is still a significant rate of foreclosure and a high rate of unemployment in Orange, a suburb of individual bungalows and single-family structures between New York City and Newark, New Jersey. An in-depth analysis of the suburb has sparked MOS Architects and their team to create a proposal suggesting a new form of urbanism and architectural occupation of the street. The proposal considers aspects of municipal budget and infrastructure, public health, and new models of ownership to promote flexibility and diversity—a range of issues that extends far beyond those generally considered in isolated development plans.
Although the landscape is vast, the failed subdivision contains houses whose square footage is inflated to the point where they seem almost to rub against one another, creating a narrow range of housing options. The team’s proposal looks to create a richer mix of uses, housing types, living situations, and landscapes, rather than to remake the unbuilt section of Rosena Ranch. It looks to understand the attraction of suburbs—including their social, economic, and spatial arrangements—and creates a new form of architecture and suburbanism from that pre-existing notion.

Michael Bell
Michael Bell: Visible Weather
Site location: Temple Terrace, Florida

Replacing the original development plan that utilized public/private partnership, the team proposes the creation of a Real Estate Investment Trust (REIT), a tax designation for an
discovered that the town’s stately bungalows of the 20th Century were being cut up into various smaller apartments for multiple residents. This casual yet effective process helped create affordable housing with easy transit access to Chicago that was within the grasp of first generation immigrants.

In addition, the team also discovered the importance of organic brownfield remediation in Cicero, even if it meant the land would remain undeveloped. Through commonplace planting, the toxic industrial sites scattered across the residential fabric would change into safer cleaner zones for future community use. Finally, within certain regions of each parcel, the once zoned industrial land could be converted into a dense collection of affordable modular beds, baths, and public space by using the existing industrial structures and materials on each site such as truss frames and brick partition walls. The new clusters would become an important blend of adaptive reuse and new construction that utilized a sizable amount of Cicero’s historical past while creating a new 21st century anchor that can accommodate thousands immediately adjacent to one of Chicago’s commuter rail corridors.

One of the best precedents we can rely on for this argument is our own hometown of Somerville, Massachusetts just north of Boston, a once hard pressed streetcar suburb that has slowly turned the corner through both grassroots initiatives and design charrettes. Just like MoMA, the Boston Society of Architects (BSA) in 2007 developed a forum and outlet for Somerville called Edge As Center (EAC) to broadcast its current conditions and goals after decades of trouble and neglect. At the beginning of 2007, Somerville was still regularly depicted by its negative label of “Slumerville” from the 1950’s. The 2007 spotlight helped shed the moniker while starting to showcase the benefits and strengths of Somerville’s location, infrastructure, and heavily populated residential fabric, most of which followed Cicero’s process of cut up triple decks for new student, young professionals, and new immigrant housing close to the city center.

Too often during the bubble, banks and builders shunned thoughtful architecture and urban design in favor of cookie-cutter houses that could be easily repackaged as derivatives to be flipped, while architects snubbed housing to pursue more prestigious projects.

Cicero is representative of a suburban transformation that went little noticed during the housing bubble and bust: suburbs have replaced inner cities as the destination of choice for new immigrants.

Here's where design comes in. Most of Cicero's housing is detached, single-family homes. But these are too expensive for many immigrants, so five or six families often squeeze into one of Cicero's brick bungalows. This creates unstable financial situations, neighborhood tensions and falling real estate values.

Too often, we see such mismatches as a purely financial issue. But instead of forcing families to fit into a house, what if we rearranged the house to fit them?

This doesn't mean bulldozing Cicero's housing stock. Instead, it means using existing, underused properties that might be renovated to provide a better fit. In Cicero's case, that might mean turning to the scores of abandoned factories around it.

There's one problem with such a plan: it's illegal under Cicero's zoning code. The town's rules are typical of most suburbs, including the segregation of residential, commercial and industrial facilities; prohibitions on expanding and reusing buildings for new homes and businesses; and tight restrictions on mixed-use properties. Cicero's code also defines "family" in a way that excludes the large, multigenerational groupings now common across the country.

One long-term solution would be a type of co-op in which residents buy and sell shares according to their changing needs and circumstances. Unlike traditional co-ops, residents could purchase shares corresponding only to the units they occupy, not the land beneath, which remains in the hands of a "community land trust." Such a structure would keep housing costs down while limiting residents' exposure to the market. It would also provide a backstop for struggling homeowners, since the trust would have the legal right to step in and assist residents in the event of foreclosure.

Land trusts have thrived on a small scale in New York City and Chicago, among other places. The federal government should now scale up the efforts by transferring some of the nearly 250,000 foreclosed homes acquired by Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac and the Federal Housing Administration into a national trust or a series of local trusts.

Foreclosed Homes Breathe Inspiration into Architects

Foreclosed: Rehousing the American Dream, is an exhibition that will be showcased at the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA). The exhibit will explore architectural possibilities against the backdrop of the depressed housing market.

A few years ago, an architect with a global reputation was walking me through his busy studio, boasting of his exhaustive experience. I asked if he had ever designed in the suburbs; he looked at me as if I were out of my mind. Architects tend to treat the zones where half of all Americans live as a backward, inhospitable wilderness. The suspicion is mutual: Who needs a fancy designer when builders all over the country know how to construct a peaked-roof single-family house?

It’s got its own new set of dysfunctions: boarded windows and weedy lawns, acres of sparsely used parking lots flanking clogged roads, immigrant workers jamming by the dozens into houses conceived for the Cleavers, household food budgets eaten up at the gas pump. Then there are all the old urban ills of poverty, violence, drugs, and racial friction, which have migrated to places that were designed for escaping them.

Now visitors can wander into a single gallery on the museum’s third floor and encounter inventive solutions to formidable problems they may have thought little about. Bergdoll has used the museum’s clout to create a glass think tank, a place where the public can keep an eye on experts at work.

Some ideas in the show sit on the border between bold and silly. You might be skeptical of the wisdom of introducing African elephants to a Southern California subdivision, as Andrew Zago has proposed. Maybe you doubt that Hilary Sample and Michael Meredith’s notion of filling in the streets of downtown Orange, New Jersey, with apartment buildings would strengthen the community. Or you wonder how much enthusiasm residents of Keizer, Oregon, could muster for living atop the smelly compost-to-methane-fuel plant that Amale Andraos and Dan Wood would build there. Fair questions, all.

But precisely because the groups tackled their missions from multiple angles, they maximized the number of opponents who could prevent any of these projects from getting built. That’s the paradox of trying to transform the suburbs: The only way to get it done is by rewriting laws, rationalizing markets, reforming the construction industry, and changing the culture all at once—which probably can’t be done.

The exhibit springs from the belief (fleshed out in the Buell Center report) that fewer and fewer Americans have or want the lives that suburbs were designed for. Today, we mostly live alone, or share quarters with roommates and fluid configurations of relatives. We start kitchen-table businesses with vendors in China and customers all over the world. We’re starting to think of the car not as a passport to independence but as a toxic jail cell. For decades, coveting a house you couldn’t afford was a patriotic sentiment, an essential ingredient of the American Dream.

“Foreclosed” does a fine job of analyzing these changes and of offering tentative, provocative solutions. For all its thoughtfulness and rigor, though, a whiff of colonialism blows through the project, with its corps of city-based experts venturing into suburbia with maps and modern.
Academic Hubris, Homeownership, Role of the Museum, Silliness and Seriousness

Cities and Suburbs, Quality of Life

KAZOOGUY

Justin's closing remarks have it right. After living in an urban core with flocks of pigeons and 20-something bar hoppers, we were ready for the green grass and birds of suburbia. Now we're looking again - for an aging-in-place suburban homestead that will support a 2- or 3- workstation home business office and a live-in housekeeper. Complicated? Yes. Impossible? Not at all. Add a neighborhood shuttle, a rec center, a boutique grocery, a coffee shop, and walking/bicycling trail connectivity and you'll have a community for those of us lucky enough to not have to commute downtown each day, which is a rapidly growing portion of the workforce.

Liked By cyberoid.

JAKE_WEGMANN

I totally agree with Kazooguy.

I was about to write this piece off, but then I read the absolutely spot-on dose of skepticism at the end, and then I was OK with it.

For starters, couldn't the architects have designed to live "in residence" in, I dunno, a blue collar suburb like Brentwood, Long Island rather than Long Island City, Queens? Would it really have killed them to go and look at a (GASP) actual suburb and talk to some people who actually live in one?

On a more fundamental level, I question whether architects come from the right profession to address the undeniable problems that suburbs face. Design is the easy part. The hard part has to do with politics, infrastructure, taxes, race, class, regulations, and so forth.

And on a still more fundamental level, I question whether the term "suburb" is even useful at all. Are Claremont and Riverside both "suburbs" of Los Angeles? Well, I guess so. Do they even remotely have anything in common with each other, apart from the fact that they are in the LA region but not part of the City of LA? Not really. In fact, not at all. I think the very framing of this exhibit is outdated, and was put together by people who do not get out of their bougie, 24-hour city enclaves enough to have a whole lot that's interesting to say about the "real America" (the REAL real America, full of racial, ethnic and other kinds of diversity, not Sarah Palin's 1950s-era small town fantasy) and what problems it faces.

Liked By cyberoid.

CYBEROID

I heard this exhibition announced on Pasadena, CA NPR station KPCC. The announcer was reading a press release from MOMA that began, something about pioneering design "in the wake of the foreclosure crisis."

We are not in a wake following a concluded foreclosure crisis -- we are in a foreclosure crisis! For MOMA to pass this off as the creative residue of a situation now resolved is not only stupidly Pollyanna, it is disingenuous and spreads false hope that the worst is behind us. No, the worst is ahead of us. More, many more homeowners are underwater or nearly so and as the economy continues basically moribund, the situation will only get worse. That is, if no one does anything dramatic to help homeowners as much as the bankers. Two Administrations of supposedly different ideologies have conspired to let the banks off the hook and throw the deadbeats -- the newly poor -- out of their homes.
LE CORBUSIER
The writer of this article doesn’t seem to have the foggiest idea of what is actually being done to fix the suburbs. For a summary of the good work being done, see the book Retrofitting Suburbia by Ellen Dunham-Jones.

As I would expect from MoMA, the designers in this exhibit are more interested in attracting attention to themselves by doing something new and different than in doing something that can work: “Michael Bell would herd newcomers to Temple Terrace, Florida, into a pair of high-tech megastructures lifted above vast urban plazas. Zago turns the classic subdivision into a largely car-free cubist collage.”

Obviously, this sort of thing cannot be done. But when the writer concludes that transforming the suburbs “probably can’t be done” at all, he just shows that he has not looked beyond this museum exhibit at what actually is being done in suburbs across America.

Liked By Hairlylime

JUSTIN DAVIDSON (NYMAG)
A lot of issues in just a few comment! @Jake_Wegmann: Your point that the problems facing the suburbs are not purely a design problem is right on, but that’s exactly why the MoMA show tries to deal with legal, financial, ethnic, political, and cultural issues, too. And yes, the teams visited the sites they dealt with and interviewed people who live there — in the case of the Studio Gang project, the interviews are part of the exhibit.

@Cyberoid: It’s true that the word “Suburb” includes places that are vastly different from each other — do you really think that makes the word so vague as to be meaningless, though? I don’t think MoMA is claiming that the foreclosure crisis is over by any means — in fact, the sites in question were selected in part because they have high rates of foreclosure and high rates of non-foreclosed homeowners under water on their mortgages.

@Lecorbisier (I’ve heard of you, haven’t I?) For what it’s worth, I do know Ellen Dunham-Jones’ excellent work on retrofitting dead malls, etc. What I said probably couldn’t be done was revamping the suburbs wholesale “by rewriting laws, rationalizing markets, reforming the construction industry, and changing the culture all at once.” Do you know of anywhere where such a sweeping transformation has been carried out? If so, I’d be very interested to know more about it.

Pre-Foreclosed: February 2012

L: Press and Links, Role of the Museum
R: Challenge of Suburbia, Press and Links

L: The Exhibition, Internet Banter, Retrofit or Redesign, Role of the Museum

Reference and Comparison, (Un)Realistic Proposals
Barry Bergdoll, the museum’s chief curator of architecture and design, describes the proposals as portents of a “more sustainable, more equitable future, filled with optimism for places where that is often in short supply.”
"Foreclosed" Reopens the American Dream

The Exhibition

Land Use and Density, Reference and Comparison, (Un)Realistic Proposals

Family, Government and Policy, Populations and Demographics, (Un)Realistic Proposals

Circulation, Land Use and Density, (Un)Realistic Proposals

The Exhibition, Reference and Comparison

At 2,500 square feet. The Museum of Modern Art's Robert and Joyce Menschel Gallery, site of the exhibition Foreclosed: Rehousing the American Dream, is about the size of the average suburban house. But while that may be too much square footage for the typical family, it is too little for a show this rich. MoMA should consider rehousing "Rehousing."

That proposal is by Amalie Andraos and Dain Wood of WORKac, for a section of Keizer, Oregon that would be five times as dense as neighboring suburbs, but with three times as much open space. A gorgeous, dome-shaped structure contains a community composting plant. Around it are buildings that recall the best work of Steven Holl, Bijarke Ingels, and MVRDV. One imagines a developer seeing Andraos and Wood's elaborate 1,250 model, depicting a gently futuristic suburb, and wanting to break ground tomorrow.

The other star of the exhibition is Jeanne Gang, the Chicago architect. She and her teammates tackled the problems of Cicero, an older Chicago suburb that is filled with rotting industrial facilities but not the kind of housing needed by its large immigrant population. They decided to play to Cicero's strengths, as what Gang calls an "arrival city," by creating modular housing that can go up or down in size as families evolve. They also reclaimed industrial facilities as gardens and, like most of the teams, came up with an unconventional financing scheme. Like the very different WORKac proposal, Gang's Cicero proposal seems practically shovel-ready, even though, as she pointed out in a New York Times op-ed, it remains illegal under Chicago's zoning code.

The most provocative idea in the show may belong to MOS—the firm headed by Michael Meredith and Hilary Sample—which focuses on East Orange, New Jersey. The plan acknowledges the lack of pedestrian life in today's suburbs and reclaims the streets themselves as building sites. That allows increased density without the need to demolish existing housing. But if the idea is strong, details of what the "ribbon" buildings would look like and how they would function, are sparse.

Less developed is the plan by Michael Bell and Eunjeong Song to revamp parts of Temple Terrace, Florida, near Tampa. The models and renderings are colorless—if the goal was to avoid tropical clichés, the architects succeeded. Andrew Zago went to the other extreme, covering the houses in his proposed development (part of Riata, California) in patterning so bold, it recalls the work of Ettore Sottsass at the giddy height of Memphis. One extraordinary rendering appears to have been printed out of register (so that colors overlap in unexpected ways), symbolizing the desired blurring of lines between public and private property.
Anonymous wrote:
Housing Projects in 2012?
2/13/2012 2:11 PM CST

Anonymous wrote:
Central Planning in Beijing might be a better place for this exhibit. Are these Utopians sure we are all too anti-social and numb to survive as a species? Are we dummys so brainwashed by the old-fashioned we just can't let go of streets, fences, single family homes and going to the store for produce? Clientless design imposed on the "masses" is not the answer to fixing the world that embarrasses these folks...the answer is not to answer the unasked question...and I am sure none of the pathetic low incomers that I know asked to live in a decommisioned pile of box cars. Architecture is evolving at a nice evolutionary rate, leave it to do so. Fix federal regulation and banking and leave this type of "creativity" in North Korea where it works so well.
2/13/2012 2:27 PM CST

Anonymous wrote:
These type of ideas always give me pause. This walks, talks and acts like the urban renewal of the sixties. Our idealized vision has a way of not turning out the way free people want to live.
2/13/2012 2:33 PM CST

jameswadley wrote:
What are we all doing? None of these projects would be accepted by the public who would have to live in them. (Some are better than others at being contextual and/or livable, but where do you walk the dog.) A discussion that begins to sell the public on the need for re-thinking the American lifestyle has to come before the design studies. Otherwise it's just "posturing." And probably scary for the average home-buyer or apartment seeker. Problem no. 1 for architects today is entering and starting to lead that discussion. Otherwise we will be ignored...vigorously. And probably planners are more important in the discussion than architects. James W. Hadley AIA (aka anonymous)
2/13/2012 2:54 PM CST

Anonymous wrote:
Has anyone asked the people who need housing what they need? Suburba has always been wasteful and dehumanizing, but when I see ivory tower intellectuals and "community activists" trying to redefine our culture I cringe.
What people need is the liberty to pursue their dreams and the educational and intellectual means to obtain it. Then they can build whatever housing they like, even a McMansion.
2/13/2012 3:13 PM CST

Anonymous wrote:
Once again, I applaud MOMA reaching out to Architects for thoughtful investigations. One hopes that someday actionable ideas come out of this brainstorming. The argument that the housing industry is not solving the needs of Americans is valid, but not much in this show is any better. Like "Home Delivery" and "Small Scale: Big Change," earlier MOMA investigations, these aesthetic fantasies are appealing to look at but largely out of touch.
2/13/2012 2:45 PM CST

Anonymous wrote:
Studio Gang seems to have recycled Yona Friedman and a lot of the futuroist thinking of the sixties. That was fifty years ago. It turned out not to be all that palatable then and I don't think it's going to do any better today. On the whole, I have to agree with the previous comments about how out of sync with the real world these proposals happen to be. McMansions are not the answer and I think most people today would agree that little boxes all in a row (lucky tacky) don't make the grade either but higher densities and architectural language that comforts rather than confronts may provide some of the answers that we are seeking. I am not talking about the acres of "townhomes" that spring up in the suburbs. I am suggesting something else altogether that is neither that nor what we are seeing in the "foreclosed" exhibit.

Jim Pettit (I am not anonymous)
Academic Hubris, Liberal versus Conservative, The Market, Quality of Life, Reference and Comparison, Silliness and Seriousness, Top-Down and Bottom-Up

Pre-Foreclosed: February 2012

Anonymous wrote:
This is a tenacious question for the design community but “Academics” are not equipped to address it because by definition they are insulated from the market forces that drive these questions. Their design responses always seem to find answers in central planning socialism (or communism) where the lord in charge decrees how the little people shall live. In the context of the greatest economy on earth, these solutions always vary from amusing and trendy to useless. Ironically and predictably, the housing solutions generated by real world socialists and communists are among the worst on the planet!

Two years ago I outlined a grant project to design and build “the next American Home” using an award winning, very expensive, AE design and development team that no market rate home owner could ever afford. My local region’s weather, utility rates, standard of living, aesthetic sensibilities and real estate market would all form the basis for this project. Once constructed, it would be leased and its overall performance measured over years – including elements like comfort, pride of ownership and livability in addition to the boring engineering stuff like energy performance.

The goal would be to offer a platform for the next generation of America’s homebuilders to reference when that industry recovers. I will not give away all the beans because I may resurface it someday but needless to say, even in this economy I became too busy to fuss around with it.

2/13/2012 4:12 PM CST

American Dream, Reference and Comparison

Anonymous wrote:
These all seem recycled ideas, all of which have been seen at one time or other since WWII, when the suburbs were developed with full steam, and that’s a long time ago.
There don’t seem to be any strong critical concept in re-thinking the suburb, or the “American Dream”, in the time of the “American Nightmare”. Can’t see the attractiveness of WORkac’s proposal, one story strips and towers.......? how original.

2/13/2012 4:26 PM CST

A New Conversation

Anonymous wrote:
It’s about time we start to engage new ideas for urbanization. Happy to see people proposing something for us to discuss.

2/13/2012 4:36 PM CST

Government and Policy, Liberal versus Conservative, The Market

Anonymous wrote:
It’s always amusing to read the anti-socialist nonsense from bloggers in response to articles like this. Urban planning is a socialist activity, and should be proud of it. It’s about limiting the damage that developers do. Every country in the world that has a healthy urban and suburban planning system is either fully Socialist or a Social Democracy. The reason America has been so inconstant in terms of planning is precisely because of the “Big Lie” that the markets should decide how development occurs. The market is just a synonym for “the rich” in our modern economy. They’re the ones doing the buying that developers want a piece of. The issue of planning in architecture is by definition a question of whether the adopted Socialist policies will be adopted in America or not. If not, then America will continue to fail in terms of responsible planning. There’s no magic bullet, no way of playing along with the market economy to get around that fact. It’s either embrace some Socialist policies, or don’t plan anything. The laissez-faire capitalists of course want to disguise that reality, but it’s there regardless. The welfare of the 99% will be ignored in modern America, unless via politics and therefore planning they make their voices heard. End of story.

2/13/2012 5:22 PM CST

Government and Policy, The Market

Anonymous wrote:
There’s not a big enough return on investment for projects that benefit the general public in America. That’s why America’s wealthy don’t invest in them. The only way to have healthy cities and suburbs is to shape the government, and therefore use the wealthy’s money via taxes to subsidize them. There’s no other way to access the money needed to build green cities. The market economy looks out for the rich, and only the rich. The rich won’t build healthy cities and suburbs. So they’ve left us with no other recourse than the government. The only people with enough power and money to build green are the people we elect and put in office. So choose people who believe in progress and green cities. And if not, then the vast majority of Americans will live in sickness and decay as a “reward” for their conservative political beliefs. They probably deserve it. Unfortunately their children don’t.

2/13/2012 5:30 PM CST

Academic Hubris, Government and Policy, Liberal versus Conservative, The Market

Anonymous wrote:
The problem: Americans were given what they wanted in terms of market economy-based city planning for decades, and “egghead” liberal architects and planners were ignored.

The solution (according to the people responding to this article): Ignore the “egghead” liberal architects and do what the American people want: i.e more of the same.

No wonder America is so incompetent when it comes to healthy cities. Only a small minority of intelligent liberal green architects and planners embrace a healthy productive path forward, and an overwhelming majority of ignorant architects and free market thinkers couldn’t care less or think the solution to the problem is to ignore the solutions and embrace the problem as the only answer - I guess because Ronald Reagan told them to (during a period in his life when he had a debilitating mental illness I might add).

2/13/2012 5:46 PM CST
Anonymous wrote:
"The city can not be a work of art."
--Jane Jacobs
1/19/12 12:32 PM CST

Anonymous wrote:
The architecture of the city is always a "work" of art. What you should be evaluating is the quality of that work of art, good or bad.
1/19/12 9:31 PM CST

Anonymous wrote:
So much spin and hate on the 'Architectural Record'? It looks like student Occupiers have broadened their opinions to include architecture/planning? I actually feel sorry for them and agree with those who believe that even misplaced, but uncorrupted, passion is better than apathy. But your view of our future is sadly UnAmerican and something that will handicap your life until you wise up.

"Anti Socialists", "healthy cities" – hilarious! "Eggheady liberal architects"? LOL Oh how you flatter yourselves! Inexperienced, academic, mystic, global warming eco hustlers who don't understand the environment, fossil fuels/energy economy, national defense. US economy, our history or American Exceptionalism means that you are incapable of comprehending our future. which robs you of any basis for design, ... so as a result we get vanity nonsense like this, ... and wishes for socialism as Athens burns in the wake of spastic entitlement class withdrawal.

Americans were not ‘given’ anything: planning is not a socialist activity in the United States, and the diversity of planning across the country varies from tragic to excellent – something some writing here are obviously unaware of. living in a generation of under-educated, arrogant skepticism of forces you don't understand.

Market forces drive change. a natural process arrogant socialists have no patience for. You are confused and angry because of the lies you tell yourselves and the turmoil that results. For example: there is no place for over-priced boutique wind/solar power (creates a job killing prosperity tax); oil is cheap and plentiful for hundreds of years; electric cars have already been rejected by the market; human controlled global weather is nonsense (global warming); landfills are a business like any other; recycling is, with few exceptions, just more manufacturing; and you have been betrayed by those who have taught you much of your lives. No matter what eco fantasy world you want to inhabit, everything I've written is dead on and there's not a thing your hateful confusion can do about it.

Take some comfort in knowing that, for better or worse, you are not wise enough to begin to understand our future.
2/14/2012 11:25 AM CST

Anonymous wrote:
Unfortunately, Jeanne Gang's work represents little more than architectural gimmicks. It is a shame that she continues to misdirect her talents.
1/20/2012 12:23 PM CST

Anonymous wrote:
This is what architecture would be like if there weren't all those pesky humans running around.
1/20/2012 12:27 PM CST

Anonymous wrote:
There's a reason the general public prefer New Urbanism to the quasi-intellectual fantasies proposed here. The former addresses the real needs of the end users in a way that has stood the test of time, even as it evolves stylistically and functionally. As evidenced in the elitist and out-of-touch works shown here, the latter approach is at best a disconnected abstraction that responds only to the imposed program of its creator. It has no basis in the world we as architects are supposed to service. Using trumped up jargon like "investigations" or "speculations" cannot hide the intellectual abyss from which this work emanates.
1/20/2012 12:58 PM CST

Anonymous wrote:
Greed is good.
1/20/2012 2:17 PM CST

Anonymous wrote:
BTW people are stupid: they don't know what they want. It takes people like Steve Jobs to create trends.One trend will follow. Architecture is no different. The apple of architecture is here, it just takes a while for people to catch on (the amoeba effect). Remember apple was the butt of many jokes from pc users. Now look who's laughing.
1/20/2012 2:24 PM CST

Anonymous wrote:
Wasn't it left-wing, socialist, eggheady liberal architects that gave us projects like Pruitt-Igoe (and a host of comparable crime-infested dumps still standing)? Why do some architects refuse to learn from these mistakes? Don't answer, but while you're scratching your head, I'd like to welcome the latest generation of architectural Lemmings to the cliff face now. Work, Mec and MOIS. Let's start with you please. Go on, jump...you can do it!
1/20/2012 2:34 PM CST

Art and Architecture
Art and Architecture, Internet Banter, Liberal versus Conservative, The Market, Sustainability
Academic Hubris, Silliness and Seriousness
Academic Hubris, Reference and Comparison, (Un)Realistic Proposals
The Market
Art and Architecture
Academic Hubris, Silliness and Seriousness
Academic Hubris, Reference and Comparison
Liberal versus Conservative, Reference and Comparison
Anonymous wrote:
To the commenter below who said "BTW, people at college..." because you lack intelligence, don't assume everyone else is in the same boat. The comparison with Steve Jobs and Apple is highly selective. For every Apple there has been a slew of failures. The projects shown here seem more likely to be in the failure category. We've seen this stuff before. It didn't work then, it won't work now. - But it's a free country. If these architects chose to be pretentious, who am I to stop them. It's their mind to waste revisiting dead and speculations.
21/4/2012 2:42 PM CST

Anonymous wrote:
In response to the commenter who responded to my earlier post about people being stupid...good one. You can disagree with me all you like and call my intelligence into question, but the simple fact remains that most people don't have a clue about architecture, how can they? The education we go through (in school and the professional world) is some of the toughest. It is up to the architect to educate. I don't know what happened in this country to make people so resentful of others. The kind of discourse people have with architecture resembles that of monkeys and their habitual poo throwing.
21/4/2012 3:14 PM CST

Anonymous wrote:
I'll give you libeskind, im not a fan of his either, but just because an idea isn't popular doesn't automatically make it incorrect...this is a lesson that has been repeated through the course of history. People are resistant to change, we like the status quo. People hated the eiffel tower, now they love it. The same holds true for the pompidou center. People's like or dislike of things really doesn't prove whether or not it is inherently wrong or bad design or anything. It just proves that they are unfamiliar with it, nothing more. Give these ideas a chance and they might actually have some worth. And I wouldn't dismiss the education of today and compare it to the ecole. Most of the study of ecole revolved around tirelessly perfecting the Orders, today's education (at certain schools) deals more with complex building systems and the human interaction with the space.
21/4/2012 4:12 PM CST

Anonymous wrote:
Taking cheap pot shots at McMansions smacks of jealousy more than anything else. Would any of these architects turn down the opportunity to design a 18,000 square foot home...or to live in one if they could afford it?
One of the beauties of the American Dream is that people can aspire to living in a large home, or a cave if they so prefer. The unilateral imposition of small standardized homes on the masses is an idea best left to the few countries that still embrace the mistaken ideology that was Communism. If these rather naive architects are so committed to that concepts they endorse for others, then I suggest they emigrate to a former Soviet Bloc country where they will feel more fulfilled. They should take their hypocrisy with them. It has no place in the US.
21/4/2012 6:41 AM CST

Anonymous wrote:
WORC ands creation of open space seems admirable. However, the design of the homes looks like something out of Jacques Tati's film, Play Time. The architecture in that film was bad then. It looks even more ridiculous now.
21/5/2012 6:14 AM CST

Anonymous wrote:
There are many real examples where former "fringe" industrial areas have been reappropriated for residential use. London's Canary Wharf (dockyards) and New York's SoHo and Williamsburg areas (warehouses) are good examples. Often it was artists and students seeking low-cost housing at the periphery that created the beach head for the later urban development. But Free Market forces drove these initiatives both at the beginning (students) and at the end (yuppies).
Quasi-intellectual architect-driven initiatives have rarely had the same positive result. Almost a century of bombastic architectural "visions" from Corb's plan to level Paris, to Pruitt-Igoe and beyond have repeatedly shown that many architects know less about how people really want to live than do the developers for the fruits of half-baked liberal thinking rooted on "speculation" rather than informed analysis. Typically, the more theoretically driven the project, the worse were the results. - QED "Foreclosure."
21/5/2012 12:50 PM CST

Anonymous wrote:
wtf - I want to know what mindbending chemicals these people are on to design this utter crap and expect people to joyfully live in it.
21/5/2012 1:16 PM CST
Anonymous wrote:
Academic Hubris, Professional Practice
- MOS' proposal to stave the city of circulation by building in the streets. 
- The focus of WALL's urbanism is a giant compost heap anchoring their plan.
- Studio Gang emissions a world where residences look like scaleless shipping containers.
- Andrew Zago thinks the future rests in a childish vision of LegoLand with skewed walls.
I'm surprised Barry Bergdoll let his name be associated with such obvious rot. No doubt pretentious architects will buy into this. It fulfills their idea of themselves as intellectuals even as it highlights the degree to which they have not fully developed as sentient human beings.
2/16/2012 10:36 AM CST

Anonymous wrote:
The exhibition, Professional Practice
Reference and Comparison, (Un)Realistic Proposals
- Theory-based architects consider themselves the vanguard of civilization. Leading mere mortals towards a better world where untested ideas are more relevant than facts. The vision and superior attitude of these self-anointed guardians of our future lacks respect for the wisdom inherent in experience and common opinion. Its practitioners value abstractions—dreams for an egalitarian world where conflicts and the precarity has rooted in individuality do not exist. The cold urban wastelands that result from this approach are to be seen all over Eastern Europe. Why would anyone want to repeat these mistakes now?
2/16/2012 12:40 PM CST

Anonymous wrote:
Art and Architecture, Professional Practice
- News to MoMA. You don't need abstract, avant-garde "investigations" on the subject. This work is already being done, in practical ways. Entire books have been written documenting case studies. The Sprawl Repair Manual is an entire book filled with PRACTICAL design and implementation methods to accomplish this challenge.
2/16/2012 6:05 PM CST

Anonymous wrote:
Liberal versus Conservative, (Un)Realistic Proposals
- There's ample evidence that these ill-informed speculations lead nowhere. Not anywhere useful anyway. But speculation is easier than dealing with hard facts and the practical exigencies of real design for real people. (There's nothing a liberal academic hates more than a fact. Acknowledging facts undermines the whole basis for their existence in the fantasy land that is architectural academia.) So let's stop humoring these self-serving, compost-dome loving con artists. There's more newsworthy architecture out there if Record would get some sense and seek it out.
2/16/2012 6:23 PM CST

Anonymous wrote:
Art and Architecture, Professional Practice
- With the thick black glasses and the silly design, Andrew Zago could be the next Daniel Libeskind. (And that's not a good thing)
2/16/2012 8:31 PM CST

Anonymous wrote:
Pre-Foreclosed: February 2012
- The act or threat of foreclosure is a tragedy for many Americans today. Secure in the comfort of affluence, notoriety, the self-dulgent naval gazing displayed by these architects is a slap in the face to the very real problems these people are facing. I'm insulted that Barry Bergdoll and MoMA could be so oblivious to the real world concerns that this show mocks, with its distance and comfortable remove. They should be ashamed of themselves.
2/16/2012 10:34 PM CST

Anonymous wrote:
The exhibition, Professional Practice
Reference and Comparison, Silliness and Seriousness
- This exhibit (and the state of the profession) is the result of architects' having been taught that they should strive to be artists. As such they value novelty, polonics, and individual expression above all else, and are ill-equipped to offer useful solutions to real problems. Instead, they should think of themselves as professional craftspeople whose products offer lasting value based on their usefulness.
2/17/2012 9:58 AM CST

Anonymous wrote:
Art and Architecture, Professional Practice
- With the exception of Jean Gang who has an established practice, the other firms are young, recently formed and have little or no built work, and even less experience with urbanism. The absence of that training is evident in the superficial, image-driven approach to their ill-informed fantasies. Promoting amateurs as though they are experts is a bad move particularly when the naivety of their ideas reflects poorly on the whole profession.
2/17/2012 11:23 AM CST

Anonymous wrote:
Pre-Foreclosed: February 2012
- Forming moralizing judgments about what is right for the masses is a common liberal pastime ... even as most of them go home to cozy 19th century homes with gharms and character.
2/17/2012 12:25 PM CST

Anonymous wrote:
Art and Architecture, Professional Practice
- Liberal versus Conservative
- Forming moralizing judgments about what is right for the masses is a common liberal pastime ... even as most of them go home to cozy 19th century homes with gharms and character.
Professional Practice

The Exhibition, Scale, Silliness and Seriousness

Community Participation, Silliness and Seriousness

Art and Architecture, Reference and Comparison

Academic Hubris, Silliness and Seriousness

The Exhibition, Silliness and Seriousness

Professional Practice

Professional Practice, Silliness and Seriousness

Academic Hubris, Professional Practice, Reference and Comparison

Academic Hubris

Academic Hubris, Silliness and Seriousness, (Un)Realistic Proposals

Internet Banter, Reference and Comparison

Professional Practice
Silliness and Seriousness

Academic Hubris

Internet Banter, Reference and Comparison

Academic Hubris

Academic Hubris

Silliness and Seriousness

Silliness and Seriousness

L: Press and Links
R: The Market, Press and Links

L: A New Conversation, Press and Links
R: Affordable Housing, The Market, Press and Links

L: Press and Links
R: Press and Links, Reference and Comparison

L: Government and Policy, Press and Links
R: Internet Banter, A New Conversation, Press and Links

Pre-Foreclosed: February 2012

Chicago Tribune
Cityscapes
BY BLAIR KAMIN
February 13, 2012

A blueprint for a new American dream; will architect Jeanne Gang's ideas for Cicero work in the real world?

While there are ample reasons to be skeptical about Gang's design for Cicero, it should help kick-start a much-needed debate about alternatives to the standard single-family house on a grassy lot. Our homes should fit the realities of how we live, not some preordained myth of the American dream. But making the right fit among form, function and finance is no simple matter, as a close look at Gang's design reveals.
The town turns out to be an ideal venue for clarifying the scope and impact of the foreclosure crisis.

The poster child for the crisis is the exurban home in the unfinished subdivision, yet the crisis has hit equally hard at older, close-in suburbs like Cicero. According to the Woodstock Institute, the town had 1,068 new foreclosures in 2010, an increase of 8.6 percent over the previous year. While foreclosures declined slightly in the first half of 2011, no one in Cicero expects the problem to go away anytime soon.

The town, Gang notes, is an “arrival city,” where immigrants proceed directly instead of settling first in Chicago. The official 2010 census population is 84,000, but town officials say it’s probably closer to 100,000 to 110,000 because of undocumented residents. The super mercados and taquerias that line Cicero’s commercial streets hint at its shift from a haven for Eastern European immigrants to those from Mexico.

Many of the town’s families are crammed into bungalows and two-flats (left), doubling and tripling up as they struggle to pay mortgages taken on during the boom years. They have converted basements and attics into bedrooms or, in a further attempt to make ends meet, transformed garages into makeshift workspaces for car repairs and other odd jobs. Technically, such arrangements violate the thrust of the town’s zoning code, which calls for a strict separation of homes and businesses.

Gang calls the situation a “housing mismatch,” and she correctly diagnoses Cicero’s response to the foreclosure crisis as inadequate. While the town has used subsidies from the federal Neighborhood Stabilization Program to rehab and sell foreclosed homes, only about 10 homes have been fixed up, town officials acknowledge. As Gang points out, Cicero’s deeper problem is industrial decline, as exemplified by the fate of the long-gone Hawthorne Works plant, where the Western Electric manufacturing arm of AT&T once employed as many as 45,000 people.

A new vision for Cicero: The “born-again factory”

Factor in mixed-use zoning that would allow alleys to become vibrant marketplaces lined by cottage industries that residents would run out of garages (left, below, the same alley now, with an existing parking lot in the background), and — presto! — you have a vision fit for displaying on the walls of a prestigious museum.

Whether it would work is a different matter.
As anyone familiar with the tragic history of public housing in Chicago knows, high-rise housing has often proved ill-suited to the needs of low-income families, especially large families. A mother on the 10th floor can't look out her kitchen window and keep a close eye on her child playing in the backyard. Unsupervised children often play in elevators, causing them to break down.

"People would look at this more as an apartment than their own home," said Cristine Pope, director of the Interfaith Leadership Project, a church-based community organization in Cicero. While some buyers might like the affordability of the units and their modern conveinences, she added, others "would say, 'I don't want to live in it. It looks like a factory.'"

The point is: Who is this design for? The concept of an ever-changing building that morphs like a Rubik's Cube might advance Gang's reputation for innovative high-rise design, but is such a plan really feasible? And would it truly advance the cause of better housing? Gang's research included talking to Cicero residents, but she designed her plan for them, not with them.

But the failures of high-rise public housing teach harsh lessons: Architectural experiments often bring unintended consequences. At Cabrini-Green (above), earnest architects left out conventional hallways in favor of perimeter breezeways that were called "streets in the sky." The architects never foresaw that children could throw other children off of those breezeways. That forced the Chicago Housing Authority to fence in the breezeways with chain-link, making residents feel caged in.

where exactly is the site?

It might be a mile from the Cicero Ave station, but there's another station not far east of Cicero that might be closer...judging by the graphic of the building seemingly positioned on the North side of the Burlington tracks.

BK: As the story says, the site is at 31st and Central. That's south of the Burlington tracks. But in another bit of artistic license (beyond using a working factory for a plan that's supposedly about reviving shuttered factories), Gang put her reborn factory to the north of the tracks.

Sorry Jeanne a bunch of others have beat you to the punch with fairly interesting efforts. The design sketches for Cicero really make one wonder if Jeanne has the flair to make this type of approach into a vibrant neighborhood and generate a vision of the future or will it become a high rise depressing disaster. Check out this site if you want to see executed "container" homes that are a good mix of ideas.

http://www.busyboo.com/tag/shipping-container-homes/

I'm having trouble grasping this concept, but it almost seems more appropriate for young creative professionals as kind of an alternative to loft living than for poor immigrant families. On a related matter: I always wished Chicago had the row-housing stock that the Eastern cities do.

BK: Correct—who is this design for? Wicker Park or Cicero?

The use layout doesn't seem much different from a large university dorm building.

Blair - Thanks for this article -- It helps me better understand Gang's oped piece in the NY Times last week...although I am still not buying her master-planning approach to solving the mortgage crisis.

Thank you for having an honest dialog about whether this is realistic or not and bringing the architectural naivety of Cabrini Green into the mix -- an all too real example of the failures of big plans by architects trying to solve socio-economic issues from the outside.

I wrote a blog response to Connie's NY Times piece last week (which also brings up the case of public housing) here:

I guess I missed the part where Gang explained how a family unable to make one-third of the mortgage payments on an inexpensive bungalow would be able to afford newly constructed housing that must use unionized labor, comply with multifamily and highrise construction codes, and carry the expense of several years' worth of environmental remediation.

And I missed the part where Mexican immigrants yearning for the American dream, with at least their own little yard for the kids to play in, say that, no, they really want to live in an enormous futuristic warehouse where they can't even hear the kids playing and have to lug the groceries a full block from the car.

Yet Gang and her colleagues are totally mystified that production builders, designing for the middle-class suburbanite, don't turn to them more often.

If this project is planned for 31st and Central, then I personally think this woman is a wack-job.

That location overlooks a huge switchyard, where freight trains are shuffled, reconfigured, loaded and unloaded constantly. Diesel fumes, noise. The only people who might be happy overlooking that are model railroad enthusiasts.

As far as public transportation access goes, you have buses that run along Ogden, and maybe along 31st Street. The LaVergne and Cicero metra stops are both goodbyes away, even the pseudo-downtown Cicero area at 31st and Laramie is a solid hike.

Nevermind that they're talking about taking away a factory from a blue-collar town, along with its real/potential jobs.

If Cicero truly wants to build such a project a better location would be WNW of the Cicero Metra Station. That would be a location where they wouldn't potentially take away jobs from the area and that would be close to Metra and the CTA and the buses that run on Cicero and Cermak.

I'd really like to learn more nitty-gritty details about this Jeanne Gang person, like where does SHE actually live, what sort of neighborhood, in what sort of building? I'm guessing it's not anything like Cicero.

How about doing something like this in Maywood? They have a terrible foreclosure crisis due to the same factors, but it is a lovely town, I wish it would thrive.

So the blog has a picture of Gang taken nowhere near the proposed site.

The architectural renderings are showing a building situated nothing like the proposed site. And she's considered a professional?

Excellent article and thanks for sharing.
Foreclosed: Rehousing the American Dream opens at the Museum of Modern Art on 14 February 2012.
While the too-big-to-fail banks and government-sponsored enterprises Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac have received substantial support in the form of low-cost loans, guarantees and toxic asset purchases, defaulting homeowners have received comparatively little government assistance.

Another contributor, a man wearing glasses and black sweatshirt and standing beneath a beamed ceiling, holds up a text neatly printed in architect's block caps on a large pad of gridded paper:

I am 62 years old.
I have worked honestly & hard my whole life (since I was 14) because that is how you "realize the American Dream."
I was a home builder & designer.
In 1980, the "Savings & Loan Crisis" forced me out of work & out of business. (The gov't helped the banks survive ...)

In 2007, the "Sub-prime Mortgage Crisis" crushed me again. I lost my home, my wife & my belief in that "American Dream." (The gov't saved the banks again ...)
The Buell Hypothesis imagines that the stimulus package codified in the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act had channeled federal funding into the provision of new public housing. This counterfactual provides the conceptual basis for Foreclosed: Rehousing the American Dream, a collaboration between the Buell Center and the Museum of Modern Art dedicated to changing the national housing conversation by projecting new imaginaries of American housing, suburbia and citizenship.

"The foreclosure crisis has led to a major loss of confidence in the suburban dream. The idea of single-family houses on private lots reachable only by car has been broken, and this new reality has hit especially hard in suburbs. It is here, rather than in the next ring of potential sprawl, where architects, landscape designers, artists, ecologists, and elected officials need to rethink reshaping urban America for the coming decades."

Jonathan Massey, “Housing and the 99 Percent,” Places (blog), Design Observer, February 14, 2012, http://places.designobserver.com/feature/housing-and-the-99-percent/32308/ (accessed July 18, 2012). Image Credit: We are the 99 Percent Tumblr archive; Photo by David Shankbone, via Wikimedia; Collage courtesy of Jonathan Massey; Photo via Penn State, Pennsylvania College of Technology; Photo at Western Michigan University, via The Making of Modern Michigan; Photo at Western Michigan University, via The Making of Modern Michigan; Photo at Western Michigan University, via The Making of Modern Michigan; Photo via King County Museum Collections; Photo via the Library of Congress; Photo via statemuseumpa.org; Photo courtesy of Daniel Kariko; Photo via Queens Museum; Photo via CUP.
Felix Salmon (FS): So, I like this. So, you raise a large amount of money up front to build everything, and you raise that money by selling shares in the real estate investment trust to the broad public, to investors.

FS: So what you're doing is you're going along to the residents of Temple Terrace, and you're saying, “We have this great new model for you. It involves shrinking and no longer owning your home.”

Michael Bell (MB): [laughs] You're trying to make it sound good.

FS: Essentially you're creating public housing here, which doesn't have great connotations. Historically speaking, it hasn't worked out that well.

MB: The big issue I would get across here is that all housing is financially constructed. And in the United States, the single-family house for purchase with a mortgage is public. The mortgage deduction on your annual taxes means that everybody in this country has subsidized housing.

FS: Well, the homeowners do anyway.


“Foreclosed: Rehousing the American Dream” MoMA exhibit. http://reut.rs/zVU8jU
I thought I would post this interesting interview w/ Michael Bell. It seems we are always discussing ways to put architects back in the driver’s seat of the building process. I thought he posed some interesting solutions to immediate, real problems.

I really liked his holistic approach of re-casting the financing business model and working with members of that community to create a new paradigm.

http://www.reuters.com/video/2012/02/14/reuters-tv-a-radical-approach-to-homeownership-fell?videoId=230166482&videoChannel=117757

I am hoping the show runs through June so I can see it in NY.

jla-x
Feb 15, 12 12:23 pm

Thanks for sharing that Keith. Not really sure if I understand what he is proposing with this business plan.

Nam Henderson
Feb 15, 12 6:36 pm

I would be interested in hearing from any Nectors who have read the book/visited the exhibit/participated in the studios.

Particularly in light of Guy Horton’s recent piece of criticism Thoughts on MoMA’s Foreclosed: Rehousing the American Dream wherein he wrote "This is a shame because there are some valuable ideas. Ironically, most of those are contained in the boring data taken from economists and social scientists. Were the architects trying too diligently to spatialize the data?...As unsettling as the damage the financial crisis has wrought on the fabric of dwelling in America, the distance these proposals travel away from what caused these foreclosures is equally unsettling."

Or Justin Davidson who recently in NY Magazine wrote "Some ideas in the show sit on the border between bold and silly...As a whole, though, the show merges daydreams with pragmatism."

There he specifically critiqued Mr. Bell’s vision as seeking to “herd newcomers to Temple Terrace, Florida, into a pair of high-tech megastructures lifted above vast urban plazas.”
There he specifically chased Mr. Bell’s vision as seeking to “herd newcomers to Temple Terrace, Florida, into a pair of high-tech megastructures lifted above vast urban plazas.”

Finally, more substantively to me was his feeling that “For all its thoughtfulness and rigor, though, a whiff of colonialism blows through the project, with its corps of city-based experts venturing into suburbia with maps and modern technology and plans for reforming the indigenous culture. The visions they come up with have a familiar urban feel, and the show replaces old conventional wisdom with the only slightly fresher dogma of density”. Is it inevitable that this sort of project/process will perhaps come across as disconnected from on the ground socio-politics and communities. I wonder how a more organic approach to the problem could be articulated, perhaps even as simple as something like OccupyHomes but more architecturally or spatially focused.

Also, this item Housing and the 99 Percent recently posted to News feed seem apropos.

Nam Henderson
Feb 15, 12 7:15 pm

Or to reference a line from Blair Kamin’s review of Jeanne Gang studios contribution to the exhibit maybe what is needed is less concept more blueprint?

wurdan freo
Feb 16, 12 10:06 am

Is this guy suggesting Condos are the solution to the real estate crisis? Or does everyone become a renter? Seems like another utopian community to me. And of course... he’s going to tell me that if I have ONE child, I only get a two bedroom unit. No thanks. Why does innovation from Architects always have to come in the form of telling people how to live their lives? Maybe innovation could be a business model that allows Architects to incorporate all these good ideas and give the customer what they want instead of telling them what they want?

Some good ideas lost in translation, reducing cost of utilities. Simple solution there. Smaller footprint, better insulation and higher efficiency systems. Hmmmm... looks to be the kind of home that the home builders are putting out right now. Wonder why they’re still in business.

go do it
Feb 16, 12 10:22 am

it would be a hard sell to convince people to abandon the traditional stand alone owner occupied home to become apartment dwellers.

it really is not that hard to build a very efficient or even a net zero home these days

toasteroven
Feb 16, 12 11:22 am

ending the subsidies that drastically lower the true cost of many aspects of the suburban lifestyle would be a very strong incentive for many people to move into apartments and denser neighborhoods. If you want urban-style services and utilities with the luxury of low density you should have to pay a premium for it. otherwise there are ways of living more “off the grid” if you’re willing to do your own maintenance and pay a little more up front for these systems.

many people do have the dream of living in a detached single-family home, and I think this should be available to people if they can afford it, but I think until the crash people were pretty delusional about how much this lifestyle actually costs (i.e. taking out loans they couldn’t afford), and how much it has been costing our country.

jia-x
Feb 16, 12 11:27 am

Why does innovation from Architects always have to come in the form of telling people how to live their lives?

You guys pull on the thread. This runs back the the EU/US grand eco-idea, that we are
You hit the nail on the head. This goes back to the FLW broad acre city idea, that we can reinvent society in totality to fit a certain utopian vision. The problem is that every architect wants to invent the big cure not the gradual remedy, because the glory lies in being Jonas Salk not the guy who invented Robatustin. The problem with any utopian model is that it usually works in theory, but is completely unrealisable due to the given societal constraints with regard to culture and economy. I have been arguing on threads here that we need to become developers and offer realistic alternatives to crap suburbia. Once again, architects are thinking of top down solutions to what can only be achieved with bottom up models. We live in a free market society whether we like it or not. We need to create demand by building better stuff. "If you build it they will come" We can't just dictate our solutions and hope for society to demand our service. The suburban model is not going away because it is deeply part of the american culture. Rather than get rid of it, lets start by building more sustainable and enriching suburban communities that are affordable. Look at the way the auto industry copes with these constraints...Sure a small electric car that weighs 1000 lbs. may be the best solution, but they recognise that society will not change so quick, so they focus on hybrid suv's and 4 door sedans. We need to build the "civic hybrid" equivalent of architecture right now (transitory projects) not the electric smart car, because unfortunately many people out there still have steel testicles hanging from the back of their pick-up trucks. If we can't even do that, how the hell are we going to do anything more radical. While I wish society was easy to change and would love to see such grand projects, it just ain't gonna happen yet.

Kevin W.
Feb 16, 12:13 pm

Builders, developers and real estate people have been telling people how to live for years....it's obvious now, more than ever, thats how things are done....people don't know what they want....Architects stopped telling people what they want in the 1980's....see what we have now? I think as far as far as something developer driven, the Eichler approach today would be a good start....Developer, hiring good and great Architects, offering something different that makes sense.

jia-x
Feb 16, 12:22 pm

Eichler, yes, I agree Kevin. You know of any contemporary developers that are doing this kind of work with a little more focus on community design and sustainability? I would love to do a little research into this.

Kevin W.
Feb 16, 12:24 pm

I don't...if you find anything, please share with us.

toasteroven
Feb 21, 12:11:42 am

sustainable developers?? developers follow incentives and try to minimize risk - without government subsidizing sprawling (i.e. cheap & low capacity) infrastructure and overly restrictive zoning laws they'd very likely build far more high-density mixed-use buildings without parking (but also without green space). without utilities, roads, and other services land is pretty much worthless - and developers typically don't like challenging zoning unless they know the municipality is on board. also - high-density outside of the city center presents another challenge because of the capacity of the existing services. Some towns in the northeast have put a moratorium on any new building because their existing water and sewer systems cannot handle any additional load. when you think of it, suburban development is often a function of how big the sewer systems are, or how much space is needed for a septic and/or leach field and buffer. perhaps if as a culture we had a much healthier relationship with our own poop....
Builders, developers and real estate people have been telling people how to live for years...it's obvious now, more than ever, that's how things are done...people don't know what they want...

If you think it's just builders and developers telling people how to live, you're clearly missing a larger picture. Retailers are a huge factor here too. The problem with suburbia is the lack of "real job" creation.

The problem comes from the concept that many retailers sell products that more-or-less require single-unit, single-family housing units—lawnmowers, automobiles, chest freezers, full-sized appliances, furniture et cetera. The code for this word is "durable goods." And anytime you hear the government, planners or business-types talking about the increase in the purchase of durable goods or stimulating the durable goods market... they're clearly talking about suburbia.

And many of the companies that sell the tools of suburbia actively influence policy development by funding various non-profit and non-governmental organizations. We don't know who does what but there are fair examples.

Cato Institute, a supporter of laissez-faire capitalism, is quite a staunch critic of urban planning in or has been supported by the likes of General Motors, ExxonMobile, Toyota, Visa, Wal-mart, Volkswagen, Honda, FedEx and Time Warner. None of these companies want to see functioning cities.

And we end up the paradox of...

If most of the jobs are low-wage, who's buying goods and services?
And where do the armies of wage workers live if new suburban development is too expensive?

jia-x
Feb 23, 12 12:07 pm

Sub-urban and suburban are also two very different things. I would argue that sub-urban is not bad. A good example of this is in some parts of Brooklyn, Queens, and Nassau county NY. The density is greater than the typical suburban environment, and there is a small business walkable street scape that flanks a mix of multi and single family housing in many of these neighborhoods. There is also access to public transit in and out of the city. There is a mix of home owners and renters, and the opportunity to own a house and rent out the top floor.

There is a sense of community and a feeling of being in a small town within a city. The film "Do the Right Thing" by Spike Lee so clearly expresses this. Another issue is density. More density is not the solution alone. We need to find an appropriate balance of density, production, and economy so that development can be in some sort of sustainable balance. I think that sub-urban form has the greatest potential for a sustainable development because there is enough space to support a mix of agriculture, industry, small business, housing, park space, etc... as well as enough density to support local businesses with regard to employees and consumers. Cities like Manhattan will never be able to become hybrid typologies because things like urban agriculture and production will be far too expensive due to crazy high land prices. The only problem with the sub-urban typology is that it sometimes becomes gentrified over time as we see in brooklyn or the opposite happens where it becomes a ghetto due to the home values going down as density goes up like in Jamaica Queens (balance is always a thin line). On the other hand, suburban development lends itself to exploitation by corporate interests as James R. clearly articulates. The American dream of owning a single family home is not going away. It is a part of the American culture that dates back hundreds of years. We need to find a solution to the problem without ignoring the cultural mentality that led to it. This is why ideas like the ones in the MoMA exhibit never work. I believe that we need to study examples that already work like Astoria, and go from there.

toasteroven
Feb 23, 12 2:49 pm

if downtown is for people, then who are the suburbs for?
Infrastructure, Populations and Demographics, Scale

Internet Banter, (Un)Realistic Proposals

Foreclosed: February 2012

joe klein says:

can some one explain to me when the horrendous proportions of contemporary developments (infrastructure) will be addressed. this seem to reflect and expectation of population engorgement. till this is addressed i say you stop being architects your proportions of way off.

your understanding of the human organism its entirely none considered as you payed not attention to physical well being providing no lessons for its observation.

you are a empty economic driver with little prospective.

Nate says:

a little confused with your entry Joe,
I would say that the proportions of human figures are hit-and-miss. It is hard to say though, since there are multiple presentations. Personally I am a bit lost to the takeaways. Did each firm propose a set of solutions or was this merely an expose of the current crisis?

Ken Taisukki
Omar Taisukki

bit.ly/jrwmxnC Foreclosed: Rehousing the American Dream at the MoMA: By Irina Vinnitskaya(click here for o...
huff.to/Y4m7ad

Ekaterina Dovjenko

SO COOL. I want to go! Foreclosed: Rehousing the American Dream at the MoMA | ArchDaily
archdaily.com/199094/foreclo... via @archdaily87

L: Press and Links
R: Press and Links

Domus

(Sub)urban Realities

MoMA’s new exhibition Foreclosed continues the museum’s exploration of seminal issues in contemporary living. An architecture report from New York by Danielle Rago

This vision of the Museum as a proactive institution in which exhibitions are used for advocacy-related purposes relates back to MoMA’s founding mission of “creating a dialogue between the established and the experimental, the past and the present, in an environment that is responsive to the issues of modern and contemporary art.”
By altering the cultural narrative that is as pervasive as it was when first introduced into mainstream society in 1931 by James Truslow Adams, we can rewrite and ultimately redesign the future of American cities. These five proposals on display at MoMA, while optimistic and idealistic in nature, do capture the spirit of change and forward thinking in both design and practice. While differing in scale and execution, all five projects address the notion of the “American Dream” as an ideal that needs to be refigured in order to reflect current needs and demands of contemporary society.

What happens next is the continuation of the dialogue that began at MoMA PS1 (where the architects began the initial stages of research and design) and has transferred into the Architecture and Design galleries in the Museum. In order to establish solutions to current problems, such as the emergency housing crisis in America, we must propose ideas (as the aforementioned teams have done) through careful research and study before proceeding with rebuilding and redevelopment efforts. What Bergdoll demonstrates throughout Foreclosed and in this exhibition series is the importance of involving architects and design practitioners in the early stages of development of larger problems and social issues, such as the housing crisis and the global warming crisis, respectively, on both a local and global scale. Thanks to these efforts, the architecture and design community can now offer a more substantial role in the redevelopment of cities and, more importantly, ways of thinking about how we live in the expanded spatial environment.

The American Dream, Revised

Saving the suburbs might mean starting essentially from scratch.

But the sometimes grandiose architectural conceits are in the end less interesting than the economic ideas on display. It’s not just the McMansion and the white picket fence that are deconstructed here; the very ideal of single-family home ownership comes under scrutiny as well. After all, the foreclosure crisis sprang from financial mechanisms as much as from the built environment.

The elimination of restrictive zoning in the Cicero proposal is emblematic of the way the various teams in “Foreclosed” challenge the physical and bureaucratic barriers that have defined American suburbia for generations. All five teams push for a vibrant mix of residential and business development. All challenge the idea that “suburbs” and “cities” are fundamentally different creatures. All advocate for variability in types and terms of ownership, with rental always an option, and shared spaces for work and play readily available.

The designs on display at MoMA will never be built in the real world. They are, however, a meaningful addition to a conversation we’ve waited too long to have about the way we will live and work in this country for the next hundred years, and the next American dream.

“Femrca

“He who pays the piper, dictates the tune.” Housing delivery, its design and the general structure of the industry is controlled by the institutions that provide the money; whether GSEs(Fannie & Freddie) or banks, those are the true puppeteers. Even the physical architecture, the cookie cutter nature of everything is dictated by the “appraised value”, the only language the money lenders understand. Builders, designers and architects can dream all they want, unless there are new ways of structuring how houses are paid for, what consumers want will always be compromised and subverted by dictators of finance.

Jesus Negros

“decoupling the previous notion that ownership is a home and the land beneath it.”

It’s called a trailer park. It’s already been invented.

TomPaine4

Retrofit or Redesign

The Market

Cities and Suburbs, Homeownership, Land Use and Density

A New Conversation

Homeownership, Reference and Comparison

Family, Populations and Demographics, Reference and Comparison

MoMA Misses by 99%

The newly opened show at the Museum of Modern Art, *Foreclosed: Rehousing the American Dream*, through July 30, fails to accomplish what it claims: to address one of the most critical issues facing the public today – foreclosures. The result is a disservice to the people the show’s organizers set out to help. What’s worse, the exhibit takes design back ten years, attempting to re-aim design in a failed direction of the past.

For the past ten years, evidence has mounted in other exhibits and publications that design can play a direct role in addressing issues critical to the general public. Rather than just providing luxury to “the few,” designers involved in those projects worked intensely with communities to reshape their built environments.

One of the best of these was (ironically) another MoMA show, “Small Scale, Big Change,” presented just last year. Curator Andres Lepik selected projects in which the architects maintained a sustained relationship with the communities they served. The projects were developed and carried out with the involvement of the communities, not invented in a museum for distant “beneficiaries.” Rather than being esoteric ideas proposed for whole “mega-regions” of the country, these projects were site-specific and actually built, in cooperation with the people who benefited.

To be fair, a few efforts at community engagement could be found in Foreclosed. Jeanne Gang included three qualified advocates for the interests of the general public: Theaster Gates, Roberta Feldman, and Cristine Pope. As she states: “Early in the process, our teammates Roberta Feldman and Theaster Gates worked with Cicero’s Interfaith Leadership Project [Cristine Pope] to interview residents about their own personal foreclosure crises.”

Rather than just serving the top 1%, design could be as meaningful as public health and public interest law in serving the people. In fact, the architectural profession now sees an opportunity for a needed rebirth. Excel with the highest unemployment of any college degree. January

In the end, it is not a curator or the designer who will determine if design projects are successful or not. It is the public who will be the final judge, based on what the design achieves.

For architecture to reach its full potential the public must be involved, inviting designers to be a part of their conversations and solutions in addressing social needs. But before this happens, the public must first understand the newly-emerging role of design. And it is here that this show wastes so much possibility and a timely opportunity.

1. Right on, Brian. It’s a real shame that MoMA went from understanding something about community work to the idea that architects can magically help reverse decades of community disinvestment and financial industry assault through the use of digital design tools and esoteric philosophy. People facing foreclosure and the designers who want to help them (who may be one and the same) deserve better when our leading institutions investigate the situation.

Comment by Raphael Sperry — February 17, 2012, @ 2:44 pm

2. I feel the reviewer missed the mark this time. The design teams for Foreclosed are young architects (hardly deserving of the term “starchitects,” since they have comparatively built far less than today’s typical starchitect.) I visited the open studios and lectures that were held at P.S.1 over the past year and a half. The program is meant to be thought-provoking and exploratory, as opposed to concrete in its proposed solutions. I was impressed by the amount of data compiled by the teams (in their efforts to document the megaregions) and the thoughtfulness evident in their evolving research. The exhibition is meant to inspire people with new ideas, and new approaches to familiar problems. Obviously, architects can’t solve the foreclosure problem (that’s our banking system’s responsibility), but they can document patterns of potential future growth for these massive regions, which the teams certainly accomplished by last August during the open studios. The purpose of the excursion is to imagine new housing opportunities in regions where two large cities share resources and transport systems. Mr. Bell doesn’t mention this fact. If the teams were working in small neighborhoods and failed to engage the community, his criticisms would ring true. But these are large-scale regions with massive populations.

Comment by Laurie Manfra — February 22, 2012, @ 12:50 pm

3. Designers and architects should be actively engaging the public’s opinions and ideas in order to creatively solve problems whether they are working in small villages or massive cities.

Comment by Allison Tao — June 15, 2012, @ 12:11 pm

MoMA Misses by 99%: By Bryan Bell The newly opened show at the Museum of Modern Art, Foreclosed: Rehousing the A... bit.ly/ytqzG3

MoMA Misses by 99% bit.ly/Aa1r3L Great insights from Bryan Bell on "Foreclosed"; Droog’s/DSR’s Levittown show had same issues

Good urban design is achieved through collaboration, not imposition. bit.ly/Aa1r3L

<table>
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<th>Lawrence Pollard (LP): That ideal of your own house and its own garden with room for the car isn't just American. It may have started there, but it's what people aspire to in China or in Brazil, in Africa. And if it's gone bust in the US, can it, should it, survive in the rest of the world?</th>
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<td>Andrew Purcell (AP): Do you think that Americans are giving up on the suburban dream, then? Because it's still seems quite resilient to me.</td>
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<td>Barry Bergdoll (BB): It is astounding to what extent people's dreams are fulfilled by images that are supplied to them by the marketplace, by advertising, by television, but I do think that is shifting. And even some of the dream producers like movies, like television series, are beginning to address the complex realities of suburbs and are starting to show us images of suburbs which are arrival cities for immigrants which have multigenerational families living in the same house. Some of the kind of covering up of those realities in popular entertainment is itself beginning to erode. So, there are many many cracks in the dream.</td>
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<td>AP: What chance does a scheme like this have of being realized?</td>
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<td>Jeanne Gang (JG): I think we can't afford not to realize something. We have so many issues especially in the inner ring suburbs where we were looking at, like Cicero, where developers kind of hop-skip over them and sprawl out into further and further-out suburbs, which just increases our dependence on the car.</td>
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LP: What have we learned about the suburban ideal from the collapse of its American model? Is it sustainable, transferable to emerging economies?

Ricky Burdett (RB): You just have to look at what's happened to cities, and unfortunately that's exactly what's happening. Most cities are suffering from middle-aged spread. They become really wide, and their footprint is becoming larger and larger. And as was said by many of the speakers in this piece, it's because the car is there and everyone aspires to it. It's fantastic that the MoMA, this august institution, instead of doing Deconstructivism or “Edible Minimalism” or whatever, is dealing with this stuff. But you can't talk about this issue of cities and foreclosure and all that unless you link jobs and housing. 

RB: And it's not just design. That's my only gripe with the MoMA thing. You've got to have a political system, and I'm sure they raised that, which supports that level of intervention. So that architecture is meaningful socially. 

LP: And architecture becomes the way that people will trust their government or trust their institutions.

RB: It can.

While it is interesting to consider what might be done, it would be useful to ask the architects about how they would go about putting these plans into action in particular suburbs. What would suburban governments and residents approve? Where would the funding come from? A prominent composting plant? Gang’s plan requires changing a lot of zoning laws? Looking at some of the comments to this story, there is some skepticism. If these designs are in a museum, is the exhibit intended to be more art or practical design?

Questioning the value of an outsider’s perspective in MoMA’s “Foreclosed” | Legally Sociable says:

February 22, 2012 at 11:15 AM

 [...] seems to be provoking a lot of strong reactions (see Brian’s previous commentary here). Diana Lind, editor in chief of Next American City, questions both the motives and the [...] 

A surplus of 5 million McMansion in the United States? | Legally Sociable says:

March 14, 2012 at 5:02 PM

 [...] the middle of a review of the Foreclosed exhibit at MoMA, a housing analyst makes an interesting statement about the surplus of housing currently in the [...] 

Further discussion of MoMa’s “Foreclosure” exhibit | Legally Sociable says:

June 26, 2012 at 4:35 PM

 [...] few months ago, we wrote a couple of times about the “Foreclosed” exhibit at MoMa (see here and here). Here is an extended “roundtable debate” about the exhibit and a paragraph of [...]


Image Credit: Not provided in publication.
More on #MoMA's new Suburban focused "Foreclosed" exhibit: RT @ArchDaily: Nature-City by WORKac: archdaily.ly/171gh #architecture

This is none other than modernism 2.0. Boring-low livability. Sad @ArchDaily: Nature-City /WORKac /MoMA archdaily.ly/171gh #architecture

The topic of discussion: "nature," "town & country" and the suburb is neither. bit.ly/uxX04f #foreclosed

Interesting designs in the wake of the foreclosure crisis bit.ly/AlbG2LC

Get a glimpse of the future of #housing at "Foreclosed," new exhibit @MuseumModernArt moma.org/interactives/e...

Up now: Jeanne Gang, presenting our project, "The Garden in the Machine" and telling the story of Cicero, bit.ly/uxX04f #foreclosed

@Moma's take on walkable cities. View the various projects @OpinDC @DDOTDC moma.org/interactives/e...

What do you think? RT @edestesdesign: @Moma's take on walkable cities. View the various projects @OpinDC @DDOTDC moma.org/interactives/e...

So, the "Foreclosed" show at MoMA is not really about foreclosures. Nor is it any "good". Give it a miss. #AAG2012 moma.org/visit/calendar...

Suburban renewal at the Museum of Modern Art
Academic Hubris, Reference and Comparison


Rehousing the American Dream

Reinventing the American dream is quite a daunting task and I really wanted to check what the MoMA had to say about this. Do these elite architects have a real alternative to what took us to the mess we are in today? We are talking about the MoMA here, so I was really expecting to be blown away by at least some of the 5 design projects. Well instead I kind of felt like I was at some 1950’s World’s fair show (The Jetsons even came to mind). Why this sensation of deja vu?

So I looked closer, reading everything I could but it seemed like “Rehousing the American dream” meant putting a band-aid on these cities and suburbs instead of rethinking the problem altogether.

The renderings of the buildings (which looked like the unfinished renderings from an undergrad class) were not conveying any sense of intimacy or belonging. Further along, I was looking at funky shapes in crayola colors (art?) that did not have any cultural relationship with the local or regional culture of the inhabitants. Another proposal, which was developed with an ecologist on board (good start!) suggested “re-wilding”: blending with the natural habitat and even suggesting the importance of reintroducing the predators of an ecosystem, but all I saw were buildings that were forced under the turf of artificial forests… and last a flower shaped reflecting pools (biophilia?).

A New Conversation, Retrofit or Redesign

The Exhibition

Retrofit or Redesign
A provocative exhibit at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), Foreclosed, wants to change that, by insisting that suburban single-family homes have played a role in the foreclosure crisis. Curated by Barry Bergdoll and produced in less than three years (lightning-fast for large museums like MoMA), Foreclosed presents five architectural projects that rethink the suburbs from their economic underpinnings to their aesthetic character. But while the exhibit’s thesis that sprawl is toxic jives with that of many urbanists, the architectural remedies on display seem almost as problematic.

But Foreclosed seethes with disdain for the suburbs, and the lack of an empathetic understanding of how the suburbs function and are changing, ultimately makes the exhibit look less visionary than ignorant. As an urban dweller who is deeply frustrated by the social, economic and environmental consequences of sprawl and car-centered communities, I too want to see clever ways of retrofitting these parts of the country. But saying that, I wish the exhibit had improved upon the suburbs rather than suggest transforming them beyond recognition.

This outsider perspective on the suburbs is the exhibit’s crucial flaw and inevitably influenced the architects to propose interventions in suburbia that have all the grace of a superblock in the middle of the city grid. Despite their good intentions, their efforts at sustainability and their smart alternatives to homeownership, the architects’ wrath for the suburbs has caused them to create projects that annihilate the suburbs rather than improve them.

In order to change the narrative of the American Dream, the teams have attacked it. With the exception of Andrew Zago’s project in Rialto, California that retains a cul-de-sac structure while beefing up the housing density, these projects are aggressively anti-suburban in their form.

These fanciful responses seem most ignorant of a basic cause of the foreclosure crisis: With cheap money, we simply overbuilt the country. Even without building new homes, we are still probably a few years away from reaching a point of real demand that will drive the housing market. The problem in The Oranges isn’t that it needs new housing or buildings—The Oranges lost almost 10 percent of their population between 2000 and 2010—but rather that it needs people with jobs. Unfortunately none of Foreclosed’s projects propose ways of removing housing, an incredibly difficult but important task that has stymied communities from Detroit to Phoenix.

It’s important to take a long view of the suburban/urban divide and realize that the pendulum has by now swung all the way to cities and may be swinging back to the ‘burbs. Poverty, unemployment and environmental degradation are now facing cities and suburbs in equal measure. But there are good reasons to expect that the suburbs, with their ethnic diversity, will become increasingly vibrant places. By contrast, you look at places like New York where...

Urbanists should look beyond the simplistic view that suburbs are, ipso facto, unsustainable. Los Angeles, especially one of the country’s largest suburbs, also has one of the country’s lowest carbon emission rates when counting transportation and residential energy usage. More important than reducing car emissions may be to reduce the amount of energy derived from coal and increase alternative energy.

We need to stop demonizing the suburbs and start recognizing that we are all in this together. Is it better to annihilate suburbia or perfect it? Pragmatic solutions, like changing zoning to encourage density, more sustainable landscaping and agriculture, could be relatively easy to enact and would go a long way to improving the vitality of the suburbs.

These radical visions that are so insensitive to the suburbs remind me of the Modernist public housing projects that were once foisted on inner cities. Created by well-intentioned but essentially ignorant architects and planners, those buildings made sense in theory but not in practice. They didn’t respond to the rhythms and needs of the people who would be housed there, because the architects didn’t really respect or understand the lives of poor people. MoMA should have found some architects who could love and live in the suburbs, showing us the way to make the most of suburban housing instead of wishing it didn’t exist.
While I do happen to live on a cul-de-sac, I live in an inner-ring suburb of Washington DC. I walk to the metro and use it everyday to get to downtown DC. I only drive my car on the weekends. Supermarkets and stores are (finally) being built so that my neighborhood will become completely walkable within the next year or so.

**Sprawl Repair**

Ms. Lind correctly states that we should avoid the simplistic view of suburbia, but then asks the simplistic question of whether it’s better to annihilate it or perfect it. Pragmatic solutions will include both, as well as many other approaches.

“Sprawl” might be a better word to use than “suburb.” Not all suburbs are sprawl — in fact, some suburbs are already perfect as they are, while some sprawl will unfortunately need to be annihilated. Others will require different approaches. The key is to analyze each place, ideally beginning at the regional level, and identify the needs, opportunities, and measures to be taken. Ellen Dunham-Jones said as much in the article published on this site one day before (http://goo.gl/qK5p9).

The Sprawl Repair Manual (sprawlrepair.com) (http://goo.gl/BgICw) provides the practical solutions Ms. Lind refers to. They include techniques for analyzing (from the region to the building), planning, zoning, designing, financing, and implementing the repair of sprawl.

**doober**

LA has low residential carbon emission rates because people there don’t need to heat their homes. It works because of the climate.
With this exhibit, MoMA heightens an awareness of the U.S. foreclosure problem via architecture, design, and planning, albeit a niche perspective. This exhibit both inspires and provokes. Depending on who's telling the foreclosure story: the promises of government and bankers, the opinions of economists and media, the taut tales of the foreclosed, our planners are hardwired dreamers raising questions, presenting the what-ifs, creating visions and realities that can inspire. Ironically, the woeful boarded up homes that are seen everywhere as we drive through neighborhoods, dreaded by those who own housing near the monuments of foreclosure, are also needed reminders and initiators at this juncture that there is still much to do and more what-ifs are desirable.
The Exhibition, Quality of Life

For me, the most interesting shared idea in "Foreclosed" came in the form of lists. The task embedded in "Simultaneous City," the project led by architects Michael Bell and Eunjeong Seong of Visible Weather is the identification of what people really like about suburban living and the question, Can they do that with less? Their list includes outdoor space, privacy, and room to move. Their solution involved a higher-density, energy-efficient mixed use development, owned in common by the citizens via a public REIT.

What is it that you really need? the architects ask. And How long will you need it? Their responses are flexible spaces and flexible financial instruments, a clever response to the frustration one feels over homeless here and empty houses there, people with too much space and those with too little. These are necessary questions, and there is no doubt architects need to be involved from the beginning with finding answers. The fact that every team felt the need to redesign the ownership structure of the suburbs, as well as the suburban home, indicates a willingness to go beyond the aesthetic that is one of the best reveals of this MoMA series.

And yet, one can't discount the aesthetic. I can't visualize an REIT, can you? And the museum clearly felt they couldn't exhibit one. Part of the rationale for bringing architects in early is not just to shake up the suburban form, but to offer a visible alternative model. Deconstructing the bungalow is all well and good, but what if I love my front porch? When you ask me to live with less, how much are you really taking away? Which is why the models, which dutifully occupy the center of the gallery, are such a disappointment. Instead of getting me excited for a hybrid town-country, work-play-walk-bike future, they read as architectural shorthand. The recent vogue for shipping container architecture has made the studio practice of treating program as blocks as a form of 3D sketching into real buildings.
The Exhibition, Quality of Life, Reference and Comparison

Diana Lind wrote a fairly heated denunciation of the exhibition at Next American City; I didn’t feel the architects involved “demonized” the suburbs, but I also didn’t see a natural bridge between the visions and blueprints. I wonder if the show might have been stronger if it had stopped short of asking the architects to build new towns, which end up looking and sounding a lot like new Brookylns. Three stories, home offices, granny flats, walkable. That’s my life, but many of my friends don’t want it.

As Justin Davidson pointed out in New York Magazine, there’s still a chasm between urban architects and suburban architecture, and part of getting out of the foreclosed mess is not only creating a better checklist but one in a form people are willing to buy, rent or lease. That’s why the Wieden+Kennedy ads were so brilliant. Impossible to look away, they offered you an emotional investment in the new American dream ... without having to show you the house.

Retrofitting the American Dream in a flat world

Carl W. Smith
02.26.12 at 07:29

I hate the over developed suburban wasteland, having grown up in a small town in eastern PA. Shortly after developers cut down the apple orchard at the end of my street to build more houses I escaped to art school. Ironically I grew up in a town that had a lot of history & culture — where American folk artist Edward Hicks painted the Peaceable Kingdom. In that Newtown, which is a very old American town, I learned a few things. If we combine a time for work (the lion), a time for home (the lamb) and a time for culture (the horse) we will rediscover the American Dream. Our Dream just needs a little pruning to flourish.

I agree with Ellen Dunham’s optimistic ideas for retrofitting suburbia. She touches on the idea of people having a third place to go to after the home and the workplace. We need to develop this idea. The only thing I would add to Ellen’s summary is to build equestrian centers on public land through out the American suburban landscape to add culture to the town centers. People need a place to meet and reconnect. We need to get back on the horse and rediscover our culture.

Thank you for your post.

OK. Perhaps building equestrian centers may be a bazaar idea and taking the American dream idea to an extreme, but re-greening suburbia and adding some local food as Ellen Dunham’s recommends would certainly help point us in the right direction.

Carl W. Smith
02.26.12 at 11:50

One of the answers to “what is it that you really need?” is, probably, NOT architects. Since well over 90% of the building in America is done without the aid of an architect, it seems that, particularly in the foreclosed suburbs, an architect is a luxury, a status symbol, and one of the first things to be cut.

Certainly architects can bring value to a project—but, in most cases, its not monetary value, and in fact it usually adds quite a bit of cost.

Rice
03.02.12 at 03:31

Internet Banter

American Dream, Cities and Suburbs, The Exhibition

American Dream, Reference and Comparison, Retrofit or Redesign

Jobs, The Market, Professional Practice
Cities and Suburbs, Internet Banter, The Market


Breakfast links: Phones

Second look at suburbs: A new MoMA exhibit ties suburbs to the foreclosure crisis, but Diana Lind argues that we need to stop demonizing the suburbs; and think about how to improve, not abolish, suburbia. (Next American City)
Land Use and Density

Cities and Suburbs, Government and Policy

Land Use and Density

Challenge of Suburbia, Government and Policy

Foreclosed: February 2012

re: Second look at the suburbs:
We need to stop demonizing the suburbs and start recognizing that we are all in this together. Is it better to annihilate suburbia or perfect it? Pragmatic solutions, like changing zoning to encourage density, more sustainable landscaping and agriculture, could be relatively easy to enact and would go a long way to improving the vitality of the suburbs.

I think this misses the critique by a long shot. The problem of the suburbs is not that it’s being demonized, and being “nicer” to the suburbs ain’t going to redeem them.

The suburbs will be “fixed” when an overwhelming political majority of suburbanites buy into the “pragmatic solutions” the author listed. The question is whether that will happen or not. That someone somewhere made fun of Applebee’s is irrelevant.

What stuns me, though, is the claim that things like zoning changes would be “relatively easy to enact”. In the absence of democracy this is clearly the case. That’s not the world we live in, though. Hell, DC has arguably one of the most liberal, pro-urban voting populations in the country, and implementing such changes here, in the heart of the city, are almost impossible.

(As an example, there’s been an almost decade long struggle to allow a 2000 square foot day care facility to operate just north of Lincoln Park on Capitol Hill. There was angry resistance when neighbors found the newly opened Hill Center planned on allowing wedding receptions until midnight. The examples are endless).

The idea that it will be relatively easy” to get existing suburban homeowners on board with such radically changes of policy is naive. Frankly, I’m stunned whenever a place like DC or Arlington manages to eke out a minor pro-urbanist victory. The cynic in me says meaningful change in the suburbs are orders of magnitude more difficult, and is contingent on outside factors like resource depletion. And there’s a further argument to be made that a suburbs without the resources to maintain itself certainly hasn’t got the resources to reinvent itself.

by oboe on Feb 22, 2012 10:20 am • link • report

I was just reminded but yesterday on tv during a commercial break there was a story about how both the MD. and VA. agreed to start talking about a new potomac bridge.

Re: the suburbs. Again, its not suburbs that should be demonized, it’s sprawl. There is a difference despite the fact that suburbs and sprawl have mostly gone hand in hand for a long time.

by Canaan on Feb 22, 2012 10:41 am • link • report

@ oboe “Frankly, I’m stunned whenever a place like DC or Arlington manages to eke out a minor pro-urbanist victory. The cynic in me says meaningful change in the suburbs are orders of magnitude more difficult, and is contingent on outside factors like resource depletion. And there’s a further argument to be made that a suburbs without the resources to maintain itself certainly hasn’t got the resources to reinvent itself.”

Arlington is only out of the category of “suburban” (to the extent it is) due to the large scale urbanist victories there.

in fact lots of suburban jurisdictions are making urbanist changes -in greater DC (excluding arlington and City of Alex as urban) we have them in Fairfax, in City of Falls Church, in McCo, and even in PG (and even a tiny bit in Loudoun). Now, those are often only in select locations, or are balanced by anturbanist decisions. But see, that’s where the demonization blinds people - if you can accept that auto centric suburbia is going to continue to be the preferred way to live for many (possibly the majority) then the fact that only 5-10% say, of Fairfax, is going to end up walkable TOD may be an acceptable result.

As for demonization mattering to the political process, I think it does. I have participated in such discussions with fellow NoVans, and I think the more extreme viewpoints including have left people very defensive, and believing things about urbanism that give ammo the anturbanists, and make their job of persuasion easier. These include the impressions that urbanists believe A. that everyone should be carfree B. that no one should live in a SFH C. That everyplace on Greater Washington outside of the district is “bad” regardless of density, etc, etc.

Obviously there are larger, real issues that drive suburban politics, not just these discourse focused issues, and obviously there are issues in the discourse on these issues that are...
I think the more extreme viewpoints including have left people very defensive, and believing things about urbanism that give ammo the antiurbanists, and make their job of persuasion easier.

By way of a comparison: gay people have been struggling for marriage equality for decades now. Many cultural conservatives are very angry about this, and feel their way of life is under assault. It’s a difficult thing to persuade them. Frequently, you’ll see footage of some gay pride parade somewhere, which is repeated on a loop for the express purpose of stoking this outrage.

Do gay pride parades make arguing for gay marriage more difficult? Of course. But that’s not the fundamental problem.

Same goes for environmentalism: if it weren’t for that guy with dreadlocks on that college campus somewhere in the midwest who goes on about Gaia, would folks like George Will have signed on to “cap and trade” by now?

If no one ever said anything mean about suburban cul-de-sacs on GGW, do you think the Randall O’Toole’s of the world would cease talking about shadowy urbanists trying to take away your car? Or UN initiatives that threaten our freedom? After all, that’s where your average “man on the street” gets such nonsense, not because they read some urbanist gaffly in the comments section of an obscure blog somewhere.

Cmon. Municipalities are trying to retrofit to urbanism because the experts feel they don’t have a choice, long-term. But industries (and that includes conservative political parties) that benefit from suburban sprawl will fight with every fiber of their being to prevent that from happening. Do you really think the Rush Limbaughs of the world are going to find TOO religion if the David Alpers of the world start praising ample parking?

Sure there are individuals with essentially zero influence who bad-mouth suburbia, and that may register with the very, very few people who read GGW, but in the larger debate, they’re hardly even background noise.

@oboe

I’m not concerned about randall otooiole and Rush limbaugh - im concerned about my neighbors in Fairfax county. And yes, they do hear the memes floating around - GGW may have a small audience, but they see this stuff in City Data, in City Paper, etc, etc.

WRT to gay pride parades - presumably they help individuals finding their identities. I presume urbanists have no such needs, as a general rule.

And yeah, I would suggest that over the top environmentalism ("industry must die" types) DO impact the conversation on cap and trade.

yes, there are powerful lobbies against the kinds of changes a place like FFX needs. There are ALSO powerful lobbies for, including owners of land that is suitable for high density development. When those powerful forces clash, the inclinations of the citizenry can matter. And yes, the belief by some folks who dont listen to Rush that urbanism is about demonizing their way of life, is an obstacle.

Re: fixing the suburbs

The author's jimmies seem to be particularly rustled at the thought of replacing cul-de-sacs with a cold, urban grid. "The winding cul-de-sac roads are then met with a grid form. This disrespect for the rhythms of a suburban lifestyle...". We do not need a grid of streets to fix the suburbs, or so he argues.

Actually, you kinda do. IMO, the cul-de-sacs are part of the core of the problem. A landscape
Actually, you kinda do. IMHO, the cul-de-sacs are part of the core of the problem. A landscape that is very permeable for walkers and cyclists is essential. A grid of streets makes it much easier/faster to walk from one place to another. A grid of streets is easier to mentally map. The author doesn’t really understand what makes the city different from the burbs.

by Amber on Feb 22, 2012 12:14 pm • link • report

@booe - Municipalities are trying to retrofit to urbanism because the experts feel they don’t have a choice, long-term.

Do you mean in terms of the long view on sustainability wrt energy and health? B/c I think part of the short term motivation for the retro-fit is economic factors; e.g., demand, attracting/retaining people by providing what the “market” indicates people want, etc.

by Tina on Feb 22, 2012 12:38 pm • link • report

@AWalker, But see, thats where the demonization blinds people...and I think the more extreme viewpoints including have left people very defensive, and believing things about urbanism that give ammo to the antiurbanists, and make their job of persuasion easier. These include the impressions that urbanists believe A. that everyone should be carfree B. That no one should live in a SFH C. That everyplace on Greater Washington outside of the district is “bad” regardless of density, etc., etc...I find the distortion of urbanism involved in those memes particularly troubling. It makes a sophisticated vision of a reinvented metropolitan america sound like the ravings of naive hipsters.

Well you’ve surely said a mouthful here and it is as reasonable and objective and nonconfrontational as they come. The problem is, you’ll still have people defending (maybe naturally) the idea that “well that’s not us, we’re just trying to better xyz.”

I can’t tell you the number of times I’ve heard similar sentiments shared by DC residents who don’t consider themselves “urbanists” but do rely on their cars and in cases, transit.

by HogWash on Feb 22, 2012 12:57 pm • link • report

Do you mean in terms of the long view on sustainability wrt energy and health? B/c I think part of the short term motivation for the retro-fit is economic factors; e.g., demand, attracting/retaining people by providing what the “market” indicates people want, etc.

No, absolutely. You make a good point about what’s driving the short-term urgency. I was thinking in terms of “what happens if the deadlock can’t be broken”. Eventually that which can’t be sustained comes to an end.

What we have now is a deadlock between market forces (and owners of developable property as AWalker pointed out) on the one hand, and existing owners (call them NIMBYs at the risk of starting a fight). Of course, the property owners are few, and potential residents don’t necessarily get a vote. So obviously the influence of existing owners is large.

Anyway, I think you see the defenders of the status quo harnessing the power of the culture war. That’s why, in my opinion, it makes little sense to say, “I don’t care what [the WSJ editorial page] says, I care what my neighbors think.” The debate is informed (and distorted) by the big outlets. Not to be too cynical, but your neighbors thing what the WSJ/Wapo editorial page tells them to. And that goes for the city as well as the suburbs.

As far as ambient city-mouse/country-mouse trash-talking goes (“they insulted Franconia in the City Paper!”), I doubt we’ll ever be completely free of that. My guess is that cultural trends (and hopefully not decreasing quality of life) will be what drives the transformation of these “urbanizing nodes” in the suburbs.

by oboe on Feb 22, 2012 1:01 pm • link • report

Municipalities are trying to retrofit to urbanism because the experts feel they don’t have a choice, long-term.

I think the disconnect between the urbanists and many suburbanites is in the intensity of belief. Plenty of suburbanites think that a transformation to a more urban form would be good but think it’s way off-base to say that without such a transformation, the burbs will fail. It would be similar to saying that DC cannot be successful or sustainable without radical change in its public education system. Obviously, it would be great if DC schools got a lot better but I don’t see another collapse happening for DC anytime soon, with or without better schools.

The Exhibition

Lena Beug at MoMA

Holiday Films’ director Lena Beug’s latest project, Nature City, premiered last week at the MoMA as part of the exhibition, Foreclosed: Rehousing the American Dream.

The exhibition is an exploration of new architectural possibilities for American cities and suburbs in the wake of the recent housing crisis. The spots, directed by Beug for urban planning firm WORKac via Wieden+Kennedy, New York, promote a theoretical environmentally friendly housing community in Oregon.

The aesthetic of the spots, with their clean and simplistic art direction and locked-down shots, reflects the back-to-basics nature of the project.

Who better to realize those alternatives than architects? According to Bergdoll, the mandate of Foreclosed is “to reveal that design is central to solving” America’s housing crisis. The architects he and Martin chose—three of them Columbia faculty members—formed teams with economists, ecologists, activists, engineers and developers to develop new ideas for America’s declining suburbs.

Henry: We took the plans out to Orange in Essex County, which has one of the state’s highest foreclosure rates.

Woman on Street: [looking at images] I really like it.

Man on Street: [looking at images] Fantastic.

Woman on Street: [looking at images] “Sounds like something from the Jetsons.”


Poppy Harlow (PH): Looking at life after the foreclosure crisis, the exhibit reimagines how we live.

PH: It’s creative, but how is it a solution to foreclosures?

Barry Bergdoll (BB): The show, I should say, in general is not trying to solve the mortgage crisis. That’s for the banks to sort out. We’re saying that, since we also have learned from it, that the way we build is part and parcel of this massive foreclosure crisis.

PH: We took the plans out to Orange in Essex County, which has one of the state’s highest foreclosure rates.

Woman on Street: [looking at images] I really like it.
Man on Street: [looking at images] Fantastic.
Woman 2 on Street: [looking at images] Sounds like something from the Jetsons.

PH [Voice over]: Orange Mayor Eldridge Hawkins had not yet seen the plans.
[to Mayor Eldridge Hawkins (EH)]: Could it help solve the crisis?
EH: I think it's a novel idea. I think it might be a little bit more futuristic, something down the road, but the theme in and of itself is not that strange or different than what we're trying to establish here.

PH: So will be buildings in the streets be next?
EH: Maybe in the future, but I will say directly answering your question: The entire city of Orange will not be a carless community.
Chris Hayes (CH): Part of what makes Detroit so symbolically powerful is the fact that it is the birthplace of the American car, and the car is one of the two pillars of the American Dream. The other, of course, is the detached single-family home. Such structures make up almost two-thirds of the nation’s housing stock, but more than that, the single-family home is an essential plot point in the story of the American Dream. We all know how it goes: you spend your twenties renting, aimless. You meet someone you love. You marry, settle down, get a career, and get a mortgage on a single-family home in a suburb with a good school district and enough space for children. Of course, it was this aspiration that provided fuel for the maniacal engine of destruction that was the great housing securitization machine that Wall Street built during the last decade. The trauma of the housing bubble, and then the financial crisis and the foreclosure epidemic it has left in its wake, has created a landscape of ruin and abandonment. Half-completed developments of McMansions dot exurban cornfields. Blocks of vacant, boarded-up homes blight neighborhoods in inner-ring suburbs. And all of this forces us to reassess our fundamental adherence to the single-family suburban home as the cornerstone of American life. In a brilliant new exhibition at New York’s Museum of Modern Art, five teams of architects were each assigned a suburban community with a higher foreclosure rate than the national average and asked to imagine in the design a vision for what sustainable, vibrant, post-crisis communities could be if we rethink our most fundamental beliefs about the American house.

Michael Bell (MB): We were asked by the Museum to work on a site called Temple Terrace, Florida. It’s the northeast corner of Tampa, and a little town. It’s 22,000 people. It was an incorporated city in 1926. It preceded the growth of Tampa. Tampa eventually came to meet Temple Terrace, in a kind of typical American situation where something that was very rural became urban, “quasi-urban” one could say. Temple Terrace actually had a relatively low foreclosure rate: 168 foreclosures in a town of 10,000 households. So, in looking at all of this, it actually became much more of a scenario of looking at “How did Temple Terrace operate historically? Financially? What was its density?” Etc., etc. It became much more of a project about trying to produce a future that would be more secure against those kinds of problems, rather than being immediately reactive to the problem now. And I think that’s true for the whole exhibition.

CH: I cannot tell you how much I love this exhibit. I just thought it was really fascinating to start thinking in these terms. And in some ways it brings the discussion we’ve had in Detroit—which is a discussion about “How do you take this moment of crisis and ruin and abandonment and turn it into an opportunity to kind of rethink things?”—to the national level where we have communities … some of these communities that were assigned have foreclosure rates as high as thirteen, fourteen, fifteen percent. Tell me about what your team did, where you were assigned to look at, and how you started to think about what kind of place you would design in the wake of the foreclosure crisis.

MB: […] In the 1990s you had a booming economy, you had a kind of push to alter, if not end, the welfare state. By the 2000s, you have a financial crisis that starts to shake things. And then what do you do? You do something about it. You get the people you’re working with on the ground who are thinking about these problems, whether it’s the city council who are thinking about them, the people who are affected by them. And then you get the people who are working on the national scene to think about this. And I think that’s the key part of this exhibit. You do this kind of rethinking of what the American Dream is, of what the American house is, of how to make sure you have a financial policy that’s going to take care of people in this country, of how to make sure you have a kind of social compact that’s going to enable the American Dream to be accomplished.
Comments on Foreclosed

TS: It's about $80 for homelessness. A bigger expenditure on the federal level than, for example, funding for HUD, a huge amount of American housing public housing at some level. It's a far more complex housing issue academically, and that deduction makes basically a tax incentive out of something.

MB: [...] One of the big points of the show for anyone who deals with housing, taxation, and mortgage interest deduction that helps produce this. There is a public policy structure, particularly the mortgage interest deduction, that gives rise to the American suburb and the single-family home, which doesn't exist without that deduction that helps produce this.

CH: The future of the American home and the American Dream which are sort of married together, I think. One of the things this exhibition makes you think about is the underlying financial structure and policy structure that gives rise to the American suburb and the single-family home, because we all think of it as “They grow like corn in cornfields, right?” Particularly during the housing bubble, where I was living in Chicago, you'd go eighty miles west, and they are. They're just being built, and it's almost like an organic process. No one said, “Oh. Let there be McMansions. Let there be sub-developments.” But actually there is a structure underneath. Partly during the housing bubble, where I was living in Chicago, you'd go eighty miles west, and they are. They're just being built, and it's almost like an organic process. No one said, “Oh. Let there be McMansions. Let there be sub-developments.”

MB: [...] I think most of the people in this exhibition are quite positive and excited about the suburbs. We know it's a deeply, deeply important part of the American ethos, if not just everyday life of course. But, they're not inevitable. And the financial underpinnings of them have really dramatically shifted in the last five, ten, fifteen years—not just the last two.

CH: Talk about that R&D thing. You made a point in the video in the exhibition that blew my mind about the comparison between how much money in R&D goes into your iPhone or anti-lock brakes versus an American home.

MB: I did mention anti-lock brakes. For many commodities, before they hit the market, there are billions of dollars that might precede it, whether it's Clorox or whether it's an iPhone or a Honda Civic which is quite an ingenious product. Housing as we know it has kind of ironed all of that out of it, and it did it a long time ago. [...] They are paying Mercedes Benz prices for a twenty-year-old used car. The single-family house market atomizes out all of the financial processes, and you still are spending large sums of money, but you're not getting the sophisticated product. It's not that it's not a nice product or something people love, but it could be much, much better in energy and everything else.

Thomas Schaller (TS): Are you envisioning a resuburbanization of America in the next twenty or thirty years? At its peak, houses got gluttonous and big, and the physical footprints that those houses were sitting on got really big. So, I'm wondering if it's going to be smaller plots? Smaller homes? A little bit of both?

CH: Increased density?

MB: All five projects in the show deal with density, and they also deal with trying to find housing that is probably more financially and size-wise appropriate to its user, but also that would use dramatically less energy to basically dramatically lower carrying costs. But I think many of the people, including ourselves, we were looking at ways to take underutilized property, publicly held or publicly controlled, and increase density around infrastructure because the public has already paid for all of that infrastructure and isn't using it.

CH: The future of the American home and the American Dream which are sort of married together, I think. One of the things this exhibition makes you think about is the underlying financial structure and policy structure that gives rise to the American suburb and the single-family home, because we all think of it as “They grow like corn in cornfields, right?” Particularly during the housing bubble, where I was living in Chicago, you'd go eighty miles west, and they are. They're just being built, and it's almost like an organic process. No one said, “Oh. Let there be McMansions. Let there be sub-developments.” But actually there is a structure underneath. There is a public policy structure, particularly the mortgage interest deduction that helps produce this.
The future of the American home and the American Dream, which are sort of married together, I think. One of the things this exhibition makes you think about is the underlying financial structure and policy structure that gives rise to the American suburb and the single-family home, because we all think of it as “They grow like corn in cornfields, right?” Particularly during the housing bubble, where I was living in Chicago, you’d go eighty miles west, and they are. They’re just being built, and it’s almost like an organic process. No one said, “Oh. Let there be McMansions. Let there be subdevelopments.” But actually there is a structure underneath. There is a public policy structure, particularly the mortgage interest deduction that helps produce this.

One of the big points of the show for anyone who deals with housing issues academically is, yeah, that deduction makes basically a huge amount of American housing public housing at some level. It’s a far bigger expenditure on the federal level than, for example, funding for HUD for homelessness.

It’s about $80 billion. Low-income housing tax credits, I think, are probably $30 billion. So, the federal government at this point in time really does not build directly public housing any longer. It incentivizes it through tax credits.

And it incentivizes for people to purchase their own homes and take out a lot of debt, the interest of which they can then take off against their taxes.

Victoria Defrancesco Soto (VDS): I also think there’s the emotional part of it. How do you roll back half a century of the American Dream? I mean, what type of public service announcements are you going to put forward? “The American Dream has changed…" I mean, that’s even a bigger challenge. It’s a huge challenge.

CH: One of the other architects, Jeanne Gang, who did a project in Cicero in the exhibit, makes this great point that I never thought about in these terms. She said that you’re sort of making a casino bet when you buy a house. You’re betting that it’s going to rise in value. That was a bet that a lot of people made, and now they’re on the wrong side of that bet. But, you’re also betting about what your life is going to look like. How many people are going to inhabit that house? You’re putting money down—you’re putting all your wealth in most cases—into this structure that says, “I am going to be married with the two kids and the dog” or whatever. And the fact is that new family members come in as immigrants possibly or you get divorced or you lose your job or your kids have to move back because they can’t get jobs. So the house is insufficiently flexible to deal with the changing American family.

MB: People have looked toward changing or improving the suburbs for a long time. You can go back to the 1970s, and academics are often lambasted for not being sensitive about it. But the reason I’m bringing this up is that what is different at this point in time is everything from globalization in terms of where is production happening, what are the jobs. When you talk about housing, you ultimately always—even if you’re an architect—end up talking about jobs. What will secure that loan in the future? So, flexibility comes in. But the difference now, I think, is that what people realize… And the foreclosure crisis is an awful thing, it is absolutely a crisis, but it does start to create a situation where people start to imagine that what we have is not inevitable. And, in fact, it was produced, and it was dreamed. I think, people don’t like change in housing, and they should worry about change in housing, but what we have is also not terribly secure. And, so, I think that’s what you’re bringing up, and Jeanne was bringing that up quite brilliantly.

CH: One of the things I think Detroit forces us to think of is the fact that the things we think are natural are contingent.

Bob Herbert (BH): What’s going to inevitably happen is that the American Dream is going to get redefined if it survives. But we’re moving ahead into a landscape where standards of living in general in this country are just going to be lower, and then I assume that housing becomes an integral part of that.
TS: The mortgage deduction incentivizes buying the biggest lot you can and putting the biggest, 3,000-square-foot house that you can on it. Bob is right. If we're going to move to a future where that's not what the model is—it's maybe scaled down a little bit more, maybe more demure—then, we should reincentivize the way the tax cut—

MB: There's the Glass-Steagall Act which segregated commercial and investment banking. There's the Wagner-Steagall Act which funded public housing. Steagall was on both.

CH: Interesting.

MB: It's very interesting.

CH: Now we've got huge conglomerate banks and no public housing.

CH: The other question is whether we'll see the market begin to produce smaller homes in the wake of this crisis, whether there's going to be a lesson learned there, or if we're just going to start the old Wurlitzer up again and try to dance like we did in the last decade?

MB: I personally think that the people that invest in housing will be fearful of investing in the old versions of housing and they're going to look for a new product to invest in.

The Hypothesis has already affected the real world with MoMA's Foreclosed exhibition, an art/architecture exhibition which takes Diotima's PowerPoint case studies of a few suburbs around the United States and imagines alternate futures for five of them. Read Foreclosed's inspiration, The Buell Hypothesis, in its entirety at the Buell Center's site.


Image Credit: Not provided in publication.

Gary Gibson, Minneapolis, Minnesota...
Building in the streets...

The modern city is one built around a sprawling network of roads for cars. The cities are also serviced and linked by federal highways. This system encourages anti-pedestrian development: things in the cities themselves are spaced too far apart to manage without a car and completely car-dependent "separation of uses" development results with cul-de-sac housing pods and strip malls along the highway.

This is just as much a government-spawned mess as the mortgage crisis itself. When you bring up the idea of stateless societies, one of the very first things people ask is "What about infrastructure and roads?" The answer is that a stateless society would have a very different physical setup. Roads may be needed a lot less... or not at all.

We would argue that neither case is true. We would argue that suburban sprawl is a horribly inefficient (i.e. unsustainably expensive) physical arrangement that free markets would never have allowed to develop the way it did.

(This is proving as faulty as the government's attempts to pitch home buying — with increasingly long payment times — as an investment instead of what it really is: debt-based consumption of a durable good.)

The curators at MOMA are definitely thinking about the box. They are not thinking beyond the old arrangements. We are pretty sure they are not thinking of a stateless city per se... but they are thinking beyond the crutch that governments insist governments must provide: roads.

When the CNN reporter working on this report took the ideas to the people on the street in Orange, NJ, one person remarked, "Sounds like something from the Jetsons." How right they are!
That's the idea, good patrons. Free markets don't just mean liberty. They also mean progress. They mean development that turns unseen worlds out of science fiction into reality.

Suburbs, Jetsons style: MoMA remaps America [SLIDESHOW]

Thoughts on MoMA’s “Foreclosed” exhibition challenged designers to reexamine the American Dream. See what changed. bit.ly/wqFwE

@richardpietro Which makes this exhibit by MoMA so interesting: bit.ly/yq8SPY 1/2

We live in a society for the last half of a century based on the idea of suburbia as the “American Dream”—the dream of owning a house with a white-picket fence and the fresh green lawn. Lately this dream is either nonexistent or fading away in most Americans. The need to change the entitlements and essentially rewrite the home equity system for housing will allow the owners to "play" with programming and developing types. Thus, will create a new coding system and modify what the definition of a standard lot is. People can then rent and own spaces at the same time rather than just one or the other. Cooperative housing for families to share spaces (such as kitchens, laundry room, etc) is a common thought throughout each and every design and is one of the many ways to redefine housing.
Can I live here? Keizer, ORE. at MoMA.org bit.ly/x3QsTu

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March 2012
In placing an emphasis on socially and environmentally conscious subjects, two New York museums must address the challenges of presentation.

ARCHITECTURAL EXHIBITIONS aimed at a general audience are hard to pull off. Small-scale representations—photographs, models, drawings, and, increasingly, video—can only approximate the sense of the full-size work. Like art objects, they need to captivate the museum visitor while acknowledging the thicket of constraints—program, site, budget—that shape the form. If the projects have a socially or environmentally conscious dimension, the challenge is tougher. The display may lack the wow factor—the visual panache of extravagantly innovative or elegant architectural works and objects that make museum visitors stop in their tracks. And the danger lurks that providing the necessary information to appreciate the projects displayed will make the show look like a walk-in book.

Like the Rising Currents show, the Foreclosed exhibition put MoMA in an activist role, actually commissioning speculative solutions, developed through a workshop process. Bergdoll, who organized the project with Reinhold Martin, Director of Columbia University’s Temple Hoyne Buell Center for the Study of American Architecture, isolated five geographical areas in the U.S., from Florida to California, where the banking mortgage crisis of 2007–08 led to stalled projects and swaths of vacant homes...
The Exhibition

As is typical in socially oriented exhibitions, Foreclosed includes a good deal of nonvisual material: One gallery is devoted solely to presenting data underpinning the show’s program.

Internet Banter

suzanne stephens wrote:
Please sign your name at the end of your comment. We find signed comments are more helpful than purely "anonymous" ones. Thank you,
Suzanne Stephens, Deputy Editor, AR
3/5/2012 10:03 AM CST

Internet Banter

Anonymous wrote:
Please sign your name as anonymous, as a protest against the "identity hall monitors" who stubbornly and disrespectfully refuse to recognize the value of and right to anonymity in public discourse.
3/7/2012 2:18 AM CST

Internet Banter

Anonymous wrote:
Why would socially and/or eco-conscious projects not be able to document their work in such a way as to hang in an art gallery? Photographers take pictures of conventionally looking buildings and make them look beautiful all the time. Why couldn’t they show incredibly detailed models, at enormous scales, like we see from the ever-despised "star-architects"? I see no reason why socially and eco-consciously focused firms shouldn’t be able to fill a gallery space. Every architect should have a design process and a documentation process that is artful and ready to show. In my opinion, the entire process of making architecture is what makes it architecture. The process has to be artful. But I don’t think there’s any reason simple or even conventional buildings that are focused on other issues than high-design (like the environment or social problems) can’t document the process of creating them in a very modern and artistic way. It’s not like these socially/eco-consciously focused architects don’t know what good graphic design looks like. There’s no limit on how artistic a socially-minded architect can be with their process and documentation. Even conventional looking buildings can be documented in unusual and conventionally beautiful ways. People do it all the time in the very first photography classes they take. Architects who do socially and eco-consciously focused work need to seduce the kind of people who go to MoMA and bother with exhibits like this, because they’re often going to be the clients for doing more work like it. I’d say the seduction of a well considered/artistic design and documentation process is a moral imperative for socially minded architects, if they want to make big change and affect things at a large scale.
3/7/2012 2:32 AM CST

The Exhibition

Anonymous wrote:
While I very much appreciate MoMA’s and the Smithsonian Cooper Hewitt’s efforts to infuse activism more forcefully into their programs, I have been unsatisfied with exactly the topic of this article - their modes of display. Anonymous - I couldn’t disagree more that exhibiting a “socially conscious” project (such as the schools or transportation systems included in “Small Scale, Big Change” for example) is exactly the same as exhibiting a “conventional” building (perhaps a high-end residential building here in New York). As Ms. Stephens acknowledges, what’s supposedly on display in an exhibition about architecture is much more than the form of the building. And it is exactly the differences between these complex political, economic, and cultural processes in the so-called developing world that make these projects worth trying to understand. Unfortunately, and this is where I disagree with Ms. Stephens, the exhibitions here under analysis do little to differentiate how a high-end residential tower in New York and a school in West Africa are summed up and displayed to an unfamiliar public. For me, the title of the article has yet to be proven, and the subtitle remains as an unfulfilled challenge for these institutions within what is otherwise a worthy cause.

3/7/2012 9:26 AM CST

Jacob Moore, New York, NY
Academic Hubris, The Exhibition, Liberal versus Conservative, Reference and Comparison

Professional Practice, Reference and Comparison

Government and Policy, Reference and Comparison, Silliness and Seriousness

Internet Banter

Anonymous wrote:

In a world with an ever diminishing attention span, notoriety is best achieved with one-liner gimmicks featuring a calculated mix of simplistic graphics, pseudo-intellectual pretension and the requisite shock value that appeals primarily to adolescents. Fashionable nonsense and superficiality trumps substance every time. We've seen it from Vilé Radeau to Pratt Igoe and to other slums designed by self-styled "intellectuals" lacking the compassion and talent to create meaningful places and homes. "Foreclosed", the latest incarnation of ill-informed ideas rooted in the abstract ruminations of amateurs with (mostly) little or no real world building experience, fits this sad mold exactly. Remarkable principally for its lack of insight in the research and dignity on the end products, it comes across as the work of self-indulgent poseurs proposing novelty for novelty's sake as though "invention" is somehow synonymous with 'solution'. Candy-colored shape-making is offered in lieu of sincerity.

The use of charged buzzwords words and phrases like "activist" and "socially or environmentally conscious dimension" suggests some serious import where none is evident in the work itself. It is a common liberal ploy to distract from any more intuitive thought processes that would likely conclude that these ill-conceived experiments will almost certainly be the slums of tomorrow.

Dr. D.S. Abrams
New York City
3/23/2012 3:31 PM CDT

Anonymous wrote:

As Deb Gans made clear in her interview on this website, it's critical that architects in 2012 address both formalism and green issues. It's not enough to be either or. Either or is only doing half an architect's job, and that's not enough. Everyone deserves access to progressive contemporary design, rich people, poor people, Americans, Africans, everyone. It's about equality and respect and not patronizing people.

3/23/2012 1:45 PM CDT

Anonymous wrote:

People need to understand the point of these projects. A good article was written on this topic in Metropolis. The 1st point to make is that these are largely political and social problems that have to be tackled in that realm in order for architects to even have the ability to address them. For example, Americans can't keep electing people who don't believe in sustainability and who are beholden to oil companies if they want to solve these problems. Architects can't overcome the weight of political and legal restrictions holding them back without help from American voters. There need to be subsidies for green tech, mass transit, sustainable development, etc. These architects know enough about these issues to know this is the case. I have no problem with utopian solutions in this case, because the point of the projects are to reinforce what first needs to be done in order to get anywhere on these issues. Therefore mass transit is critical, even though it's nearly impossible in our current political climate. Does that means architects should abandon proposing ideas that make mass transit central to their designs? No. The point of projects like this is to reinforce what the model needs to be. Once people understand what the model needs to be, they can vote accordingly for people that will allow architects to move the country in that direction. People who are overly critical of utopian proposals are missing the forest for the trees. Utopian proposals have a critical role to play in making sure everyone is facing up to reality in terms of what our goals should be. If we cut architects off at the legs and force them to only propose ideas that work for today's developers, then we get nowhere and in reality architects aren't doing their jobs. They're just legitimizing bad developers and their values.

3/23/2012 1:52 PM CDT

Anonymous wrote:

People write in so that they can be part of a conversation. That's it! Obviously, the comment is being written by A Person. If the comment is appropriate and interesting, based on the author's point of view, who cares who wrote it.

3/31/2012 10:59 AM CDT

The central question today, in particular in the USA where this crisis began, is linked to the rethinking of an entire economic model, the very idea of property and the role of politics in terms of its global governance. More generally, this crisis has led to a rethinking of the myth of the American Dream and its implications in today's world.

The Buell Hypothesis also highlights another central fact: the need for architects to return to research on these non-urban areas. Until now, the suburbs have been analysed by a specific group of architects linked to the New Urbanism movement. Usually the argument has been that a mixture of nostalgia and contemporary priorities (sustainability, green space, pedestrian zones and so on) has been the idea which has inspired the form of these areas, in most cases. And thus prevailing opinion has often linked the reading of suburbs more to that of a village than a city. The Hypothesis attempts to provide another way of understanding these areas.
a city. The Hypothesis attempts to provide another way of understanding these areas.

Moreover, this project redistributes various tasks in a way which leads towards new forms of intervention (but while the teams include experts from various fields, team leadership is always taken up by an architectural studio) in a project which radically alters the role of a cultural institution.

The work of the Estudio Teddy Cruz, McMansion Retrified (2008), which is referred to in this exhibition, is linked to this very question: if a resident could buy a house, would they buy a typical McMansion? The market, in recent years, has developed its image in order to look like the built form of a dream which is then sold as an aspiration. In this sense the MoMA exhibition carries out an important function: it puts these questions back in the hands of the architects and asks them to come up with new and original ideas. And this is done in an intelligent way, as each team has been asked to come up with architectural and planning proposals, but these teams have also been supported in this enterprise by other experts (each project looks at economic questions, and proposed alternatives to traditional concepts of property ownership, resource use and so on). In this way the various answers proposed are not aimed at simply creating a new typology or a new urban form, but also try and understand how the economic, legal and administrative system needs to be changed in order to support these new models.

In this sense, the projects on show here also provide an interesting overview of the state of contemporary architecture in the US, where an architect who is tuned in to what is going on cannot fail to think about green issues, the problem of health, the use of resources and public transport systems when drawing up projects.

After the MOS project, everyone who works in that area will have to take into account what they have proposed. A new idea is thus introduced into suburbia, something which is typical of the historic city: whatever is added must take account of what is already there. The merit of Thoughts on Walking City is that, perhaps, it creates a new dream which is not necessarily happy or workable. In a realistic way it asks residents to attempt to live in spaces which have greater limits (the project is marked by many stairways and pedestrian routes).

A deep crisis like that which has hit the US has left in its wake a huge number of unfinished and half built projects. Andrey Zon has looked at this issue...
in its wake a huge number of unfinished and half built projects. Andrew Zago has looked at this issue and, through the case of Rosena Ranch, has gone back to the outbreak of the crisis in order to try and understand how a typical suburban area could be developed in a different way. This is a highly sophisticated project, which apparently does not throw out completely what is already there but works through what Zago defines as a “relaxation of boundaries”. The idea here is that if you work on the types of streets used, the use of space between houses, the typologies involved ... you can then create a new form of space.

When we look at contemporary suburbia, it looks more like private property than public property. The system of single family homes and marks vast areas of residential development in the US is an inefficient model, because the collective and investment costs needed to sustain it are not part of a system. The public-private proposal by Bell and Seong underlines a form of reality which is already there. The current system of property ownership, based on mortgages (backed by government through low interest rates) is actually a system of public or subsidized housing.

Jeanne Gang’s project, The Garden in The Machine, is perhaps the project which deals most directly with a redefinition of the American Dream and with how the market needs to change in order to create a new set of ideas lined to the real demands created by new demographic groups (immigrants, new kinds of families) and with the mixed and simultaneous use of spaces for work and living. Gang argues that a
It is thus extremely important that this exhibition and its accompanying research are taking place during an ongoing crisis. This has created the necessary sense of urgency which has been transmitted into the ideas themselves. As we are still suffering from the effects of the crisis, these projects put themselves forward as possible post-crisis realities, but also as ways of overcoming the crisis itself. At the same time, however, these projects also suffer from this sense of urgency. They do not, in fact, discuss one key question, which is central to contemporary architectural debate and is concerned with the instruments which are available to architectural practitioners. The open question is this: why should the solution to all problems always be the same one: the building of new architecture? Nobody here has really moved towards other and more radical solutions, which move beyond the very idea of an architectural project.

In conclusion, these five projects open up debates concerning a process of change, and offer some sophisticated and informed ideas about future development and new values. They understand the need for radical change and offer answers which are linked to contemporary realities, including demographic changes, new social structures and advanced economic models. But on their own, perhaps, they have not succeeded in creating a different “Dream” or a new collective idea centered on real radical change. Despite this, it is to be hoped that the progress that these projects represent is not lost in the future, when we finally overcome this crisis and, as in 1973, the need for structural change is no longer seen as a priority.
“The house is a sacred term in American public discourse,” says Martin. “But a house could just be a house, like a car, or a chair, or a computer. It doesn’t necessarily bring with it — nor should it, I think — transcendent social meaning. A house isn’t sacred; it’s just one among many artifacts with which we live. You could say that we have attempted to gently secularize the idea of the house.

III. Public Outcry!
The provocations lived up to their name. The show was widely praised in the media for its ambition, vision, and social and environmental engagement, but there has also been some dust raising on the architectural blogs. Dissenters called the proposals out of touch, self-indulgent, elitist, esoteric. Some saw a cabal of ivory-tower types imposing their social-engineering fantasies upon a constituency they don’t know or understand. Others confused a theoretical exercise meant to incite discussion with a shovel-ready project.

For Martin, the vitriol on the Internet illustrates how public discourse on housing crumbles at its foundation. “What hasn’t been asked is, what is the role of the government in addressing the housing crisis?” Martin says. “Again, that’s a question we’re barely able to enunciate in public because of the stigmas associated with public housing and the durability of the fetish of the single-family home. You can see from some of the reactions that we were denounced for asking that. There was a certain amount of name-calling. That is not surprising, but it’s interesting: even though these are hypothetical projects, they draw out the political contours of the country. They draw out different strategies: more activist strategies that consider this to be fiddling while Rome burns, purely academic speculation that doesn’t take into account the voices of the people who would actually live in these places.

But for Martin, one possibility was conspicuously absent. “In my view, some options were overlooked, like public housing. I’m not surprised, but it’s a fact. Despite our encouragements — we even provided publicly owned land, and identified sites that were either publicly owned or under the supervision of the local municipalities — in virtually all cases that alternative was side-stepped. So the results have proven that it’s very difficult to contemplate options outside the market.

“That’s the bottom line: the option of public housing is not currently available in the mainstream.”

In February, an exhibition of architectural models, videos and descriptions of their ideas opened at the Museum of Modern Art. There was an open panel discussion held on March 8 for the architects to answer questions and discuss how they truly felt about the future of these developments. When all was said and done there were six unique projects but what caught the attention of most was the sheer scale of their proposals. This emphasized that the issue at hand was much greater than maybe what was first conceptualized, that to propose a incremental shift within this suburban framework would not be dramatic enough to change the course of time, or is it. Although neighborhoods look like a grain of sand on a map "...they are the result of processes that took hundreds of years to evolve." Does this really call for the need of a grand proposal? Yes it is true that it would be very difficult to change zoning laws to permit denser new development patterns but is there not an inate power nestled in a simple architectural infill.

The economic and demographic factors at hand may seem emense but I am not sure that a revised American Dream could not have an equally great influence. Guy Horton of author on Architect comments that he does not believe architects have the power to dictate a solution to the crisis, "To them, this is further evidence of the irrelevance of what architects have to offer in terms of solving real problems." I am afraid to say that many others feel the same that architects are along for the ride as much as anyone else, architects are not problem solvers. Really? Of anyone who has been trained day in and day out to make something out of nothing. To merge the gap between reality and imaginary we are the innovators those with visions of a different future. Yes we may not be able to single handedly solve major issues but we are in a great position to express our thoughts on a global scale. I think we are selling ourselves short over humbling our potential to make an impact on the future. "In architecture we have become inured to the special effects of formal bigness and dramatic constructs." But isn’t this not a perception stemming from those ideas buried in the American dream. This maybe exactly where we need to start initiating a shift, why BiG, why more? In the end the architects apart of the workshop are just adding to something already dead. This unsustainable template has been passed down as a ritual and we are blind to its presence.

REHOUSING THE AMERICAN DREAM AT MOMA

The content of the show tracks closely with a preview presentation held last September at PS1, MoMA’s contemporary annex. The participating teams—headed by architects Jeanne Gang, Michael Bell, Andrew Zago, partners Amale Andraos and Dan Wood (of partnership WORKac), and Hilary Sample and Michael Meredith (MOS Architects)—have taken real tract developments, in locations across the U.S., and turned them into theaters for conceptual intervention. Using models, renderings, and videos, the group leaders and their co-designers demonstrate how creative real estate contracts and innovative architectural solutions could combine to forge a revitalized suburbia, one inoculated against the kind of economic shocks that precipitated the current real estate crunch.

Of the proposals on view, perhaps the most appealing is Nature-City, WorkAC’s inventive re-imagining of the modest Portland feeder town of Keizer, Oregon. A surprisingly urban vision for a relatively remote locale, the design boasts a wide variety of housing typologies, all of them arrayed around a municipal complex whose tumulus-like forms suggest a connection to nature fully qualified by the development’s eco-friendly features. As with the Zago group’s plan for Rialto, California, and Gang’s for Cicero, Illinois, Nature-City puts a premium on communal space and services, not only as a means to foster community but as a hedge against the mercenary commercialism that gave us the late housing boom and bust. And to the special credit of Andraos, Wood, and their academic and engineer collaborators, the Keizer scheme avoids the trap (into which Michael Bell’s proposal, Simultaneous City, slips all too easily) of rehearsing the problematic motifs of 20th century social housing, creating instead a novel and lively template for the future of American life.

Fred Bartels

Interesting vision of a new sustainable community. moma.org/interactives/e... Watch the video to understand the concept. #yestermorrow

The message of “Foreclosed: Rehousing the American Dream,” a new exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, is that it didn’t need to be this way—and that economic crises can have architectural solutions. But from the start, MoMA pulls its punches: Barry Bergdoll, chief curator of architecture and design for MoMA and the show’s curator, concedes in his catalog introduction that “architects, urban and landscape designers, and infrastructure engineers can do little directly about the problem of foreclosed mortgages and households ‘under water’ (that being a crisis of the financial architecture of America).”
Affordable Housing, Sustainability

Academic Hubris, Cities and Suburbs, Community Participation, Government and Policy, Liberal versus Conservative, The Market

Silliness and Seriousness, (Un)Realistic Proposals

Affordable Housing, Challenge of Suburbia, The Market

Scale, (Un)Realistic Proposals

Challenge of Suburbia, Family, Populations and Demographics

Cities and Suburbs, Land Use and Density

Challenge of Suburbia, Cities and Suburbs, Retrofit or Redesign

Internet Banter

Academic Hubris, Internet Banter

Foreclosed: March 2012

If the housing crisis taught us anything, it’s that we can’t go on like this anymore. Today, the average American family spends 52 cents of every earned dollar on housing and transportation, according to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). That’s a fixable problem, and for “Foreclosed,” five different groups came up with conceptual plans for five different suburbs around the country—all of which attempt to create something more sustainable going forward.

Of course, for an idea to be sustainable, it also has to be realistic. Much of the MoMA show fails that criterion miserably. Orange, N.J., is not going to build long strings of apartments in the middle of its streets, as suggested by MOS Architects’ Michael Meredith, AIA, and Hilary Sample, AIA. Neither is Keizer, Ore., going to bite on huge towers of three-story homes teetering atop each other—complete with indoor waterfalls—as put forward by Amale Andraos and Dan Wood, AIA, of Work AC. And are those elephants that Andrew Zago dropped in the backyards of Rialto, Calif.? Yes, they really are.

The basic idea is enticing: “Temple Terrace’s residents could spend 30 percent of the $700 million they collectively earn annually and remain within HUD housing-cost guidelines,” write Visible Weather’s Michael Bell and Eunjeeong Seong, “but the disaggregated way in which housing monies are spent means that they are spent on a very low-level commodity.”

But there’s the rub: If you try to get 10,000 people to live together in a single development, you’re cutting against the very impulses that drive people out of the city and into the suburbs in the first place.

There’s something almost colonialist about this exhibition: Witness five architectural practices hail from New York City, Los Angeles, and Chicago parachute into relatively poor suburbs, spend very little time actually talking to the people who live there, and pitch projects that only a city-dweller could love, and that only a socialist state could finance. “City-building does not necessarily have to take the path laid out by the markets,” writes co-curator Reinhold Martin, who set the terms of the team’s engagement with The Buell Hypothesis—an eclectic text (it is in part a screenplay) that quite explicitly proposes "unapologetically public housing models on government land."

But despite this prejudice against development, the proposals in the show are basically mini-cities, to be developed as single projects at vast expense. There’s precious little scope for organic growth in this exhibit: Instead, all residents have to fit into a preconceived plan where the costs are front-loaded and where financing seems to magically appear whenever the municipality wants it. Meanwhile, the existing residents of the suburbs in question, the ones still underwater on their American Dream houses, are barely considered in these plans.

Any honest attempt to fix the suburbs has to start with facing up to why so many Americans live in the suburbs in the first place, and who those Americans are. Suburban families are bigger than urban families; they like their space; and they like living in places where they’re a good distance from their neighbors and a long way indeed from people of other social classes.

All of the projects in this exhibition, in one way or another, pile Americans on top of each other; squeeze them into homes that are much smaller than those currently found in the suburbs; and exult the wonders of urban mixed-use developments that feature the broadest possible range of owners, renters, and even businesses. They basically comprise a simple message to suburbanites: We city-dwellers are better at living than you are, and if you want to improve your lifestyle, you’re going to have to become much more like us.

It’s a message that doesn’t really solve the problems of suburbia so much as simply eradicate them by decree. Studio Gang’s proposal gleefully attacks Cicero’s suburban zoning code, deleting most of it with neat red lines and replacing it with the language of “density,” “diversity,” and “a variety of living types.”

Congratulations on reinventing the city. Now, what are we going to do about the suburbs?
EVERY exhibition aspires to make a strong impression. "Foreclosed: Rehousing the American Dream" at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) manages to bowl over the visitor within the first 15 seconds. Unfortunately, the impression is one of intermingled bemusement and nausea. For this viewer, the feeling has yet to subside.

The exhibition is disappointing largely because its premise is so fascinating. Barry Bergdoll, MoMA's chief curator of architecture and design, and Reinhold Martin, director of Columbia University's Buell Centre, set out to explore five struggling suburbs. These pockets of the American landscape are in the midst of a transformation. Yes, they were ravaged by the housing crisis, but they were changing even before the recession. Suburban poverty rose by 53% from 2000 to 2010, compared with a 26% jump in cities. In many suburbs, white, nuclear families have been replaced by multigenerational Hispanic ones. The old car culture has become unsustainable, as petrol guzzles a greater share of families' budgets and the need for exercise becomes ever more apparent. All this begs for new types of transport and housing. MoMA wisely seized the chance to imagine a new future for the suburbs. The result, unfortunately, is absurd.

Presumably the curators chose to display certain pages because they were particularly enlightening. "For despite what you may have heard," Socrates explains, "we do not live in a cave. In fact, in this country there is a term for the place in which we live. It is called the American Dream." If this is the best of the screenplay, one shudders to think of the rest of the 436-page manuscript.

Still reeling from this display, your correspondent rounded a corner to the main room of the exhibition. The gallery presents a new vision for each of five suburbs. The first project is for the Oranges, in New Jersey. The curators' decision to lead with this design is unwise, particularly as its only proper place is the dustbin. MOS, an architecture firm based in New York, came to the astounding conclusion that the roads of the Oranges should be filled with new buildings. The monolithic new structures would have walls that zig and zag, making it impossible to see if someone was lurking behind a corner. With no conventional streets, there are only narrow paths for bicyclists and walkers. Heaven help residents if a fire ever broke out. Perhaps the firefighters could use scooters?

A design for a suburb near Tampa, Florida is much less dangerous and slightly less silly. The suburb, which never had a town centre, suggested building one at a busy intersection. This sounds quite sensible. But the architects at Visible Weather scrap this plan and propose instead a 225-acre site along a commercial strip north of town. The result is a complex of offices for city bureaucrats and start-ups, with homes on the top floor. Part of suburbia's challenge is creating a sense of community while still preserving privacy.
Populations and Demographics, Silliness and Seriousness

Andrew Zago imagines building Rosena Ranch with shared outdoor space and many types of homes, so that families of different incomes and sizes could be neighbours. Mr Zago's plan has the benefit of beautiful design—buildings are shaded by intricate, coloured lattices. Yet even this plan, sadly, indulges in the ridiculous. A design for an adjacent zoo of elephants and lions might be forgiven if Mr Zago did not also welcome wildlife into the development itself. He suggests watering holes and feeders to attract not just birds and wild sheep but mountain lions and coyotes. A child's jaunt on a tricycle might become quite exciting.

A plan for Cicero, a suburb of Chicago, may be the most reasonable of the bunch (pictured top). Studio Gang Architects try to accommodate Cicero's influx of Hispanic families. The suburb's old bungalows are replaced by stacks of flats and spaces that can be shared among families. The most enthralling site, however, is the one imagined by WORKac for Keizer, a suburb of Oregon. A high-rise is a stack of individual, peak-roofed houses—a bland suburban form becomes a building block for a fantastical tower. A small mountain has a path that spirals down its slope, passing flats tucked neatly into the hillside. One wonders, however, whether the inhabitants of this hill will relish the scent of compost burning in the mountain's interior. Similarly, residents enjoying a grass-covered roof might be unsettled by the immediate proximity of a grizzly bear, as displayed in the architects' model.

The suburbs may be in need of change, but surely not the changes proposed here.

Comments on Foreclosed

Populations and Demographics, Silliness and Seriousness, (Un)Realistic Proposals
typingmonkey  Mar 2nd, 19:31

It looks to me like the Orange NJ proposal is to place buildings in the centers of certain street segments to create
1 - density
2 - mixed use (neighborhood retail/commercial services)
3 - capillary cul-de-sacs (where kids can play without through traffic)

These could put services close to residents, and make walking/biking to them more attractive at the same time. This, in turn, could revitalize the local economy and sense of community. Not an easy task in existing grids, so we must begin thinking of unconventional solutions. Fire engines, by the way, routinely serve cul-de-sacs.

I have also long championed flexibility in housing to better accommodate the diverse life paths taken in modern times and other cultures. The American Dream/white picket fence/Mayberry suburb fails badly at this, making your Cicero concept another valuable exercise. In 2012 America, we have a working class that may marry 3 times or not at all. We are all step-this and step-that. College kids might need to return home for years. Grandma might need closer care. Families aren't really nuclear, they are fissile, fusile, orbital and subatomic. So bring back the courtyard, with apartments around it.

The reintegration of nature into our communities is another worthy goal. I think creek daylighting, community gardens, and village greens are all good ideas. The cougar idea must be whimsy, but it helps us avoid getting trapped in the fallacy that land is a purely human medium.

CH, I advise you to spend more time off the island of Manhattan. Go to Alaska. Go to Detroit. Go to a hutong. And go to a desolate American suburb. Then go back to MoMA and tell me what you see.

NotanEconomistFrank  Mar 2nd, 22:48

What a strange review. It seems that anyone questioning the car in American urbanism is considered ridiculous. MOS's Orange NJ proposal is completely reasonable in a world where our policies towards automobile driven urbanism is making the working poor even poorer and more unhealthy/obese. It's based around pedestrians and mass transit, not really that radical actually.... To propose a dense city based upon the pedestrian instead of car seems like the type of urban thinking we need.

johnberkowitz  Mar 3rd, 09:32

I think that contemporary architecture should reflect the community needs of the current population. The idea of changing the old style of living into more dynamic one is great. Replacing bungalows by the condo style type of living is just a great idea. I can see the European and Canadian influence in the battle against the old English style of living.

From my point of view, creating the new "centers" of life in the suburbs is also very interesting idea. Sometimes it is much better to reconstruct everything from the scratch than to continue with the old structures and ideas. Never ending House Flipping can not sustain the houses forever and sooner or later, the old suburb has to be replaced by a new one.

With new model of suburb, you get more possibilities to evade old mistakes and give people better life conditions and space for their everyday lives.
I wonder if anybody thought to ask these people who live in these communities what they wanted. These proposed changes sound as if they were generated in somebody's downtown office. How about you, John? What do your neighbors in the suburb you live in think about being moved into condos? About tearing down the old and starting from scratch?

My own guess is that they think you would come up with a whole new list of mistakes to replace the old ones that they have become used to.

SometimesLeftSometimesRight  Mar 3rd, 13:35

I saw the show two days ago with my husband and kids (9 and 11). It's been the topic of conversation since then. I hate to think about what sort of world we are leaving our children, not only are our cities and infrastructure falling apart but more importantly there seems to be nobody proposing an alternative to our current state of decay. Although they look very well considered, I'm not sure all the proposals are reasonable, but it's wonderful to have people seriously proposing an alternative to our sinking status quo. I wish there was more of exhibitions like this forcing us to think how we are all responsible for the construction of our world, our cities and suburbs. And more importantly that urban development and infrastructure are our legacy we leave our children.

johnberkowitz in reply to SometimesLeftSometimesRight  Mar 3rd, 14:36

I agree with you 100%. The problem is that the market is not controlled by people with ideas but by people seeking profit. And building a sustainable and children-friendly environment is not that important. Each building has its own architect, own solutions and etc. But look on the wonderful planning of Brasil (the capital of Brazil), with the coherent architecture and sustainable environment. And it is almost 50 years old right now, but it looks wonderful!

Rob S in reply to SometimesLeftSometimesRight  Mar 7th, 00:44

Danger! Cliche alert!
eal DAO  Mar 4th, 10:08

crazy imagination must depend on real need and life.

Anderson-2  Mar 5th, 13:25

This stuff looks like the public housing experiments of the 60s given an absolutely fabulous facelift and a couple of pairs of mahnohos. I'm all into walking and dense housing and good public transport, and lived that for 8 years in Cologne, but this stuff gives me the screaming heebie-jebies.

"Privacy is a sense of realising who is where and what they are doing, and that allows you to be calm." ? WTF

Anderson  Mar 5th, 13:46

One think that might be interesting is to set up one of these big internet games to virtually re-develop one of these places.

What would folks do if they had their choice? The urbanist ideas make a lot of sense to me. What might happen if you set up things like transport and development guidelines in terms of population density and small and large retail for a small satellite city and then let a whole bunch of people just wiki it out?

lapin229  Mar 5th, 14:55
Academic Hubris, Reference and Comparison

Liberal versus Conservative

Scale, Sustainability

Art and Architecture, Role of the Museum, (Un)Realistic Proposals

Circulation

Foreclosed: March 2012

Architects (some) have always had an over-evolved sense of their own importance. At least Paulo Soleri had style, these guys are recycling stuff we did in the 70’s, just not as well. The big design solutions and Urban planning of the past don’t work for the future. The next step will be devolution, self sustaining, smaller, less susceptible to economic changes and power failures. I think you call them villages in Europe. We don’t have that concept in the USA. The curator screwed the pooch on this one, there’s lot of interesting alternate work out there.

Graham Peterson Mar 5th, 22:32
My roomie is a fan of central-planned designs to beautify cities. I was always skeptical based on libertarian principle. Now I’m just mystified anyone let these people out of high-school.

Peter Sellers Mar 6th, 07:17
"Nature-City" for Keizer, Oregon resembles what Singapore has begun to look like. Ughhh
Disclosure: I live in Singapore (and am obviously not pleased with the changes I see here).

Mad Hatter Mar 6th, 13:29
Architects/Urban planners often suffer from the same level of hubris as religious and political zealots. They “believe” they know how humanity should behave and think. When presenting they will say, “One walls along this avenue, and feels a sense of…” Huh? The world abounds with architectural and urban planning disasters. Look at a park where instead of following some meandering walkway, there is a muddy path straight across the grass.
Le Corbusier was amongst the worst, and subsequent generations not much better. A case of the “Emperor’s Clothes”. Throw in a little anti-capitalist, anti-car, eco looniness, and you end up with Milton Keynes, or worse, Bracknell where I am spending too much time. I need Sat-Nav to get in and out of town and contribute to muddy paths straight across roundabouts. Now we have computers, curves and angles thrive, simply because they can be designed, not because they make sense,
Why reinvent the wheel? We have spent thousands of years evolving buildings and spaces that work.
Classic examples of Urban planning disasters caused by hubris? Brasilia along with Chandigarh in India. Loved by the acolytes of modern architecture, a failure by everybody else’s standards.

Yamatotimes Mar 7th, 00:12
Walkable suburbs - the most important future development for suburban planning and refurbishment.

OpinionFromAustralia Mar 7th, 05:07
Isn’t the museum of Modern Art a place for Art?
I don’t know if i’m missing something, but any art gallery/museum i’ve been too rarely lets reality to get in the way of weird and wonderfula rt (especially if it’s of the ‘modern’ genre).
Was this exhibition meant to showcase real options for architectural redesign of these
The projects range from ready-to-build to conceptual to downright wild. Barry Bergdoll, MoMA’s chief curator for architecture and Design, who conceived the exhibition with Reinhold Martin, the director of Columbia University’s Temple Hoyne Buell Center for the Study of American Architecture, hopes that each can serve as a catalyst for discussion. Lots of hot-button issues involving housing are hinted at, including who pays for it, how is it made and how it can impact our health.

Some of the projects have the ability to create quite a lively town hall debate. Hilary Sample and Michael Meredith from MOS Architects worked on a proposal for urban-leaning Orange, N.J., that would create ribbon-like structures that would house a combination of homes, businesses and commercial space — and be built on top of current public streets. It’s not exactly car-friendly.

In Cicero, Ill., team leader Jeanne Gang confronted the issue that the housing stock of the town, mostly single-family bungalow houses, doesn’t really work with the population, which includes many new immigrants. Repurposing an old factory, Studio Gang Architects came up with a concept in which housing could be acquired in pieces according to need. It’s also friendly to the cottage industries that have sprung up as the town lost 45,000 factory jobs — workspaces in the factory could also be rented and shared. The proposal is based on a limited equity cooperative model. The land and shared amenities would be jointly owned — but the residents would own personal spaces.

The most visually stunning and forward-thinking model comes from WORKac, a team of lower East Side architects led by Amale Andraos and Dan Wood. They were inspired by British urbanist Ebenezer Howard’s 1890s concept of the “Town-Country,” which combined the best of nature and agriculture with the conveniences of urban life. WORKac tried to create that mix for Keizer, Ore. The city, an hour outside of Portland, is expected to grow by 13,000 people in the next 20 years. Rather than expand the Urban Growth Boundary — which was created in Oregon to contain sprawl — WORKac reworked an area currently occupied by big-box retailers to hold a combination of housing types and a variety of green space from sky gardens to urban farms.

The new American Dream: Stunning designs for the suburbs of the future

The financial crisis left large swathes of the US derelict and decimated, leading many to question the pursuit of the American Dream. And with the problem of widespread foreclosures embodying the issues faced by families and communities across the county, leading designers have now offered a new vision of the future.
This won't fly...
- paavo, USA, 3/3/2012 10:00

I'll stick to my cabin on 12 wooded acres thanks.
- Jon, Cheyenne, Wy, 3/3/2012 10:54

Usual soulless and inhuman "solutions" from those desperate-for-attention, anti-social egosits we call Architects. Horrible rubbish really - but if there's profit enough developers might build this garbage - pity the inhabitants.
- Al Foster, ex-Londoner, 3/3/2012 10:55

I remember all the futuristic designs from the 50s - and how many do we have?
- Pete, Linacs, 3/3/2012 11:01

It's never going to happen, there's not a chance in hell that America will EVER look like this. It would be fabulous if it did happen but I just don't ever see it coming to fruition.
- Ocean Blue, USA, Santa Barbara, 3/3/2012 11:13

my local Socialist council "has this dream" about one of our sea side towns that looks like Beirut on a bad day. .....dream on, dream on!
- pat, cleveland, 3/3/2012 11:22

Himm...most of it looks suspiciously like the stuff produced by the Bauhaus movement in 1930's Germany.
- Steve, The Shire, 3/3/2012 12:33

Urban planners will never understand that 50%+ of the population DON'T WANT to live in multi-unit dwellings in their beloved cities, but they keep trying anyway. Like Jon from Cheyenne said, many prefer and like our own S-P-A-C-E away from all of the traffic, crime, and supposed "enlightenment" that city life purports to offer. They can have it and LEAVE US ALONE!
- C.J.W, Tracy, CA USA, 3/3/2012 12:55

Instead of spending all this ridiculous time and money on space-age housing concepts, why not solve the REAL problem, and put the American workforce, BACK TO WORK !!
- sore eyes in CA, USA, 3/3/2012 13:00

Awful...
- AverageBrit, UK, 3/3/2012 13:18

Truly hideous architecture.
- K.M., Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, USA, 3/3/2012 13:31

More grandiose plans....which will entail the usual results....after the motivators have been paid.

Mainly, they look like prisons.
- Nell Kerslake, Germany

(Un)Realistic Proposals

Land Use and Density

Academic Hubris

Reference and Comparison

(Un)Realistic Proposals

Liberal versus Conservative, Reference and Comparison

Reference and Comparison

Cities and Suburbs, Quality of Life, Top-Down and Bottom-Up

Jobs, Silliness and Seriousness

The Exhibition

The Exhibition

The Market, Scale

Reference and Comparison
While the The Garden in the Machine project for Cicero, Illinois is interesting to look at, the 'container' living fad that has been played out in design and, now, architecture, for sometime is just that. A fad. I think its legacy would be that of Brutalist Architecture; vulgar and out-dated 20/30 years in the future. 8 house in Denmark is a lovely example of compound/community living. I've never been fully convinced on this 1930s/bauhaus notion of suburbia, I think I've read too much Richard Yates.
- Rachel Foss, Glasgow, 3/3/2012 13:50

Foreclosures - done to benefit the banksters who pull the strings of whatever government is sitting in the White-house.
- Ian Jenkins, UK, 3/3/2012 14:16

It looks like the place where the cartoon characthers "The Jetsons" lived in space! Futuristic and lifeless.
- Cecilia, Glasgow, 3/3/2012 14:40

plus ca change...
- George, Lymington, 3/3/2012 14:48

People aspire to live in their own homes - not apartment blocks, not condos. They want a house, with a garden for their kids. Stop with the unrealistic idea that you can force people into these sorts of housing projects.
- Tony, Bristol, UK, 3/3/2012 15:12

Robert Moses, many many years ago, suggested that we save all the beaiful areas of the country for ALL the people, so the rich could not take up acreage on the beach in same the Hamptons, etc. HE suggested, smaller homes with huge common gardens, playgrounds...yet we would all have beach access, lake access, etc. I think its a good idea (in theory)...in reality, I don't want to pick up others doggie doo, or garbage. If we were all abiding and pleasant, it would be wonderful. BUT I DO agree that it is not right for the very rich to be able to 'control' a beach area. WHY should they be able to claim part of the Atlantic or Pacific for their very own? makes no sense. ALL beaches should be public, be in Malibu or Quogue.
- Justine, USA, 3/3/2012 15:44

Ugly. There need to be more artistic architects and with a sense of culture. Not merely technicians.
- W. Pollard, Bristol, 3/3/2012 15:46

The ghettos of the future. I wonder how many of these visionaries would actually like to live there.
- pluky, nova scotia, 3/3/2012 15:47

Looks like PR for Agenda 21 aka Smart Cities, Sustainable Living, Plannnedpolis etc, nice pack 'em and stack 'em blocks close to PUBLIC transit, suggest cars and private property a thing of the past, American Dream or NWO nightmare? If you are going to seduce us with slick packaging and sophisticated propaganda, do try to make it slick or half sophisticated, this is embarrassingly see through.
- tom bowden, perth australia, 3/3/2012 16:22

It's not now housing 'schemes' people want right now in the western world, it's jobs. Provide jobs for people & every other problem generally dissolves into the mist. This is just one more diversion away from the priority.
Liberal versus Conservative, Reference and Comparison

Internet Banter

The Exhibition, Reference and Comparison

Land Use and Density, Sustainability

Reference and Comparison

The Exhibition, Quality of Life

Reference and Comparison

American Dream, Homeownership

Reference and Comparison

Family, Top-Down and Bottom-Up

Reference and Comparison, Top-Down and Bottom-Up

Art world does make over dream of American dream

"The architects had community and its surrounding environment in mind over economics and money and all that other business stuff when they thought of these makeovers," 20-year-old student Amandine Borreman said about the exhibit.

Even though "Foreclosed" has been open for just a few weeks, critics are already questioning the practicality of the plans and noting that trying to redesign troubled communities does little for people living in a foreclosed home or who can't afford to pay their mortgage.

Andrew Zago, the Los Angeles architect, who came up with a plan for redesigning a partially built suburban housing development in Rialto, Calif. that the developer had to stop construction on when the financial crisis hit, said the criticism of the exhibit misses the point.

He said architecture can't fix the foreclosure crisis or solve all the many economic problems facing communities but it can come up with ideas for making those towns less prone to economic calamity.

The resulting projects, including one from a team headed by 2011 MacArthur Fellow/eco-architect extraordinaire Jeanne Gang, all respond to the “Foreclosed” challenge in their own uniquely compelling ways. None, however, address the issue of sustainability quite like Nature-City, New York-based Work Architecture Company’s vision for the Portland/Salem bedroom community of Keizer. The proposal itself is a response to the question, “what if we could live close to nature and sustainably” posed by WORKac’s team leaders.

Of course, Nature-City is heavy on ecological infrastructure. Electricity for the entire development is generated by an on-site methane fuel cell; drinking water is extracted from airborne humidity using atmospheric water generators; home heating is provided by three geothermal wells; and wastewater is cleaned and reused through some truly inventive natural water filtration methods.

Affordability is also an important aspect of Nature-City, with 30 percent of the 4,850 units designated as affordable housing (20 percent middle-income and 10 percent low-income). It’s also worth noting that Nature-City’s apartments, both market-rate and affordable, are all designed to meet LEED requirements.
units designated as affordable housing (20 percent middle-income and 10 percent low-income). It’s also worth noting that Nature-City’s apartments, both market-rate and affordable, measure an average of 1,300 square feet—which is 10 percent larger than the national average.

A new exhibit at the New York Museum of Modern Art seeks to rethink suburban living and the design of the communities themselves. Taking unique and sometimes radical approaches, five design teams each took a community ravaged by the housing crisis and came up with their own architectural and artistic solution to improve the affected areas and introduce more density, retail stores and sustainable practices. The results need to be seen to be believed, as they provide a completely new and interesting way to look at American housing.

1,500 square feet or larger single family homes with large backyards and wide spaces between properties, all five proposals call for much more density, shared spaces, and retail and dining options often inside the communities. In essence, what the design teams are trying to do is replicate some of the best features of urban living and transport them to the suburbs.

What is so fascinating about the exhibit is the way the design teams take all of these criticisms to heart and seek to remedy the problems of overbuilding and density through five architectural designs that really are about as different as they are similar. As to be expected, they all feature people living closer together and becoming more sustainable, but they differ enormously in how the communities are designed from an aesthetic level. I took a look at all five exhibits (virtually, of course, until I can make the trip to New York), and came away impressed with some of the projects and more skeptical of others. The five exhibits are broken down below:

Actually, instead of “Rehousing the American Dream” a more accurate subtitle would have been “Re-dreaming the American Home.” To want to live in such reimagined communities, people would have to disburse themselves of commonly held archetypes of house and neighborhood, deeply ingrained feelings about privacy and ownership, unquestioned measures of success and even selfhood. This would amount to a massive societal shift in expectations and values. But big changes in cultural norms do occur when people feel threatened. Vast numbers of us have eschewed tobacco, for example, and sprawl is arguably even more dangerous. So what the hell? Let’s dream.

Surprisingly, the unsatisfactory aspect of the exhibition is its vagueness about the economic arrangements that would supposedly underpin these projects. The proposal for Orange, for example, would have “portable mortgages” and a “micro-governmental cooperative structure,” and the Cicero one would have a “limited-equity cooperative” model, whatever those things are. Others mention a public-private partnership or a real-estate investment trust—both more familiar terms—but what makes them right for these situations? We don’t really go to an art museum expecting a lesson in the economics of property development, but a related infographic for each proposal could have told enough. There’s a good reason to want to grasp the economics; we need alternatives to sprawl that can really work. The challenge is that it’s not just about design.

Knew you could do it but this is over the top. Congratulations. XXX, L.
— Lucinda 2012.03.08

Great review! I like reviews that so into this kind of depth and put the work into context.
— Henry Scott 2012.03.08

Can designers fix America’s suburban foreclosure problems?

Clearly, from the proposals on view in “Foreclosed,” patterns and trends are emerging in terms of possible design solutions to suburban woes. And architects might be the appropriate group to suggest radical new ideas for non-urban communities, given their industry’s creative freedom and their practical awareness of zoning, engineering, and other issues. But with design-thinking often hyped as a trendy innovation buzzword in the business press, is there a risk that the exhibition might be seen as somewhat slick and gimmicky by politicians and suburban dwellers themselves?

Some architecture critics have complained that the solutions on view in “Foreclosed” are too urban, as Justin Davidson argued in his review of the exhibition in New York magazine. True, they are all designed by firms based in cities that all are striving to turn towns into mini-metropolises. However, such a goal might make sense in the 21st century. The suburbs are dying; cities are thriving. Numerous statistics show that today, most people around the world live in cities. The fresh, urban-inspired models proposed in “Foreclosed” might just be the most timely and relevant blueprints for designers and communities committed to reviving the suburbs.

How about these in your face truths.

Government forced mandates made it legal for banks to offer mortgages to people that had no capability to pay back the loans.
The show also asked architects to engage with community activists, economists, urban planners, ecologists, and experts from other fields, suggesting that architecture does best when it can manage complex input from a wide variety of professionals. To complicate things further, the design process itself became public through a series of charettes, presentations, conferences, and blog posts, all of which are archived—and worth looking through—on the Foreclosed website.

A series of brief video advertisements by the advertising firm Weiden & Kennedy accompanied the model. The irony of the ads kept them from seeming market-ready, but WORKac nonetheless showed how much images and media must be mastered to construct desire for new suburban prototypes.

Gang suggests that people who can’t afford suburban single-family houses might instead occupy adaptively reused factories on remediated brownfields. It’s one thing for artists to choose to occupy potentially noxious former factories, as they did in SoHo in the ’70s, but another to imagine that Cicero’s poorer residents trade health for square footage.

But a latent theme of the project, made clear in a video rife with doubts about architecture’s claims to power, seemed to be the challenge of using architectural techniques to resolve larger and more complex behavioral and biological problems. Could architecture really achieve all that was asked of it by the show? MOS’s skepticism provided an important counterpoint to enthusiasm of the other projects.

Such an ambitious show is bound to have weaknesses. The most glaring for me is that the exhibition is not really about the foreclosure crisis; instead, the crisis acts as an opportunity for architects to reclaim disciplinary territory ceded to other professions.
Foreclosed's great achievement is the strong signal it sends to the culture-consuming public: in two of our most important architectural institutions, there's an ambition for architecture to take on a more socially and financially relevant role. This is exciting. It will be even more so if Foreclosed helps to create structures of legitimation and appreciation for much more ambitious attempts to take on these questions in practice.

I took these images at the MoMA exhibit, “Foreclosed: Rehousing the American Dream”. They had these tabletop displays of re-imagined urban living spaces where everything was more communal, economical and efficient. What struck me about the mock ups was not their architectural design, though impressive, but the little snapshots of life within them. It gave me an almost Laforet-esque feeling on the microcosm of how we live amongst the urban sprawl. It was a great exhibit, I highly recommend if your able to go.


On March 8, the Forum for Urban Design and the Museum of Modern Art, with generous support by the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, gathered a national homebuilder, a former NYC City Planning Director turned suburban developer, a prominent Phoenix advocate, and a leading New Urbanist to debate the proposals put forth in the MoMA exhibition, Foreclosed: Rehousing the American Dream.

Ara Hovnanian set the stage by exploring his own company’s strategy for adapting new homes to a post-crisis reality: by building multi-generational, multi-household homes for boomerang children, aging parents, and older siblings. Joe Rose followed, arguing the Buell Hypothesis of “Change the dream and you change the city” might be better adapted to “Respect the dream and you change the city,” suggesting that dismissing the suburban dream would never lead to a suburban makeover.

A View from Temple Terrace

It is not new to suggest that density can provide the opportunity for many to access services—but what is new is to be able to show that complex programming with diverse constituencies can not only stabilize a community socially but can also bring more financial stability to every stakeholder. The divides that are often set between social or aesthetic goals have not taken into account that housing never stands apart from the wider sense of need; program issues lay a critical foundation for architecture, and the response to specific program elements (or the lack thereof) will be the true test of the success or failure of developments that attempt to address our housing crisis. The crisis we are facing needs a holistic, practical approach to create thriving communities with policies that support these developments. Only then will we see the sea change we need.

The financial crisis forced millions into foreclosure, but also forced us to confront the metastasizing growth of housing costs in the U.S., as more and more Americans allot well over 30% of their income to housing. The foreclosure statistics are harrowing, and yet they are part of only one chapter in a larger narrative of misguided housing policies. The story of Temple Terrace is a microcosm of a housing crisis decades in the making.

Most people want to own their own home because home ownership historically offered a sense of financial security, and it satisfies the human desire to control one’s own environment. As we have increasingly learned, this

Affordable Housing

Homeownership

Homeownership, Populations and Demographics

Comments on Foreclosed
Most people want to own their own home because home ownership historically offered a sense of financial security, and it satisfies the human desire to control one’s own environment. As we have tragically learned, this vision was illusory for the millions who lost their homes in foreclosure, land for those who are now debt-burdened by their home investments.

It is time we re-imagined and retooled the old, stale notions of what constitutes a stable home.

By creating varied but neighboring housing typologies—ranging from 100-square-foot apartments with communal living spaces, to 600-square-foot one-bedroom apartments, to larger three-bedroom apartments—and providing for varied forms of tenure, a community can be created based on the diversity of residents and not on antiquated, inflexible notions of housing. The college student who can only afford the 100-square-foot SRO is an asset to the single mother in the three-bedroom rental who needs to work in the afternoon. The returning veteran may not need much in the way of square footage, but will need the attention of on-site social services, within walking distance of his apartment. The architecture can and should support this type of organic connection. Seniors seeking companionship and affordability can live in a shared three-bedroom apartment that lays out exactly as a family-sized unit. Housing options can better respond to personal need rather than financial status.

It's a moment of refreshing whimsy from an exhibition that envisions what's possible when politicians offer only pitiful nostrums.

The real-estate industry doesn't know how to finance such sensible arrangements, which have a long history. It's still easier to borrow for a McMansion, even though the U.S. has about five million too many of them, according to Arthur C. Nelson, a housing analyst who directs the Metropolitan Research Center at the University of Utah.

Unfortunately the architects in this show only intermittently make a persuasive case for their visions. Bell inventively harnesses Florida's subtropical climate and lifestyle in his design, "Simultaneous City," but the models and drawings are about as alluring as a sanatorium.

Zago fell in love with too-clever pixelated imagery as he pursued the valuable idea of rethinking public and private property rights to create more amenities at lower cost.

Bergdoll has defined his curatorship as restoring architecture to its proper place at the center of national concerns. He recognizes that its best practitioners never separate aesthetics from problem solving; they seamlessly interweave both.

I say keep trying.
“Change the dream and you change the city.” The maxim at the heart of the Buell Hypothesis and the thesis driving Foreclosed: Rehousing the American Dream sets up a difficult goal to achieve. Changing the city is hard. It takes vision, power, cooperation, planning and, in most cases, the forces that drive urban change are outside the control of designers or citizens. Changing the dream, however, may be harder still: amending a national subconscious is a grand, maybe hubristic task, with no clear mode of address. Conversations that complement and take inspiration from design strategies offer a potentially productive model for new dreams, and most importantly serve as a reminder that “What is Foreclosed?” is not at its heart a question for architects. It is a question that implicates many disciplines, and many people, most importantly those who answer that question with “my house.” In the face of a housing crisis, however, it would be irresponsible for architects and planners not to be asking this question. The next step, it seems, is to move the conversation outside the design sphere and instead of trying to change the dream, try to understand what America's dreams really are.

Anybody who visits the exhibit can see that nothing remotely along the lines of the buildings being proposed is ever going to be realized — Orange, New Jersey, for instance, is not going to replace its roads with long strips of narrow housing. But what’s less obvious is the way in which all of these projects are also a huge financial stretch. They were charged with coming up with innovative forms of home finance, but all those innovative solutions tend to boil down to the same basic idea: get the local municipal government to borrow hundreds of millions of dollars and then spend that money on a massive housing development which will, somehow, generate the income needed to service the debt.

Michael Bell, in the video above, makes the very good point that architecture and architects are largely absent from the suburbs. But I guess that I was really looking for something much lower-cost than the mega projects that the teams in the MoMA show came up with. Certainly lower in up-front cost, anyway. The foreclosure crisis was caused by people borrowing enormous sums of money and then finding themselves unable to pay it back. The last thing we want to do is risk repeating that all over again.

I don’t know how you can say that the housing crisis was mostly a suburban thing. In downtown Portland all of the condo projects that were completed between 2007 and 2009 were subsequently turned into apartments or turned over to banks. Unsold units in bank possession were auctioned off or otherwise sold at a 40% discount. This reversed the trend of the prior decade of apartment buildings being converted into condos. Look around and the cranes are building new apartment buildings, not condos.

To the point of suburban architectural solutions to making housing affordable. You know that museum-curated shows are always ‘think big or don’t come’. When was the last time you saw a curated show present pragmatic proposals that could be installed in real life, the next day?

Real life solutions are already being played out in the burbs of Portland, and undoubtedly in hundreds of other burbs in the nation.

Orenco Station is supposed to be a New Urbanism project, although its growth has been driven by the big-box strip mail (a blend between the traditional strip mall and the single lot big box store).

A twist on Jane Jacobs romanticism connected to mass transit rail is discerned from stop after stop along the TriMet MAX, with tracts of townhomes and pocket parks within 1000’ of a MAX stop.

Not two weeks ago, the Portland Home Show unveiled the IKEA House. A collaboration between IKEA and a local company – Ideabox – that designs and builds prefab structures. It turns out, the solution to making housing affordable is to downsize the McMansion and make it practical inside.

In any case, the solution is either to expand suburbia outward or increase density — move out or move up.

Press and Links, Reference and Comparison

Reactions, responses, and reviews of the Museum of Modern Art’s recently opened exhibition regarding housing in the American suburbs have steadily been popping up here and elsewhere on the Internet. The five design proposals put forth in Foreclosed: Rehousing the American Dream have been called “propositions” in the spirit of instigation, catalyzing necessary conversation on cultural assumptions and priorities. I admit that I am too closely tied to the exhibition’s project to offer any sort of fair review, but it is with that spirit in mind that I argue those five propositions and the show in which they are contained manage both to reveal and underscore a fundamental conflict in the planning, design, and development of affordable housing and in the approaches taken and not taken in response to the crisis still being faced.

In rather simplistic terms, one can categorize that conflict with a series of dichotomies: speculative versus public; wholesale versus incremental; top-down versus bottom-up; and central versus local. It is in this context that I turn to a couple of recent articles that provide insights and suggestions for the way forward.
In rather simplistic terms, one can categorize that conflict with a series of dichotomies: public/private, large/small, national/local, and most popularly top-down/bottom-up. In many ways, American Suburbia has long been the locus of this conflict. It is, after all, the birthplace of NIMBYism, which requires at minimum the imagined territory of a backyard.

Of course large-scale, system-wide, policy-based approaches to the crisis of foreclosure and housing affordability should require and enable local participatory processes, community input, and context specificity.

One at a time, we must try to save homes from foreclosure and save communities from collapse, but we must also recognize that these are band-aid measures unless they include long-term sustainable strategies and policies for sheltering Americans in homes they can afford within communities where they can work. Acknowledging this epidemic scale, it is relevant to note that the Occupy movement is not merely a grassroots initiative; it is a network from the bottom calling for action at the top.

The result of these decisions is that each project represents a mixture of real and fictitious possibility. As such, reactions to these projects are reactions both to places and processes that might be as well as to the places and processes that currently are. Perhaps what is most compelling about the work in Foreclosed are the projects’ attempts at pulling apart suburbia’s binary conflicts and forcing an acknowledgement of problematic premises within the real status quo.

Among the questions on the table is that of the role of architecture (and architecture within the museum) in the search for workable solutions, to which the stock answer within the field is something about synthetic problem solving and visionary thought leadership. The first step may simply be the difficult and contentious public identification of where the problems actually lie in order to move beyond top/bottom and toward throughout/within, a step architects and the MoMA have taken before. In 1934, the museum exhibited America Can’t Have Housing aimed at “show[ing] why America needs housing and yet is so backward at filling this need.”[1] That was several architectural lifetimes ago and the specifics of the housing problem were different, but it seems much of the conversation was the same. In the museum’s Bulletin, Carol Aronovici (chairman of the committee responsible for that exhibition) refers to the rationalized plans of Modernism when he writes, “Impatient with the confusion of our cities and unable to find a solution which would provide for the essential human needs, many of these innovators have presented radical schemes for city planning as fantastic as they are inconsistent with the structure of modern society.” He continues, “This is perhaps not the fault of these innovators, but rather of the social order under which our cities have grown up...We cannot hope to rebuild our cities without changing our social and economic structure...”[2]

1. This is a democracy. We have nobody to blame but the 51% of people who elect those who allow the 1% to exploit us and steal from us. Tighten financial regulations, more low cost/free public programs, subsidizing green energy and public transport as well as other welfare programs... these are values. One party in America cares about them, one doesn’t.

These aren’t architectural problems. They are political and social problems. The cities we live in represent the values of the people in America, unfortunately. If/when Americans evolve some and start looking forward rather than backwards, and start making political decisions to match, these problems with irresponsible development will be a long way towards being resolved.

As the American dream evolves, so too will the American landscape. But essentially, this is about politics in the end. Architects can only point out the root problems and propose solutions that point to them, as this article suggests. I don’t have any problem with utopian proposals. Architects aren’t the financiers and architects aren’t the home buyers. It’s up to the wealthy and to average Americans to change their values. Most architects are already much farther down the evolutionary path on that front than the average American voter.


A New Conversation, (Un)Realistic Proposals
Challenge of Suburbia, Land Use and Density, Retrofit or Redesign

Cities and Suburbs, Land Use and Density, Reference and Comparison, Scale

Affordable Housing, Homeownership, The Market, Reference and Comparison

Scale

——


Overall, I was surprised and amused by the similarities between our (student) proposals and these (professional) proposals; many of the ideas and intentions were the same, leading me to wonder if these ideas are architectural "lads" that circulate almost subconsciously here in the city. See commentary below on each project for more specifics.

Since Hillary is a GSAPP professor and I've seen this project before (she presented it during the housing studio), I'll pass over it. Suffice to say that it is more on the radical/speculative end of the spectrum of proposals.

Michael Bell is another critic at GSAPP, but not one I've had before. Although his proposal is not quite what one would call "foreclosed," its ideas are definitely on the speculative side and are something I would want to see developed further. I am also interested in the "social" aspect of his proposals; that is, how does this "neoliberal" product relate to the city in which it will be built? Do these new housing developments have any real impact on the urban landscape?
Michael Bell is another critic at GSAPP, but not one I've had before. Although his group's proposal was filled with slick renderings, I was not at all convinced, because it didn't look like anyone on the team had really thought about or looked at Florida's climate. There was text saying that the project would do this or that regarding climate, but one look at the images was enough to show that it would be ridiculous in Temple Terrace. All that glass would need to be washed continuously! Besides that, where is the vegetation in the renderings? Nothing in Florida looks like the images below - stark white and reflective - because it would blind you, and vegetation takes over whenever it gets a chance. Maybe it's just the style of the images, but it looks to me like no one on the design team had been to Florida.

3. Zago Architecture, "Property with Properties"
This is another project that left me feeling unconvinced. The talk about "misregistration" and flexible boundaries etc. didn't seem to do much to change the overall standard suburban layout of the proposed subdivision. The models were amazing, although Seussical in their color choices and shapes.

4. WORKac, "Nature-City"
(Another GSAPP-related firm) I didn't look at the text for this one as thoroughly as I should have, but I blame this on the craziness of the visual material. I'm not totally sure what's going on, but it seems pretty cool. The ensemble of weird shapes makes me think of Koolhaas, specifically of "City of the Captive Globe," while the main site model really begged for having a model train going around it. I can't say that the project made sense, but it was fun to look at.

ZA took a subtle approach, "creating a richer mix of uses, housing types, living situations, and landscapes than the serial repetition of an individual home with a driveway and patch of lawn would allow." The blurred look in the renderings is intentional misregistration ("a printing-process error that leads to blurred images") used metaphorically. The team also allowed a little more nature in via seasonal rivers and natural wildlife routes and made the roads narrower and "more circuitous."
That stretch of the 15 freeway is always sooo windy. Trucks would literally flip on their side. I am surprised people would actually consider living there.

is this what exurbia looks like an meth?

It would good for everyone if the Pomona became a job center. Places like Rialto, Fontana, Chino Hills, and Rancho Cucamonga wouldn’t be such far-off exurbs. There’s even an international airport (ONT) right next to Pomona.

@guest #3: Yes, and ONT is owned and being run into the ground by LA World Airports (owns LAX).

@guest #3: From what I can tell a gypsy curse was put on Pomona a long time ago. That city just can’t get it together. Ontario an Rancho are more likely the job centers.

What a juvenile proposal. Looks like student work.

@guest #5: For what it’s worth, Ontario has tried valiantly to remake the town into a jobs center. The area west of the airport is filled with warehouse space for distribution centers and other industrial use. Sadly, the economy tanked and the progress they were making is gone.

Gorgeous renderings, but I can’t imagine houses like this actually selling or being nice to be in, not that the current suburban developer offerings are so nice but at least they are what people want.

@guest #6: This is either the work of a naif or a genius. I’m afraid I don’t have the architectural sophistication myself to determine which.

How does this “Fix” anything? The problems are economic stupidity and corruption, not architecture.

@guest #6: Agree. When you remove the Yours/Mine designation, it evolves to the “It’s yours to maintain, but mine to use” mentality. The resultant building imagery looks like a Tim Burton claymation model—and not in a good way. This is an interesting idea, but the result is more pastiche than real content.

I wonder how little this office pays... if at all

We went to check the community out a few days ago. Best way to know how livable a neighborhood is... Ask those who live there. We spoke to three people who have homes there and they enjoy it there. That’s what we will look for. We don’t care what outsiders say... Lol

Zago Architecture’s proposal for fixing recession-ravaged Rialto, CA, showing now as part of MoMA’s FORECLOSED curated: xcTQHyjk

Follow.
Anonymous wrote:

Paradigm shift. Foreclosures aside for a moment, if you will allow me, the last 50 or so years have seen the continuing expansion of our population into suburbs, into safe, reasonably secure, more open aired environments where one could drive to work in a reasonable amount of time, shop close to home and educate your children at a local school. This study, I have not read it, seems to advocate a reversal of that movement. A compaction of the habitable structures into higher density areas with less automobile with the option of public transportation. Those first two words came from a long conversation I had with a loyally knit group of home builders and developers over coffee one morning. Consensus was that without a paradigm shift in buyer attitude about whether they could expect the livability, security and comfort and a level of freedom in a high density housing project as they would expect in a “normal” development, it had limited appeal. (Their demographic target(s) were the first/second time home buyer with children). I don’t believe that shift will occur without a far more serious change than the foreclosure crisis. And, knowing a bit about government and how it “thinks” I’d venture a guess that their stereotypes of high density housing is limited to a condominium complex with a swimming pool and 2car attached garages. ciao 3/21/2012 8:36 PM CDT

Anonymous wrote:

Have you forgotten the sad lessons of Pruitt-Igoe. Since then the hard road to “Love thy neighbor as thy self” in America has been shattered by inner city Gangs on one side & Gated WEALTH on the other. The American dream for the rest of us (the dying middle class) has become a survival Hell!!! Notes that the GREED & ME first failures have happened...perhaps we can have SOCIAL change. TRY this. Housing complexes with Cultural places which are inclusive of ALL classes & cultures.

Howard Roark 3/20/2012 2:57 AM CDT

Anonymous wrote:

Has there been any actual success stories of ‘big-box’ (with 20-acre asphalt parking lot) redevelopment? I haven’t seen any. My impression is that Wal-Mart would rather abandon the place to the skateboarders and the urban campers before they would sell out to Target or Kohls. 3/20/2012 12:15 PM CDT

Anonymous wrote:

In response to - Anonymous: "...any actual success stories of 'big-box' (with 20-acre asphalt parking lot) redevelopment? I haven't seen any." 3/22/2012 12:15 PM CDT

See Denton, TX public library - a former grocery store turned library: http://archrecord.construction.com/projects/btas/archives/libraries/06_Denton/overview.asp Published right here, in ArchRecord back in May 2006. 3/24/2012 12:52 PM CDT

Scott Kobewka

Developers react to MoMA’s “Foreclosed” bit.ly/GGWldf 8:54 AM - 21 Mar 12 via TweetDeck - Embed this Tweet

George Osner, AICP

Shifting Suburbia, Developers React to MoMA’s “Foreclosed: Rehousing the American Dream” @ArchRecord archrecord.construction.com/news/2012/03/15/ShiftingSuburbia - Embed this Tweet

Allison Arleif

Really thoughtful piece on MOMA’s "Foreclosed" at polit thepolisblog.org/2012/03/new-yo... (HT:@pdssmith) 8:53 PM - 21 Mar 12 via Twitter - Embed this Tweet

Architect

Reality Check: Developers React to MoMA’s Show, “Foreclosed: Rehousing the American Dream” bit.ly/H6nSeG

8:02 PM - 21 Mar 12 via Twitter - Embed this Tweet

MoMA Rehouses the American Dream

One would be hard-pressed to find a more jarring juxtaposition to the new exhibit “Foreclosed: Rehousing the American Dream” than the venue itself: New York’s Museum of Modern Art. MoMA is pre-High Line Big Apple contemporary, with glass, steel and high-end patrons. It is located in a very high-end neighborhood, a far cry from cities like Rialto, Calif., and Cicero, Ill. discussed in the exhibit. One is far more likely to be standing next to a Cariocu discussing her new downtown condo than suburbanites wondering about foreclosure or falling property values. At $25 a ticket, an hour of museum entrance fees on a typically busy weekday could probably buy an entire block in many of the hard-hit suburban communities across the country.

That said, it is high time that a high-profile American cultural institution took on the question of housing and the future of the American Dream, and the exhibit does an admirable job of asking some important questions.
Unfortunately, most of these ideas get lost in the pretty models and large-scale renderings, buried under architectural gloss and the dominance of design. I have the utmost respect for the goals of the Buell Hypothesis, and I would argue that most of us at Polis are attempting to engage in a new public conversation on urbanism. However, I question the degree to which the exhibit pushes this conversation forward. Perhaps it is my own distrust of high architecture, or of architecture and architects as the primary drivers of this conversation. Much is made in the Buell text of the history of modernism and public housing, a history that made many non-designers like myself inherently distrustful of a conversation about changing cities that seems to foreground physical models.

The failure of this exhibit to highlight a fact that it clearly knows, and instead fall back on the enticing eye candy of design, is all the more frustrating because of its location. New York City has long been home to some of the most innovative ideas in collective property ownership, from co-ops to mutual housing associations.

Rebecca Thu Mar 22, 10:52:00 AM EDT
Thanks Alex for a great post with a much-needed critical perspective! I hope I can see the exhibit myself this summer, and I will have your comments in mind. I agree that the discussion needs to be pushed forward, especially as the human tendency all too often is to look back.

Yake Thu Apr 12, 03:14:00 PM EDT
I didn’t see the exhibit in person like you did, Alex, but I did read about it. The part that really got under my skin was when I read that the participants, to prepare for this exhibition, had spent some time “in residence” at PS 1 in Long Island City.

Would it really have killed them to spend some time in — gasp — actual suburbs? I guess that was just a bridge too far.

It confirmed my pre-existing notion, which I think you echo, that architecture, generally speaking, is not a discipline that has much that’s meaningful to contribute towards these issues of redefining the American Dream. To critique it and to change it, it’s helpful to have even a smidgen of understanding of why it’s powerful and widespread among so many people.

Hannah Vanbiber

I can’t stop looking at the models. moma.org/interactives/e... (Read about it here: thepolishblog.org/2012/03/new-yo... #LIFEINTHEFUTURE??

Al Javiera

Much’s been written about MoMA’s Foreclosed exhibit, but when Alex Schafran writes, you should read: thepolishblog.org/2012/03/new-yo... short & sweet.

Homeownership, Land Use and Density, Silliness and Seriousness

A New Conversation

What we need to take from the Buell Hypothesis is that we need to rethink housing in North America. Specifically, what does it mean to “own” your home? What priorities should we put on helping homeowners? What about renters?

Hopefully this can start two conversations: how can we design communities so that they are more affordable, efficient, and supportive, and secondly, how do we start to address a culture heavily dependent on quantity of housing rather than quality of community? Given the continuing stagnation of economic conditions, this is a conversation that needs to start soon, as the foundations we depend on are not built to last.

The really cool part of this project is not thinking about the house in holistic terms, but in terms of separate functional rooms (the kitchen, bedroom, washroom etc). Here, the idea is for families to indicate what kind of spaces they need, and make these spaces interchangeable, making some spaces, like living rooms, multi-family household sections, which keeping other rooms separate. Its a bit radical with a touch of crazy, but hey, some of the best ideas are.

Internet Banter

April 2012
Foreclosed: Rehousing the American Dream

In 1774, the Declaration of Colonial Rights declared that the colonists of North America had the immutable right to enjoy "life, liberty and property". Two years later this document was reworked into the Declaration of Independence, and man's immutable rights were tinkered with in order to replace "property" with "the pursuit of happiness". Yet while "property" was struck from the record its spirit lingered on: owning a house became a key component of the fantasy of upward social mobility that we now know as the American Dream. This dream of property ownership never seemed more attainable than in the first decade of the 21st Century, when lax regulation, cheap credit and financial speculation led to a building boom and subsequent bust.

They are responding to the Buell Hypothesis, a long and somewhat loopy text in the form of a Socratic dialogue, put forward by the Buell Center at Columbia University whose aim is to "change the dream" of property ownership in America. Its maxims are perverse but enjoyable and often hit the mark. "The private house," it states, "[is] just as institutionalized within social and economic policy as a public housing complex".

This sort of vague, non-ideological collectivism hangs over the entire show. Designs by Visible Weather and, in particular, Zago Architecture, stress the blurring of the usual lines between public and private, renting and owning, residential and commercial sites. Such imprecise boundaries give these projects a Ballardian air: what use is changing the dream if you replace it with a nightmare?

The main problem with the show was that the architects involved seem torn between providing sweeping visionary gestures and wanting to offer immediate answers to an immediate problem. Those who chose the latter path offer solutions that are, if anything, more dispiriting than the quasi-dystopic views of their colleagues. Studio Gang Architects' repurposing of an old freight railway station in Cicero, Illinois into differing housing typologies where "informal entrepreneurial businesses" would flourish seems a purely urban solution paying little attention to a suburb's innate characteristics. After all, the problem the suburbs face is not a lack of housing but a surplus of it. Foreclosed seems less an

Much of the blame for the economic crisis has fallen on Wall Street, whose weapons of mass financial destruction helped inflate the housing bubble. A new exhibit at New York City’s Museum of Modern Art, “Foreclosed: Rehousing the American Dream,” goes further by linking the crisis to longer-term trends in housing and urban planning. The exhibit calls into question the American dream of homeownership and the way it has been packaged and sold in the form of a car-dependent, single-family house in the suburbs.

The displays include placards with statistics that show how housing in five different suburban communities has become financially unsustainable and environmentally unsound. Wall-mounted texts feature excerpts from an imagined conversation between Socrates and one of his students—which takes place in a traffic jam—about how to change dominant cultural narratives that disparage public housing and public transportation.

Architectural models offer stylized solutions to suburban ills. Suburbs accessible by proposed high-speed rail corridors are retrofitted with high-density developments, which in some cases are striped of streets. Instead of overpriced single-family

American Dream, Land Use and Density

The Exhibition, Land Use and Density, Retrofit or Redesign, Scale, Sustainability

Comments on Foreclosed


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This exhibit comes at a critical time. Right-wing organizations like the Heritage Foundation have been churning out polemics against public transportation and zoning for higher-density development. A GOP-dominated Congress is also on the attack. Last year it cut funding slated for the 2009 stimulus bill’s signature infrastructure project, the high-speed rail initiative. House Republicans appear to have given up on their attempts to include a mass-transit-crushing amendment in their controversial five-year, $260 billion transportation bill. Still, a paralyzed Congress is on the verge of allowing the current bill to expire on March 31 without any new legislation for continued funding.

Much of the increase in consumption was tied to the growth in sprawl. To find more affordable homes, families have moved to suburbs farther and farther from their workplaces. But for every dollar saved by living in more affordable neighborhoods, Americans were spending 77 cents more on transportation, according to a 2005 study by the nonprofit Center for Housing Policy. And commuting time lost to congestion has increased fivefold in the past quarter-century. As Housing and Urban Development Secretary Shaun Donovan put it in his keynote speech for the workshop phase of the exhibit, “Our affordable housing strategy was effectively, ‘If you can’t afford a home near a job or transportation, just keep driving. Drive until you find a home you can afford.’”

One of the main themes in “Foreclosed” is that the car-dependent suburban house is a form of public subsidy, since the federal mortgage tax deduction and low-interest government housing loans helped fuel the bubble. Although private developers built and profited from most of the sprawl, taxpayers subsidized its infrastructure with roads, utility lines and water mains. Instead of being an engine of social mobility, homeownership has turned millions of Americans into debt slaves tied to houses that are continuing to lose value five years after the bubble burst.

The exhibit invited five multidisciplinary teams led by architects to develop site-specific plans for five actual communities, with input from local residents. Models include familiar eco-friendly, sustainable initiatives, from light rail and co-generation electrical plants to recycling centers and community gardens. Some models include light industrial facilities and workspaces adjacent to residential areas to eliminate commutes. Most of the plans also include changes in predominant forms of homeownership.

Several design critics have disparaged the MoMA show for some of its try solutions, such as the nature corridors in Rialto, California, populated by elephants and the MOS design for Orange, which would put mixed-use buildings into existing streets, leaving little room for cars. However, as with many architecture exhibits, the elaborate models in “Foreclosed” should be seen as starting points for discussion rather than completed plans. The resounding message of this powerful exhibit is that we cannot go back to business as usual when it comes to our built environment.
Stuart Varney (SV): It seems to me that this exhibit is from the elites telling us how we should live. We should all live in cities, and if we don’t live in cities we should turn our suburbs into cities. That’s the way we should live. Isn’t that the elites going at us and telling us how we mere mortals should live?

Alex Ulam (AU): No, it’s not the elite. It’s the way our tax... It’s the way our housing policy has been oriented for the last twenty or thirty years. It’s unsustainable—

SV: We should not be organizing ourselves and where to live. Now the elites are telling us how we should be doing it.

AU: They are making some suggestions, but—listen—it’s unsustainable for people to live in suburbs.

SV: Who says?

AU: Well most Americans actually spend more money on transportation than they do on medical care or on taxes. The average family of four that makes $50,000 spends somewhere between $7,900 and—

SV: So there’s now an exhibit pointing out that the current way we live, the kind of houses that we live in, where we group together, that is unsustainable. And we, the highly intelligent people show you how to live. Notably, like that [Visible Weather’s model] on the screen. Isn’t that rather elitist, Alex, really?
Shibani Joshi (SJ): I love this concept, because I think this idea—the white-picket-fence dream—is now starting to get out-dated...It's not working anymore.

SV: But don't you think we can decide for ourselves...?

SJ: But this is what artists are doing. This is what they do. They inspire thoughts. They inspire discussion. What's wrong with it?

AU: It’s our housing policy too. Do you like your tax dollars subsidizing these developers building these tract houses in the suburbs—

SV: Yes.

AU: —that are completely financially unsustainable?

SV: Who says they're completely financially unsustainable? Who says this?

AU: Well, why is poverty increasing at double the rate in suburbs as it is in cities?

SV: Because maybe poor people have moved out of the city and gotten a place in suburbs.

AU: Well that's the only place they can afford to buy houses.

SV: What is MoMA doing putting on such an obviously political exhibit? What are they doing?

AU: The Museum of Modern Art has a tradition of putting on—

Sandra Smith: I was going to say, artists are never political.

SV: It’s always the elite telling the rest of us how we should live, isn’t it?

AU: No, it’s—

SV: Always.

AU: No, in fact, the state of California is enacting zoning policies to make suburbs more dense. You know, and the Wall Street Journal just pointed out last week that they are trying to, instead of having four houses per acre, they’re going to have twenty houses per acre.

SJ: What's wrong with sparking a discussion? Foreclosures are still on the rise. Home prices are still declining. This is bringing up a different concept.

SV: I want to live the way I wish to live. I want society to evolve the way it wishes to evolve.

AU: You care about where your tax dollars go, don’t you?

SV: Yes, and I'll vote to make sure they go in the right place.

AU: Yes, well maybe right now too many tax dollars have been going to the suburbs, and maybe it’s time to have the tax payer dollars to go to cities and making certain suburbs more sustainable and more like cities.

SV: Does this MoMA place have some sort of tax subsidy? Does it?
SV: Does this MoMA place have some sort of tax subsidy? Does it?
AU: They probably don't pay taxes because it's a nonprofit institution.
SV: That's a form of subsidy, isn't it?

All these communities had received stimulus money in 2009, and the designers were often approaching the sites after the money had already been spent. Though this makes the exhibit seem like a critique of irreversible and shortsighted choices in spending, it is hopeful in offering new solutions to the American Dream. Michael Bell, who worked on the Temple Terrace project near Tampa, compared the hundreds of millions of dollars of research that has gone into Honda Accords and iPhones to the tiny amount of money (“probably about $5000”) that has gone into the research of single family housing. Moma's exhibit doesn't offer itself up as a solution to the lack of research, either; the design ideas in “Foreclosed” are often both practical and applicable, but they are ultimately more speculative and visionary. GetawayStyle also aspires to this new dream — that housing can suit our everchanging lives while having an awareness of the greater world outside our walls.

Community Participation, The Workshop

Land Use and Density, Quality of Life

The Exhibition, Reference and Comparison

Press and Links, (Un)Realistic Proposals

Foreclosed: April 2012

Cities in crisis: Rehousing the American Dream

Rethinking suburbs as self-sufficient urbanized areas where work and life coexist in communal and environmentally-sustainable ways are the best use of the masses of land that have become unfeasible to support after the foreclosure crisis. The nuclear family of the 20th century has become the tactic of families, with the housing crisis and economic downturn making it difficult to sustain this lifestyle. In this presentation, Michael Meredith and Hilary Sample discuss the viability of rethinking suburban areas and how they can become more sustainable and self-sufficient.
Retrofit or Redesign, Sustainability

On April 16, 2012 at 12:08 pm
HG Watson said

Do you mind me asking, are you from Windsor? The description is bang on.

I think this is really interesting given that this project is taking shape for real in Detroit. The Detroit Film Theatre is actually featuring a few documentaries this month about urban farming and renewal in the city http://www.dia.org/detroitfilmt theatre/14/DFT.aspx.

On April 16, 2012 at 4:45 pm
Caroline Diezyn said

Very close to Windsor! Fascinating that you guessed it. Thanks very much for pointing me toward that project and thanks for reading and commenting.

On April 16, 2012 at 5:50 pm
HG Watson said

I got to school in Windsor so it's definitely familiar territory. This project is very interesting though.

On April 16, 2012 at 4:42 pm
Elly said

I was going to mention urban farming in Detroit! I'm fascinated by this development. I think it brings real hope to blighted areas, especially those areas which have been historically "food deserts".

On April 16, 2012 at 7:26 pm
Angie said

Um, where is historic preservation in this conversation??? HP must be a part of the conversation for community sustainability.

On April 17, 2012 at 9:16 am
Caroline Diezyn said

Hi there, that's a great suggestion for the designers behind the exhibit. This is a review on the exhibit, so I couldn't include every aspect of the discussion. Opening up for comments allows for that, so don't worry if it hasn't been brought up yet -- you're the perfect one to bring it up.

On April 17, 2012 at 6:33 am
Lady Brett said

fascinating! just great -- i want to watch all of these.

i live in a city that is wholly embracing (sub)urban sprawl - it's a small city, so this is a (relatively) recent development. the difficult part is that it feels so unstoppable when the entire system of city government is set up to encourage single-use, encourage sprawl (things like zoning laws that make home business illegal, or lack of impact fees, so that developers don't have to pay a cent to get utilities run to new developments outside the current city), and discourage historic preservations, as angie said (or, more accurately, only encourage it in affluent neighborhoods).

this from someone who has wholly embraced the home part of the american dream, if not the other parts. but owning a home has been a dream of mine for...ever -- and it is just as amazing as i always thought, the thing that really strikes me is the number of homeowners i know who don't actually get to live in their house.
Lady Brett: Just curious. What do you find amazing about owning your home and what are some of the complaints about people who do own their own home and don't like it?

I'm not intending to answer for her, but I identify with where she's coming from, so I'll give MY answer, if you don't mind.

There was a car commercial a few years ago where some young adults are dancing in their apartment and the downstairs neighbor gets mad, so they get in their VW and go buy tons of giant speakers, and it shows them setting them up, and then dancing and jumping on the floor as hard as they can. And then, just when you're thinking they're the biggest dicks ever, it zooms out and they don't live in an apartment anymore; they bought a house.

THIS is why I love my house. I can do what I want in it, I can fill all the fixtures with red lightbulbs, I can dig a trench in my yard and not fill it in all winter long, I can mellow-rock out to Halou all night long with my windows open, and my neighbors love me, because when they asked me to stop hard-rocking-out to Ministry with the windows open, I DID!

I think people get tired of paying a mortgage (which feels like rent) and not getting any of the benefits of renting. For instance: when my toilet backs up, I have to pay the plumber; when my window screen pops out, I have to shove that rubber bead thingy back in there for like the next three hours; when I get tired of my neighborhood, or my new neighbors, or my tiny, cluttered house, I can't just move...

Home-owning is rewarding, but definitely not for everyone.

It gets complicated because the point of the exhibit Caroline is reporting on is basically that home-ownership like that — unrestricted and wholly self-fulfilling — WAS the American Dream, but is no longer. We don't have the space, or the money, or the resources, or the financial institutions to support that sort of everyone-gets-exactly-what-they-want lifestyle. The communities we built in that image are sprawling and unsustainable, and the designers and artists participating in the exhibit were tasked with imagining how society could take existing infrastructure and reimage it in more effective, community-focused ways.

shannon —
my home is the hobby i've always wanted — i have always and forever loved building, fixing things...handyman work. apartment/rental life (for me they were always the same) was boring to me. the ability to customize my house the way i like is part of it, but the bigger part is that if my sheetrock needs repair i get to repair the sheetrock rather than call someone to do it. it's awesome.

there are also aspects of space and community which are not exclusive to houses or homeowners, but which have correlated in my life — urban homesteading stuff like growing food and composting and such, and talking with the neighbors, or meeting folks who walk their dogs (or kids with rc cars) by the house while you're gardening.
The exhibition transports the idea that architecture as a medium effectively contemplates possible futures for cities.

CHANGE THE DREAM AND YOU CHANGE THE CITY

However, the approaches appear somewhat utopian and idealistic. For instance, the proposed model for Oranges, New Jersey would eliminate almost all of the streets which of course would have ecological benefits, but this is hardly realizable. Although car dependency in the suburbs is an issue – which needs to be tackled – it would have been important to also see some ideas which actually could be realized immediately. Within this model cars would not be able to exist at all in the center of the city. In addition, the model Nature City proposes that organic waste should be burned which in return would produce Methan and, thus, create fuel. However, it is questionable if this is realizable in a city due to the smell which is released. Moreover, the proposed housing solutions for Cicero, Illinois are great since they give an individual freedom, however, standardized housing solutions often create issues in reality.

Foreclosed: Rebuilding the American Dream

The typical image of an American suburb, as we can see in movies and TV, is nothing else but boring, monochrome, seething world with cheap fast-food restaurants, old gas stations, and a mix of problems, such as poverty, drugs, and racial squabbles.

However, the original idea of designing neighborhoods was to escape all these city life hardships and to live in a quiet, green and neat place with a family. Suburbs have long been the sites of a key component of American dream – personal ownership of a single-family home, an investment that once guaranteed stability and legacy for next generations.

Some ideas might seem quite odd for some people, but, in general, they all have practical sense and innovatory view on the problem I stated above.

This is Temple Terrace. This drawing shows the houses. The drawings show the roads that service those houses. This is the infrastructure. It's paid for by the city, the state, the federal government. The houses are theoretically private although they are financed in ways that are ultimately public because of mortgage securities, etc. If you follow that as a financial trail and wonder about what's public and what's private, at some level it becomes really impossible to justify that much public money to support that much public housing.

Then we took a 14 acre site and developed half of 14 acres as housing. So essentially we have a 7 acre building. It sounds large to some people. There are many 7 acre buildings the United States.
There is a very long, complex promenade that is a little like the promenade of the suburbs. It is still to some extent the same choreography but greatly compressed and you are walking for far more of it. This world is constituted with one type of privacy and this world has a very different sense of privacy which is actually very open but two are highly aware of each other. And in our logic the privacy is not completely walled yourself off from the world but privacy is a sense of realizing who is where and what they are doing. And that allows you to be calm in your own space. In the end we are making about 40 units an acre.

We are arguing that Temple Terrace as a model ought to not only acquire the land but also to keep the land rather than handing the land back over to a private developer in the name of the free market; that there could be a way that the government actually could do redevelopment. What we argue is that the city should get much more control; that people should get much richer and much more complex projects; and that in fact if you do it right; it might be possible to do better than the market.

We tried to use structural engineering to extend space. We tried to use environmental engineering to make space not only more comfortable but also to greatly diminish the cost of living there. Our housing units are about 30% of the energy cost of an existing house.
L: Press and Links
R: The Exhibition, Press and Links

Foreclosed: April 2012

MoMA | Foreclosed: Rehousing the American Dream bit.ly/20yQupom

MOMA. Foreclosed. Living the American Dream. Architectural model for WORKac/S Nature City fo pinterest.com/pin/242634986...

foreclosed: rehousing the american dream @ Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) instag.am/p/KVh-tVFibxw/

The Exhibition, Press and Links
not paying close attention have seemed to mistake it for a standard architectural exhibition, and in their defence it does have some very swish models – this is MoMA, after all. But this is not a show about form, in the old MoMA tradition. It is about shifting expectations, somewhat more challenging terrain. Its underlying thesis is something called the Buell Hypothesis, the product of Columbia University architecture students and faculty, that argues that the American dream must be reinvented wholesale for the 21st century.

The resulting projects, for actual American suburbs, are predictably varied in their practicality and architectural flair. A proposal for an Oregon community designed around a compost mountain by the New York firm WORKae seemed especially daring. Chicago’s Jeanne Gang proposed the retrofitting of a derelict factory, and used it to piggyback an argument for better design and smarter financing options on the opinion page of The New York Times. Taken together, the projects would seem to suggest that the American suburbs should look a lot more like Europe, or really Holland. That is, they should be more dense, less dependent on the car, more flexible, and more environmentally friendly.

The response to this show has been almost overwhelmingly negative, which is unfortunate. The projects, so speculative in nature, were scattered in a way that made it hard to see the whole exhibit. The organizers should do better.
Academic Hubris, A New Conversation, (Un)Realistic Proposals


Pretty Little Pictures
Even when MoMA is tackling real issues, its obsession with image manages to obscure some of its most important content.

When I walked into the press opening of Foreclosed: Rehousing the American Dream at MoMA, an endless panel discussion was underway, and all I could do was tiptoe from model to model—from Studio Gang Architects’ charming Kenner Building Set take on Cicero, Illinois, to Andrew Zago’s new strategy for Rialto, California, which is represented by a batch of oddly shaped, multicolored boxes that don’t appear to say anything specific about housing. I spent time pondering Nature-City, the Keizer, Oregon, project designed by a team led by Amale Andraos and Dan Wood of Work AC. Its biomorphic form reminded me of Arcosanti, the Paolo Soleri “city” that has been rising in the desert north of Phoenix for decades, and its concept evoked the long-postponed eco-city of Dongtan, China, near Shanghai. Then I shrugged and walked away. A play on that old line from Roman Polanski’s Chinatown came to mind: “Forget it, Jake. It’s MoMA.”
On a second visit, I was relieved to notice evidence of a persistent engagement with reality, which is remarkable for MoMA. There was, in each display, a small video screen showing scenes—very dreary, very believable—of the five towns in question. However, each of those screens is paired with one immediately beneath it, which was showing footage of impromptu studio talks given by the architects. Michael Meredith, for instance, was explaining the Pez-shaped buildings that MOS has crammed into the streets of the Oranges, in New Jersey: “This informality of the repetition of this module allows for these gaps of public space...” These jargon-filled videos had the unintended effect of making the architects seem even more divorced from reality than they are. It’s what happens when you pair architect-speak with, say, scenes of boarded-up houses. The juxtaposition is, I guess, an argument in favor of MoMA’s customary shunning of the real.

As I made my way through the gallery, I noticed that both Jeanne Gang’s project for Cicero and, in part, Andrew Zago’s for Rialto called for decoupling home ownership from ownership of the underlying land, which would, theoretically, cut home prices and create a new class of public property. This was the exhibition at its most provocative, addressing the forces that have most powerfully shaped suburbs and smaller cities: public policy, government regulations, zoning, the rules governing mortgages, the way roads and utilities are paid for. At its best, Foreclosed was not an architecture show at all. It was a mini-seminar on public policy—and an assault on conventional notions of private property.

Bell told me what his team was thinking: “One basic understanding of REITs that I often heard people criticize is that they’re essentially hedging instruments.” So the upswing in home prices in one part of the world might be played off a drop in value elsewhere. “Instead of real estate being held as a local asset, it gets bundled up as a global asset.”

Or as the financier put it, “It’s like a commune, except that no one is standing around playing hacky sack.” Maybe be meant Frisbee, but no matter. It’s interesting that it took an expert in finance to see the genuinely visionary idea that’s buried deep in this exhibition. I don’t think the models that fill most of the gallery have the power to upend convention—at this point, it would take a pretty outrageous architectural idea to shake up a MoMA visitor. However, given the paranoid tenor of our time, in which the president is routinely accused of being a socialist for bailing out Chrysler, and Tea Party types commonly regard efforts to reduce sprawl as a United Nations-driven attack on our freedoms, a museum show proposing the collective ownership of front lawns is wonderfully and unexpectedly subversive.

The principles of the architecture firms, MOS, Visible Weather, Studio Gang Architects, WORKac, and Zago Architecture led the five teams in designing alternative solutions to five unique sites. The teams created strategic solutions for the communities that went beyond building to rethink the connection between the natural environment and the built environment, pursuing new concepts in alternative energy sources, waste management and other operational programs.

 across the margin

by: Michael Shields

Change the Dream

Challenging the American Dream with the aid of the Buell Hypothesis

The American Dream has never really been my cup of tea. It never made sense to me. Maybe the world has shrunk over the last couple decades so that I, unlike generations prior who seem to have bought into the idea of the American Dream intimately, see the problems and needs of the human race more clearly. With that recent insight made possible through technology and shared information how can the blind pursuit of your own self interest and desires be the end all be all? How does this consumptive me-first attitude provide for the well being of your children and their children with the daunting realities present in today’s world? I read a quote by the author and economist Jeremy Rifkin that sums up this point better than I can. He said:

“You can’t have 6.8 billion cowboys out there and begin to think about bringing the species together in a global economy and a global biosphere.”

The American Dream is not a sustainable intelligent vision. The needs of the many are left out of the utopian backyard. And I have never witnessed, in all my days, a direct correlation between happiness and prosperity.

Presented to the viewing public at the MOMA are a series of models re-imagining the ways in which we could be cohabiting the world, ways in which we possibly should be. Each model...
The different models include infrastructure additions that seem too rational and essential to not be in tact already; indispensable items such as recycling centers, co-generating electrical plants, light rails, and even gardens for people to grow their own food. They display structures that could house families or groups of all shapes and sizes as that is the reality of the situation. The nuclear family is a thing of the past and possibly never truly existed. Life is not that simple and frankly never has been.

These models are examples of the type of communities we should be demanding! Furthermore the designers, and capable minds like them, should be in positions to make decisions in regards to planning. With great talent and intelligence SHOULD come great responsibility.

I am of a generation where many in my age group have a little change in their pocket. They, too, have procreated and need some more space. They need an alternative to the apartments that have sufficed prior to life’s little miracles and changes. But what options are there? We have been handed, in terms of fulfillment of these needs, a suburbs sprawled across the landscape with profit in mind rather than the things that truly matter. We were handed a culture dependent on the quantity of housing rather than community. And, we have been handed a suburbs that lack the intelligent design necessary to maintain environmental sustainability, social interaction, and dare I stretch to say, lacking a soul.

We were sold a faulty dream. But it is our own failing if we do not make an attempt to actually change that dream to meet the needs of all of us moving forward. We have brilliant ideas in circulation, everywhere. Ones that can lay the blueprints to a promising future. Heck, all you have to do is head to the Museum of Modern Art in New York to see for yourself.

If we can change the dream we can, possibly, change reality.


The Exhibition, Press and Links

Foreclosed: May 2012

THE ONCOMING HOPE
3/22/2012 theoncominghope 1 comment

ART AS LIFE: "FORECLOSED: REHOUSING THE AMERICAN DREAM"

Accompanied by a friend who’s as obsessed with architecture as myself, I was drawn into the vortex of a one-room mind-fuck called “Foreclosed: Rehousing the American Dream”.

Uniquely, this was not a contest. The five teams were invited to host open conversations with each other at MoMA, and the 5 designs, though wildly different, were actually the product of open collaboration. They have provided five new models of living, working, and commuting in a metropolis. Some of the ideas look like the product of a J.G. Ballard nightmare, but others are truly innovative.

The Exhibition

A New Conversation, Reference and Comparison, The Workshop

Responsibility, Sustainability
Press and Links, Role of the Museum


American Dream, Challenge of Suburbia, The Exhibition, Silliness and Seriousness

A New Conversation, (Un)Realistic Proposals

Foreclosed: Rehousing the American Dream, in which I ramble on about MoMA and architecture: theoncominghope.blogspot.com/2012/05/art-as... #architecture @moma

2:35 AM - 22 May '12 - Retweet - Favorite

Image Credit: Not provided in publication.
Foreclosed: May 2012

MOMA, we love you. Really, we do. We are card carrying members of the Museum of Modern Art and we diligently pay you a visit each and every time we’re in Manhattan. You’ve been a fixture on our Modern List from the start and we’re constantly sending family, friends and colleagues your way. We have no intention of changing any of this. But you did it again. We were just there and we saw the train wreck with our own eyes.

You took a critical issue of social and architectural importance and turned it into a theoretical art project. The last time you did this was with the Prefab Housing Exhibit (July-October 2008) which announced prefabricated architectural solutions to real housing issues; but really it was just an art project masquerading as something purposeful. It took three Negronis, two Compaçi Ô s sodas, and a shrimp cocktail at the MOMA bar to doctor the wounds from that show.

USA, 2009

In the summer of 2011, New York’s Museum of Modern Art invited Five Architects, Alvaro, Lynch, Buro Happold, DeArchitects, and Isozaki, to imagine a feasible plan for mass housing projects that could bridge the derogatory gap between the public and private housing systems. The exhibition was called Foreclosed: Re-housing the American Dream. Christian Oliano, the architect behind the project, shared his vision for the exhibition in the Stanford Arts Review, May 25, 2012. The exhibition, which ran from July to September 2011, featured proposals for housing that would bridge the gap between public and private. The exhibition was a success, and the proposals were praised by critics for their innovative and viable solutions.

In the American Dream, the struggle for housing is more than just a financial issue. It is a social and architectural problem that requires creative solutions. The Foreclosed exhibition by Christian Oliano was a step in the right direction towards addressing this issue. It is important to continue to support art that addresses social and architectural problems, and to encourage artists to think outside the box when coming up with solutions.
The show's mission was "to come up with inventive solutions for the future of American Suburbs." Great, we thought, let's see some solutions!

But just a few minutes into the exhibit and we wondered if we had taken a wrong turn back at the stark-white Mies van der Rohe inspired vestibule. Perhaps we had wandered into the surrealist room, or maybe we stumbled into a symposium discussion on deciphering nightmares. The models in the center of the room were disturbingly unrealistic; they all seemed to stem from dystopian visions of dense, industrial mega-plexes. Filling in the empty spaces, previously known as backyards, with geometrically arranged chaos seemed to be the priority for most schemes. The only thing missing were miniature figures from the film Blade Runner standing on lonely decks staring out over the vast disarray of their tiny surroundings.

If a design exhibit based on something as banal as the American suburbs cannot be understood and digested by other architects, it doesn't stand a chance at speaking to the cross-section of the American public—you know, the people who are actually living in the suburbs. Worse yet, exhibits like this are misleading people to believe that solutions like this are what architects do. It's giving every-day, hard-working, house-purchasing people the false impression that architects don't have both feet on the ground. Is it any wonder homeowners would rather just go to The Home Depot to accomplish that remodel than hire an architect?

MCMA, you did more damage than good with this show and you continue to widen the gap between architects and the American public. You probably delayed the needed discussion on what to do with the American suburbs by decades. We should know better, we should have learned by now. After all, you're not called the Museum of Modern Architecture, or the Museum of Modern Solutions. You're a Modern Museum of Art, and regardless of the issues you choose to take on, or the title of your exhibits, the final product is always art. There's nothing wrong with that in and of itself and there's nothing wrong with art, unless of course you pitch the exhibit as "inventive solutions for the future of American Suburbs". We propose that you change the show's title to "Foreclosed: Artistic Impressions of Rehousing the American Dream." Or maybe you've got some other ideas - let us know, we'll be the ones in the bar tipping back Negronis.

Grahampuba said...

Usually the eye roll comes at a roof garden with mature trees on the 93rd floor, but waterfalls...? Other thoughts would have been; are those Petri dish? are we plebs bacteria colonizing on your culture? I'd like to think I would have come to the same conclusion but I think I would have not made it past the waterfall Voltron skyscraper without cursing enough to be shown the door.
Fantastic post, you hit all my thoughts on this exhibition. I first lost it when looking at the Rialto, CA project that had an elephant in the project section. After all, nothing scales a project in Southern California better than an elephant.

What bothered me most about this exhibit was that the teams didn’t even respond to the very data that launched the project. When the number of “overcrowded units” in the U.S. is only 3% how did they arrive at answers that massively increase the density of the suburbs? Math doesn’t lie, but apparently architecture does.

I saw this back when it graced Arch Daily at some point. Larger issues aside, the MOS project is unequivocally bad. It reminds me more of a gridded version of elevated highways that dissected our cities in the 60’s. This typical created a “good” and “bad” side. Formally, the language of the complexes are imposing and completely unnatural to their contexts.

Otherwise, I’m of complete agreement that MoMa did more harm than good here.

Bad MOMA! Bad, bad MOMA.

At the risk of playing devil’s advocate, MOMA is only doing what MOMA does. But blaming them for popular culture is like blaming Lady Gaga for bologna sandwiches.

If architects want to know why only 2% of housing is designed by architects, they only need look in a mirror. A $200+/sf mirror.

Did I mention I was playing devil’s advocate?

Hehe, nice text!!

The German architectural magazine “Bauwelt” wrote about the exhibit too and — if I remember correctly — fancied the artiest “solution” the most… anyway, it’s very refreshing, that BUILD has both feet on the ground.

Campari has no “o” in its name.

I hope your Negronis were stirred, not shaken.

And yeah, that’s some bad architecture.

The Bauwelt review mentioned above is actually predominantly critical of the MoMA exhibition. Just some..
The Bauweil review mentioned above is actually predominantly critical of the MoMA exhibition. Just some quick snippets: Susanne Schindler, Princeton, writes that her first impression was along the line “seen it all before”. And that the mix and application of those styles/solutions was not always justified (Temple Town, FL). Most teams had given only cursory answers to the obvious and essential question of ownership. What’s more, with the exception of Gang Studio those answers did not seem to have influenced the proposals. Schindler also finds it strange that only Gang Studio has actually used the forclosed, now empty spaces in the solution of the problem they are part of. She lauds MOS Architects, NYC, for playing to the museum setting.

http://www.bauweil.de/cms/artikel.html?id=5504855#T90DM5ig9ac

It sounds a tad academic, but the exhibition has been pulling in crowds
with its use of appealing architectural models, videos, art installations, and
large-scale graphics. Even a Rubik’s Cube plays its part, helping to explain
Studio Gang’s presentation for Cicero, Ill., an aging suburb outside Chicago.
The cube, with its shifting components, represents the plan’s modular
“recombinant” housing, mostly within an abandoned factory; the concept
allows residents to buy only those parts of a dwelling that they need, adding
or subtracting rooms as their families grow or shrink.

Yet for all their superficial differences, all the plans “look at ways you can
have a denser population in suburbs relatively near a metropolitan center,
without giving up a sense of open air and the things people go to the sub-
urbs for in the first place,” says Bergdoll. In WORKac’s plan for Keizer, for
example, the community is five times more densely populated than a typical
suburban area—but also has three times the open space.

Envisioning more mingling of work and residential spaces—often difficult
under current zoning restrictions—the different plans also place an
emphasis on pedestrian-friendly design. For Orange Township, N.J., the
Or, as Socrates says to Glaucon while stuck on I-95, “It may be time to
dream a different dream.”
Karin Lipson. “Planning for a Different American Dream,” NYLuxury.com, May 31, 2012,
June 2012
Comments on Foreclosed

Amazing exhibit on redefining our suburbs but changing the 'America Dream'. Worth seeing if you're able moma.org/interactives/e... #MOMA

My favorite was Garden City, public pool is warmed by the heat radiated from the methane composting site underneath it! moma.org/interactives/e...

Love that this vision of a future city is basically a remix of classic townhouse design. Let's focus on reuse/repurpose. moma.org/interactives/e...

Super interesting exposition at MoMa. Foreclosed: Rehousing the American Dream. Revitalizing suburbia in the US moma.org/interactives/e...

Amal Andaos and Dan Wood of WORKac asked, "What if we could live sustainably and close to nature?" >>> Nature-City. moma.org/interactives/e...

MoMa's blog on 'Foreclosed: Rehousing the American Dream'. Sustainable urbanism moma.org/explore/inside...

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Memorial Day at MoMA

Last weekend I was able to see three exhibitions at the MoMA. Each of the exhibits had a different approach to American life. Especially important Charming! See the following photo which was taken at the gift shop.
Last weekend I was able to see three exhibitions at the MOWA. Each of the exhibits had a different focus, but related to the museum’s dedication to reinventing perceptions of art and bringing complex ideas to the public.
One thing the exhibit proves conclusively is that good suburban architecture is hard to do. City buildings often have a rich surrounding architectural fabric that provides an enlivening and forgiving context. Because buildings in rural environments are not beholden to larger context, they have an almost unchecked formal freedom. Suburban buildings, however, have the unique dual responsibility to both shape a vibrant environment and to hold their own as singular structures.

Does a design exhibit ominously called Foreclosed have a fighting chance to shape a new, hopeful vision for the American suburb, traditionally a no man’s land for architecture? All five of these accomplished schemes have been imagined by architects based in large cities who offer formal solutions to the suburban housing crisis, rather than aspirational ones devised by suburban residents themselves. Obviously, many Americans value the light, space, quiet, and autonomy that suburban living affords, but this lifestyle calculus is slowly changing as prospective homebuyers realize that energy and fuel will only become scarcer and more expensive as traditional suburb-to-city commutes become longer and more perilous.
“Sustainable” is a key word here in the most basic and fundamental sense, and it’s not really referring to solar panels and well-insulated windows. These interventions alter development patterns, funding structure, and conceptions of public and private space to ensure that satellite communities can survive rising energy prices, demographic biases against suburban lifestyles, and greater concern for carbon emissions. The question is, once these changes are wrought, do these places still function as suburbs?

Each of the five projects on display confounds common assumptions about what a suburb looks like and what it’s like to live in one. Many designs set out to provide integrated live/work spaces, active pedestrian life, increased architectural variety, greater social integration, and generous green spaces. Yet none offer an architectural vision that feels truly suburban. Instead, most projects propose dense, urban schemes.

The large scale of these projects, their abstract white renderings, and even their titles suggest that the best way to support ailing suburbs is to transform them into cities. Is there a way to develop suburbs as suburbs, a way to build less densely but also responsibly?

While rewriting zoning laws and mortgage requirements falls outside the architect’s traditional role, these extra-architectural ideas bring a fresh sense of reality to the designs. The need for designers to work hand-in-hand with financial experts and developers to effect deep change to suburbs—or anywhere else—might be the most important takeaway from the show.

T. Caine | June 28, 2012 at 1:00 pm | Reply

Very interesting and provocative piece. I have to wonder if it is not a bit of a critique on the stalled vernacular that defines most of America’s housing. For a while now, the vast majority of new housing that we build is largely a replication of an historic archetype that no longer accurately reflects the present nature of our society. We build more space than we need, or even spaces that we hardly ever use, because we think they’re “supposed” to be there. The quaint American home is a fallen star—fallen from grace. It’s days of glory and true architectural exploration are over, serving more as a diluted relic of a former era.

“In the summer of 2011, New York’s Museum of Modern Art invited five teams of architects, planners, ecologists,.... fb.me/24gPxcald

The beauty of architecture and creative problem solving - MoMa’s solutions to the Housing Crisis in the USA archidose.org/wp/2012/06/11/

Closing down Foreclosed #Suburbs take on MoMA architecture (@ Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) w/ 7 others) [pic]: 4sq.com/LEBvQx

The "Foreclosed: Rehousing the American Dream” exhibit at @MuseumModernArt is worth checking out. moma.org/foreclosed

Interesting for me to read that Rodney King apparently lived & died in Rialto, CA. moma.org/interactives/e... Has anyone picked up on that story?

Check out MoMa’s "Foreclosed” project! Five teams of architects, ecologists, city planners put together visions... fb.me/itStYQAk

note to self: moma.org/interactives/e... #urbanplanning
A New Conversation,
Press and Links

MoMA | Foreclosed: Rehousing the American Dream
MoMA.org/interactives/e...
Saw this exhibit on Friday...just wow. This will change the world.
Press and Links

Brilliant: Go see Foreclosed exhibit
@MuseumModernArt Can US remake suburbs post-crash? Architects tackle communities moma.org/interactives/e...
This prologue to the Hypothesis and the Foreclosed designs does a great job of explaining how the mortgage crisis is based on global finance -- ergo, so is homeownership. It also illustrates how suburbs are increasingly city-like, in terms of demographics, economics, and social conflict. Therefore changing conditions locally and globally necessitate a reconsideration of the suburban milieu, not just quick fixes to the existing infrastructure. But do the five designs point to effective "dreams" for Americans to consider?

Just about all of the speculations add density to their suburbs and increase propinquity, basically making the suburbs more urban to reflect their actual social and economic conditions.

When the various speculations are viewed through the framing of The Buell Hypothesis, the American Dream is inverted from homeownership to social and economic cooperation. In this sense it’s not surprising that people are dismissive of the exhibition. But if people are looking for ideas that maintain the suburban status quo, one may ask why they haven’t been discovered and implemented yet? A handful of architects will not have the answers to such a great problem, especially since it involves, as The Buell Hypothesis attests, global finances and infrastructure. The projects attempt to give the viewer and reader something to think about, but ultimately it’s the group at Columbia’s Buell Center that sparks this more than the models, drawings, and films from the architects.

Earlier this year Foreclosed: Rehousing the American Dream opened at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. The exhibition quickly became controversial, with some labeling it elitist and paternalistic, others defending it as powerful and ambitious. Here Reinhold Martin, co-organizer of Foreclosed, and Raphael Sperry and Amit Price Patel, of Architects/Designers/Planners for Social Responsibility, continue the debate — in a virtual roundtable — along with IDEO.org fellow Liz Ogbu and urban planner Tom Angotti of Hunter College.

REINHOLD MARTIN: ABOUT FORTY YEARS AGO...

More specifically they were asked, gently but persistently, to design public housing on publicly owned or supported land identified in The Buell Hypothesis: not “affordable housing,” or housing provided by “public-private partnerships,” but genuinely public housing that learns even from notorious precedents like the Pruitt-Igoe and Cabrini-Green “experiments,” as well as from far more successful examples that still endure in cities and suburbs across the country and around the world.

It is a sign of the times that this exhortation has proved controversial not because it reminds us of the economic inequity, the structural racism, and the gender violence that has marked every stage of so much welfare-state public housing, from inception to management, even as it challenges the apparent inevitability of such results. It is controversial because it suggests that the state, or the public sector — conceived along with civil society in terms of multiple, overlapping, virtual and actual publics — might play a more active, direct and enlightened role in the provision of housing and, by extension, of education, health care and other infrastructures of daily life in the United States. In other words, it is a direct challenge to the now-dominant paradigm of privatization. That the design teams did not entirely take up this challenge is, in my view, at least as interesting as what they actually did propose, and is perhaps symptomatic of how deeply the politics of privatization has shaped design culture. Simply put, can we no longer imagine architecture without developers?

It is equally interesting, and maybe troubling, that the overwhelming majority of the projects did not take up practices of participatory design that also date back to the 1970s and even earlier. Still, it is worth noting that the more recent codification of “bottom-up” approaches to housing, particularly in Latin America, has coincided with neoliberal “structural adjustment” in the global economy. In the case of sites-and-services and other models of user-generated, low-income housing — in which municipalities provide only minimal financing and basic infrastructure (e.g., water, electricity, sanitation) and depend upon residents to construct their own shelter — this has often meant, among other things, offloading the material cost of that housing onto the backs of already dispossessed residents. This reality in no way delegitimizes vital efforts to empower residents in the provision of housing; it merely marks one of the potential contradictions — the fact that residents are often compelled by ineluctable, apparently horizontal, group relations to participate in processes.
housing; it thereby marks one of the potential contradictions—the fact that residents are often compelled by implicit, seemingly horizontal power relations to participate in processes that validate and perpetuate their own dispossession. And it suggests that empowerment from below must center on developing the political resources with which to contest—intellectually and pragmatically—the very structures by which this occurs.

Now you could rightly object that this merely reproduces architecture's ideological role as a regressive image-machine by emphasizing “dreams” over material or economic processes. But the point is not that a collective fantasy or narrative like the "American Dream" defines or produces the single-family house and its all-too-real plumbing, wiring, driveways, roads, subdivisions, and so on.

Instead, the dream is conjured out of these material things and fed back into them as a guiding norm. Similarly, architectural projects, no matter how fanciful or abstract, are real, material things (models, drawings, and videos, in this case) that put ideas (and maybe dreams) on the table for detailed debate by interested parties. Yes, this too could be a distraction, and the still unmet challenge is to assemble all of the parties, from residents to public officials to investment bankers, in an agonistic yet equitable setting. Nevertheless, the large models of large-scale proposals sitting on tables in a MoMA gallery represent a deliberate curatorial decision, since models have a way of generating discussion and assembling publics around themselves. The tables on which the models sit might even foreshadow our efforts with this online roundtable, which the Buell Center has convened in collaboration with Architects, Designers, and Planners for Social Responsibility to explore the contours that configure the debate surrounding housing and suburbanization itself.

Within these contours you can detect the pervasive, historically constructed barrier that has increasingly prevented us, over the past 40 years or so, from using the word “public” in public in anything like an informed, enlightened, and unapologetic way when it comes to housing. Changing the conversation is a necessary but not sufficient part of changing the practical reality. I therefore ask all participants in this debate—which of course may ultimately include not only those whose responses follow but also readers who wish to comment or contribute—to consider how we might, perhaps with the help of Foreclosed, reclaim the project of “public housing” in some form.

Think of Foreclosed, then, as a highly controlled laboratory experiment, a mapping of constraints and a documentation of erasures. It represents one contribution that a university and a museum can make together, as participants in the public sphere, or the multivalent space in which public opinion—and “common sense”—is formed and contested. Whether it contributes to anything like a shift in the dominant paradigm remains to be seen. Thus far, indications are that it has touched a nerve. Whether that translates merely into a nervous reaction or into strategies for structural transformation from below, from above, and from the sides—this is our mutual challenge to take up in this discussion, and beyond.
programs (to cite just one example: here in cash-strapped California, the epicenter of the taxpayers revolt in the 1970s, legislators have recently eliminated all of the state’s almost 400 redevelopment agencies) and by the right-wing and libertarian attack on the idea that government can be a locus of collective action and shared values. The steady and intensifying dismantling of American public housing — as exemplified not just by the demolition of Pruitt-Igoe but also by the wholesale destruction in the past decade of Chicago’s postwar high-rise public housing — is certainly part of this rollback. And we would go even further: we believe it’s important to restore the perceived worth of public housing in order to validate and implement the fundamental human right to housing. Understanding the project of public housing within the larger human rights framework will advance Prof. Martin’s position and help architects (and civilians) appreciate the value of Foreclosed as well. It will also expose the misbegotten faith in “individualism,” which has distorted the politics of human rights.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights — which the newly founded United Nations adopted in 1948 — affirms that everyone has the right to housing, among other “necessary social services.” Within the framework of international law, the ultimate responsibility for the protection of human rights rests with the public sector. But if it is the responsibility of the state to ensure that housing is universally provided, it is not necessarily the role of the state to build and operate housing directly. As with food aid (including food stamps), government-run programs implement the right to food, but do not require the state to own land and farm it. Similarly, government programs could implement the right to housing by strengthening existing mandates or incentives for inclusionary zoning, collective ownership, rent subsidies and regional housing plans — none of which requires public-built housing on public-owned land.

Prof. Martin argues that these kinds of strategies are often limited and even defined by the “now-dominant paradigm of privatization.” But many of these housing strategies are effective in creating low-cost housing and in fact are tightly linked to government action. For example, “affordable housing” — with or without the scare quotes — would not exist without the federal Low Income Housing Tax Credit program, which was created in 1986. Similarly, inclusionary zoning puts private resources to explicitly public purposes, requiring developers to provide a fraction of newly-built units to low-income residents on or off site. In California, until recently, tax increment financing (generated by private businesses) allowed redevelopment agencies to provide the pre-development and gap funding that led to the creation of thousands of units of high-quality affordable housing.

On this note, we were encouraged, in Foreclosed, to see some of the design teams propose innovative forms of financing and ownership. In “Simultaneous City,” which focused on the Tampa suburb of Temple Terrace, Florida, the team led by Visible Weather calls for a Real Estate Investment Trust, in which, unlike most REITs, “publicly owned local land remains a public asset, and the income derived from development is shared with citizens.” In “The Garden in the Machine,” for a site in Cicero, Illinois, Studio Gang Architects envisions a limited equity cooperative in which “residents own their individual spaces, but land and shared amenities are jointly owned by all, in a private trust, a kind of micro-governmental cooperative structure, where the local residents participate directly in determining the qualities of their neighborhood.” These sorts of small-scale, alternative mash-ups, based on shared ownership and responsibility, can help ensure that the projects maintain a public dimension yet operate with greater flexibility than traditional public housing.

Another salutary aspect of the exhibition was the designers’ recognition that both old and new suburbs fail to meet the growing diversity of housing needs — e.g., extended families, granny flats, home offices, group living, etc. Both “Nature-City,” designed by WORKac for a site in Oregon, and “Property with Properties,” by Zago Architecture for a site in Southern California, feature units of different sizes, types and densities. Niche demand (including dispersed rural communities, and supportive and transitional housing) can be more nimble met by entrepreneurial non-profits working with government support than by top-down housing authorities. But even so-called traditional families would benefit from having more choice with regard to housing providers — with government serving as a watchdog against discrimination and retaliation. When public housing is the only housing provider — the provider of last resort, as it often is today — government itself can become the agent of discrimination, as is the case when it imposes “zero tolerance” rules for minor drug possession — the kind of rule that often results in poor families being evicted. While Reinhold Martin wonders whether we can any longer “imagine an architecture without developers,” we would argue that to substitute “government” for “developers” seems an insufficiently nuanced proposition, and that government can have more impact by promoting a diversity of public-serving private developers than by commissioning architecture itself.

As a robust player in the housing market, public housing would not only ensure that everyone has adequate housing; it might also spur other housing sectors to innovate and compete to provide better alternatives. For example, the recent development of the new City of Destiny apartments in nearby Ukiah provides a model of what can be done to provide affordable housing while adhering to the highest standards of design and construction. By fostering a competitive market for housing, public housing can encourage developers to build better and more affordable homes, which will in turn benefit the broader community. This is a strategy that requires careful planning and collaboration between government and the private sector, but it offers a promising path forward.
It is important to acknowledge that housing is a tool of political power. Just as high jobless rates work to drive down wages (thus hurting workers and helping employers), so too high rates of homelessness, as well as overcrowding and substandard housing, serve to inflate the profits of real estate developers and mortgage bankers. At this most fundamental level, the threat of homelessness gives the 1% greater leverage over the 99%. If we guarantee that as a nation we will uphold the right to housing codified in Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, then we will empower the poor — a class which these days is expanding to include many who once felt secure in the middle.

The ongoing assault on the public sector relies upon a chorus of hackneyed themes: government is the problem, not the solution; welfare is socialism, etc. Reinhold Martin is advocating a direct response: strengthen the public sector in order to stand in solidarity with the poor and dispossessed. We would like to reframe the debate with a related but different emphasis: the public sector is essential to the protection of human rights, and housing is a human right.

LIZ OGBU: NEW SYNTHESIS

Too often public and private are positioned as opposites, as extremes that lead to nothing less than different systems. (The right-wing rhetoric that's branded President Obama as "socialist" is only the latest example.) In this schema, high public good is equated with high government spending, high public debt, and ultimately low private value; likewise high private value is equated with high profit and minimal public good. But no matter its political uses, this sort of either/or thinking is unproductive; the rise of both the corporate social responsibility movement and the non-profit social enterprise sector underscore that public good and private value not only can coexist but can also be mutually reinforcing.

So I believe the hybrid approach is the likeliest way to achieve real innovation in housing as well as in real estate development practices. What might be the role of architects in this effort? The South African architect Iain Low has described a building as a manifesto, a declaration of what is possible. ("I work within the possibility of significantly transforming reality, as opposed to reinventing it," he said.) And indeed, the five projects in Foreclosed show us the possibilities of dreaming big.

That is a daunting challenge, a generational challenge. So it is helpful to recall that mantra from the startup world: Think big, start small. Thinking big will allow us to reimagine the possibilities of the house, the neighborhood, the city. Starting small will allow us to devise the nimble strategies that can begin to tangibly test the elements of a big vision on a more human-centered scale. Rather than aiming for a wholesale transformation of housing infrastructure, we can start right now to undertake shorter-term community-serving propositions that meaningfully advance the larger vision.

One of the largest visions is housing for all. From WORKac's attempt to bring a five-fold increase in densification through high-rise buildings to MOH's dissolution of ownership and tenure of the tenant, the possibilities for invention are immense. But the key is recognizing that these are just pieces of a larger, more complex whole.
One of the largest visions is housing for all. From WORKac's attempt to bring a five-fold increase in densification through high-rise building to MOS's decoupling of ownership and place through the mechanism of portable mortgages, the projects in Foreclosed seek to meet this goal through various new strategies. But what about small-scale strategies that have already proven successful? Here's one example: Accessory Dwelling Unit programs, which flourished in the last decade, have added density, diversity and connectivity to existing communities, and in the process made them more sustainable. In 2006 Santa Cruz, California, started one of the most progressive ADU programs in the U.S., largely to enhance housing affordability in an affluent city where less than 10 percent of the population could afford to buy even a median-priced home. The program included loan financing and technical assistance, and it hired design firms to create prototypes for likely "accessory" conditions. Today it's one of the city's most popular programs, with an average of 50 new units every year.

These are just a few examples of thinking big/starting small. Central to all is the belief that design matters. For decades now, we have waged a battle between Architecture (high design) and architecture (social design). But as with public and private, this is a false debate. Ultimately good design must be aesthetically engaging, economically viable, environmentally responsive and socially just. There is no either/or. If we are to meet the goal of housing for all, good design must be part of the process. This is why Foreclosed is compelling; regardless of the criticism they've inspired, all of the projects grappled with the power of good design to reshape housing. And yet they all neglected one final quality of good design: the ability to be actionable. Let's pair them with more agile, smaller-scale innovative processes, as a first step in realizing their big-scale visions.

Foreclosed is provocative and filled with many good ideas — alternatives to sprawl and auto dependency, and the mindless proliferation of detached single-family homes — but it has fallen into the trap of physical determinism — the occupational hazard of the design and planning professions. The problem is that we can't design our way out of the foreclosure crisis, or suburban sprawl, or global climate change, or the deep class and racial divides that all these at once underscore and perpetuate. We need to stop looking for the next technological or spatial fix, because it will inevitably reflect and reproduce the entrenched economic and social inequalities that have led us to our current crisis. Design and planning must be part of the solution, but to find durable solutions we need to organize around strategies that get to the root of the problems.

Architects and planners who want to act effectively — to get to the heart of the matter — will have to stop changing the subject and moving the discussion into the familiar territory — the design studio — that they can control.

First, we need to struggle to establish a basic right to housing and a right to the city for all. Eviction and displacement should never be allowed as solutions — they are "solutions" only for landlords and bankers, and they invariably happen at the expense of tenants and homeowners. As amply defined by UN-Habitat and in international covenants, the right to housing is much more than a roof over one's head; it is a right to a decent quality of life in a viable, sustainable community. Groups like the New York City-based National Economic and Social Rights Initiative and the Habitat International Coalition, which has members and allies worldwide, are strongly advocating for this expanded definition of rights.

Second, contrary to the myth that ours is a "post-racial" society, the foreclosure crisis has disproportionately affected communities of color, as did the housing crises that have recurred throughout U.S. history. For more than half a century, U.S. housing policy, with bipartisan support, has supported the "American Dream" of individual homeownership as the answer to the exclusion of African Americans from access to decent housing. But lately the dream turned into a nightmare when predatory lenders targeted the very populations that had been excluded, when greenlining led to gentrification and displacement in many cities, and when disinvestment in public housing began to eat away at one of the last of the mid-
Finally, we need an open, democratic approach to long-range planning. I don’t believe it when planners and designers talk about “smart growth,” “retrofitting the suburbs,” and “transit-oriented development.” These seem to me the new mantras for professions that lack the courage to confront the real problems and challenge the dictatorship of developers. The urban planning profession fully endorsed and helped create suburban sprawl when it chose to collaborate with the homebuilding industry and accommodate itself to the highway system. It is now obediently following the market trend towards denser development without critically engaging with and supporting the widespread movements that place quality of life over growth.

I posted this article on Facebook, and a friend who is not involved in planning or architecture commented on the theme of forgetting history, and how it is similar to the themes of the book “1984.” The theatrical erasure of Pruitt Igoe has become a stand-in for the failure of modernism and public housing. I remember taking undergraduate planning classes at a very liberal university where public housing was being taught as being synonymous with failure. Everyone has bought into this fabricated history, and also to the new reality of public-private partnerships. That being said, I commend Amit Price Patel for taking a nuanced stance and recognizing that the fundamental goal is to provide housing and to recognize it as a right, rather than to quibble over the funding and ownership mechanisms.

We need more effective ways to build housing quickly and cheaply, and this requires both a design solution and a policy solution. Even in cities like San Francisco where there is a push by the local government to create housing for people at all income levels, the process works too slowly and leaves too many people out. Housing policy is a failure when there are thousands of people waiting for a home that they can afford.

As a non-design professional, for whom I would assume the exhibit and Mr. Martin’s statement might be aimed at, I find the discussion interesting, but somewhat baffling. Mr. Martin’s use of language and terminology is inherently exclusionary to those who are not of the academic/professional of which he is a part. The other essays here are more readily understandable to a layperson.

The disappointment expressed by Mr. Martin, that none of the teams used a public process to inform their entry is legitimate. Based upon lectures at the Alaska Design Forum, it appears that many designers have little interaction with the end users, whether it is housing stock or another product. The most apparently successful designers are those who engage the end users, whether it is residents of Medellin, Colombia, Aboriginal Australians, or buyers at Sacks 5th Avenue.

Mr. Agnotti accurately summarized the problem, that we cannot design ourselves out of a problem, whether it is sprawl, foreclosures, or racial divides. The faith in design to solve problems is similar to the faith in technology to solve our problems. Perhaps it would be useful to step out of the the world view that seems to inhabit these conversations and look for a different one. Take as an example that of social work, where they ideally look for and base their work on the clients’ strengths and desires. Lecturing or telling society to change, without asking why it should or what currently drives the actions, will just result in frustration and a smaller and smaller audience.


Legally Sociable

Further discussion of MoMa’s “Foreclosure” exhibit

These are some big issues to tackle: the impact of neoliberal capitalism on housing, providing housing for all, marrying design and social design, and long-range planning that doesn’t just cater to developers. One exhibit can’t solve all of these concerns but they are important ones that more people should be discussing.


Affordable Housing, The Market, A New Conversation
The Future of Urban and Suburban Spaces: Redesigning The Suburbs After the Foreclosure Crisis

As they now exist, these researchers speculate, many suburban places are not meeting the needs of the residents who live there. As we’ve written, the demographics of the suburbs are changing. Suburban cities around the country are home to growing immigrant communities who have been disproportionately affected by the foreclosure crisis. And today the largest share of the American poor live in the suburbs. These cities are increasingly ill equipped to deal with the needs of poor families who need access to things like good public transit and multi-generational housing.

And as designed, suburbs may no longer be how most of us want to live or work. Many of us want to be less reliant on our cars, especially with rising gas prices. We want to have communal public spaces for living and working, to be closer to stores, social services, and to build wealth for our families in diverse ways, not only through traditional homeownership.

The results of the experiment are on display at MoMA and at this interactive online exhibit. The exhibit caused some controversy when it first opened for being “unrealistic” (planners said it would be impossible to change zoning laws to permit denser development patterns in inner-ring suburbs, for example). But it’s also been hailed as innovative and visionary. I found it fascinating to read through and to look at the pictures and renderings that envision incredible possibilities for changes in our everyday spaces.

Most interesting to me was the variety of new economic models of ownership, from limited equity co-ops, to real estate investment trusts that blur the line between owning and renting (the government would share the income from development of public land with citizens), to new “portable mortgages,” where ownership is “not tied to a particular space.”

The exhibit speaks to the importance of design for those places that will shape our home and working future. It is an educational and humbling challenge.
At MOMA, Tinkering With the Machinery Underneath the House

Sometimes the most important things are not the easiest things to display. This can be particularly apparent in attempts at presenting economic or social policy ideas in a museum exhibit, an inherently visual venue.

What strikes many visitors to the exhibit are the arresting architectural acrobatics of each team. Most teams found ways to increase density within often-conventional suburban or industrial contexts, something inherently dramatic. One project, "Nature City," set in Keizer, Ore., shows a giant beehive of compost set amid "towers of houses" and other new architectural forms.

But beyond the architecture, landscaping and infrastructure, which were all inventive, it’s more in the fine print of the exhibits and in the catalog that gets to the more radical reimagining of the American dream. Many teams experimented with altering the standard system of home ownership through a bill of sale for land and a home, with a conventional bank-financed mortgage. The teams called for “portable mortgages,” a “public real estate investment trust,” a “community land bank,” a “public-private partnership,” and a “limited equity cooperative.” These alternative ownership systems take a clear cue from the Columbia University manifesto, and strive to give alternatives to individual homeownership by emphasizing the public and long-term ownership of housing by a given community or government. This is real change.

Unfortunately this aspect of the show is only given a few sentences in the exhibit catalog, as well as the website and physical exhibit. A more detailed description of ideas such as “portable mortgages” or “public real estate investment trusts” would have taken the conversation further into the intersection of buildings and the communities that inhabit them. More than changing zoning or the physical walls around people’s kitchens and bedrooms, expanding more of the possibilities of new types of housing tenure would have been helpful. This would have provided a clearer path to showing how they propose we ground these new American dreams financially and legally.

Comments on Foreclosed

July 9, 2012, 11:30 a.m. - Foreclosed: Rehousing the American Dream: Lectures & Gallery Talks...bit.ly/ONxpJn @aplusk @theconion

7:48 AM - 5 Jul 12 via web - Embed this Tweet

July 9, 2012, 11:30 a.m. - Foreclosed: Rehousing the American Dream 3go0.gl/eoqTl

6:21 PM - 5 Jul 12 via web - Embed this Tweet

One of the most interesting museum exhibits I've ever seen: Foreclosed at MoMA.org bit.ly/wQpxaR @MuseumModernArt

8:28 AM - 11 Jul 12 via web - Embed this Tweet

#MoMA #NYC #manhattan #models #ecodesign #architecture #foreclosed: @r @New York Museum of Modern Art (MoMA)

9:08 AM - 11 Jul 12 via web - Embed this Tweet

@VisionVancouver @greenestcity Making silk purses out of sows' ears? MOMA, "Foreclosed: Rehousing the American Dream" moma.org/visit/calendar...

8:26 PM - 14 Jul 12 via web - Embed this Tweet

MoMA Foreclosed - bit.ly/Q7OpwH - great exhibit! #eplan #design #architecture #housing #sustainability

8:26 AM - 18 Jul 12 via web - Embed this Tweet

I attended this exhibition - some innovative ideas for delivering infrastructure and financing housing projects... moma.org/interactivestories/e

12:07 PM - 10 Jul 12 via web - Embed this Tweet
For the last 30 years I have lived in New York City, and I consider myself very much an urbanist. I love the city’s density, vibrancy, and diversity. It’s not at all like where I grew up. But why can’t we have both in one place? That is the brilliance of WORKac’s proposal for Nature-City. It demonstrates that, in fact, we can have both. And that it can be quite wonderful. And, perhaps of greatest surprise, financially feasible, too.

Of the proposed new 4,850 residential units housing 13,000 people, half are ownership units and half are rental. Thirty percent of all units are income restricted, with 10% affordable to families earning up to $45,000, and another 20% affordable to families earning approximately $45-60,000 annually.

And so it seems that we can have it all: urbanity, diversity of choices, a high quality of life that does not revolve around the automobile, and a healthy and economically sustainable community. And the chance to be “roommates with nature.” I particularly love how Nature-City dares to give kids of every age a landscape of opportunity for discovery and joy.
Homeownership, A New Conversation

Government and Policy, Land Use and Density, The Market, Quality of Life, Responsibility

Land Use and Density, Populations and Demographics, Quality of Life

A New Conversation

Internet Banter

The Market, Reference and Comparison

The Market

Government and Policy, The Market, Responsibility, Sustainability
Since the Mexican drug lords and international high-dollar real estate speculators have pretty much cornered the market on having a roof overhead, when can we expect the Government/associated business entities to start setting up low-cost campsites and RV/trailer parks, or the high-capacity public confinement facilities/gas chambers/whatever?

There are still a lot of post Katrina trailers available in New Orleans and they come permeated with formaldehyde at no extra cost.

At worst, like the whip and buggy mode, sprawling suburbs must die a natural death. At best, many prefab'd sub-divisions of suburban labyrinths will have to die off - ebb and flow - to satisfy the natural attrition due to dwindling market demand...

Either way, no intervention is necessary... let's walk away from the 2008 debacle with the lessons learned and a commitment not to repeat it again.

A talk with Galina Tachieva, author of 'The Sprawl Repair Manual'
Sprawl Repair Manual

The Cicero plan sounds good on paper, but don't put a dime into that town until Larry Dominick is safely out of office and finally behind bars. He makes us next door in Chicago look clean.

I've never understood why anyone ever thought to pay so much to live in grids of look-alike homes... They look exactly like low income housing developments, really.

And the idea of criticizing people who use mass transit bus systems, but think it's not government to use the highways...

There's such a disconnect... I think a lot of people anymore don't connect how community & civilization aspects interact, and don't really understand how we have a civilization.

There are many good ideas and many bad ones. What is important is remain clear that one solution will not work for everyone and in every area. Plus all ideas will have to manage the actual implementation. Making it reality often takes quite a bit of compromise. I do not like the over populations idea...that has proved to be a failure and a cesspool for disease. Those zoning laws probably it can seen for a reason. This is not a solution... but a right move.
Land Use and Density, Quality of Life, The Market, A New Conversation

Jobs, Land Use and Density, A New Conversation

Internet Banter, Reference and Comparison

Family, Populations and Demographics, Quality of Life

Family

Government and Policy, The Market

Homeownership, Government and Policy

Internet Banter
Comments on Foreclosed

02:36 AM on 07/23/2012

More silly talk

HUFFPOST SUPER USER
PeterPaul
Never trust a statist.
491 Fans

09:36 AM on 07/23/2012

Even better. Repeal the income tax.

bookreader451
"You can't ever have my books," she said.
1032 Fans

06:34 AM on 07/23/2012

So you would let Romney and his ilk continue to use every available loophole and remove the largest middle class tax tax exemption? You are part of the problem, not the solution.

4eva

09:19 AM on 07/23/2012

This tax exemption just subsidizes more sprawl.

techBob
whatever happened to peace, love and understanding
495 Fans

10:17 AM on 07/23/2012

I've been talking about the fact that there is no limit to the interest a homeowner can deduct. This is a big problem that reduces tax revenue. There should be a limit on the amount that can be deducted. Interest on the price of an average home should be deductible anything over that average amount excluded. $300,000.00 seems reasonable to me, any interest due to borrowing above that will not be deductible.

Had this been in place since day one homeowners would not have tried to get the biggest, tackiest house they can get a mortgage on and we may never have had this problem. There would be no demand and the contractors knowing this would not have built so many excess. Despite the banks trickery this would have prevented a lot of the carnage.

palaces they will never be able to sell. BTW my ex live near Tampa, was the first to buy in their new development, and now the surrounding, brand new homes having never been lived in are being torn down to prevent squatters and shooting galleries from taking over. My daughter bought a modest house in St Petersburg only to learn 2 years later that it's worth less than half of what they owe as almost every other house in the neighborhood was now on the market at rock bottom prices. Fortunately they were able to do a short sale and move to Seminole which is a slightly more affluent area.

HoosierInMaryland

01:24 AM on 07/23/2012

HuffPo says my 'micro-bio is empty'
333 Fans

One thing that would help suburbia would be a requirement that ALL streets have sidewalks on at least one side of the street, preferably both sides.

Might encourage people to do a little walking, and do that walking away from the vehicular traffic?

MSROADKILL612

02:03 AM on 07/23/2012

This user has shown to opt out of the Badges program

love auto biographies, any apps to write mine?
260 Fans

Only scanned it, but have long thought US doesn't just have the legacy of a bubble, it also has a lot of unsustainable housing that should never have been built & is worthless.

its happening now. forget peak oil. Min wage workers cant afford to drive but they have no choice—

After all this, you now have to rebuild your cities. what a waste.
"Arresting angles and curves" DO NOT equate to usable space! Higher density yes, walkable neighborhoods yes. As a degree in civil engineering, design practical floor plans in various sizes for a diverse market. Forget wasted spaces in weird angles and oddly shaped rooms. You pay a premium for a useless layout with strange angles where you can’t live.

Thank you. The MOMA exhibit seems more like advertisement for avant garde architects than anything else. My links below show a different approach.

If the people who live in the suburbs would grow food instead of lawns...that might be part of a solution...

Some of the land used for housing was at one time good farm land.

Why not have a few chickens in some back yards?

I was at my town's city hall last week. There was an elderly gentleman in front me there to pay a fine for growing corn in his backyard. The city stated his corn stalks were too tall and fined him $50. Cities and towns don’t wish to help. They just want to collect their revenue.

Some communities do allow chickens, but no roosters. My own community does allow chickens. I don’t know of anyone who actually has chickens, but I do know that the local laws do allow them. I live in a fairly sophisticated part of DC.

It is called “edible landscaping”. It does not have to involve tall corn stalks. It is a very intriguing idea. I have done some of this type of landscaping. Every year I grow a hedge of indeterminate, small tomatoes that greets you as you come up to my door.

Too tall corn stalks? Maybe, maybe if they were blocking a view of traffic and causing a hazard. You can get into that situation with too tall shrubbery, as well.
Government and Policy

Internet Banter, Reference and Comparison

Cities and Suburbs, Homeownership, Infrastructure, Land Use and Density, Sustainability

Quality of Life, Reference and Comparison

Land Use and Density, Quality of Life

Quality of Life

Homeownership, The Market

Affordable Housing, Reference and Comparison
Of course. Most of the huge old Victorian homes were broken up into apartments because no one could afford to heat or maintain them. The same thing will happen with the plague of McMansions that have cropped up in the past 15 years or so.

We need a sea change in American attitudes before anything will change. First, does everyone really need a lawn mower ALL OF THEIR OWN?? Pooled resources would help a great deal. And why do people need so much land? We live in a patio home with a small back yard and very small front yard. It is more environmentally responsible. Then there is the trend to obscenely large houses. Does a couple with no children really NEED a 5K of house? It is environmentally irresponsible to have such a house. Look at the wasted space and energy.

We must get past the concept of individualism and "what's here for me" and into the concept of sharing in our communities and doing what is best for all of us. The Republicans, of course, don't play well with others and want their individual "rights" regardless of how damaging it is to the community. In the end, it is unlikely that anything will be done that is intelligent until we're falling completely apart. Individualism is the curse of humanity....and may well be the end of it.

Amen. Americans need to stop worshipping at the alter of the lawn. It's absolutely insane. Name me another activity where I'm expected to nurture something and make it grow just so I can mow it down when it grows too much? I think Elvis had the right idea with AstroTurf.

Greed is the curse of humanity. Individualism breeds ideas.

You seem to be of two minds. First you say American attitudes need to change, which I agree they must, and they will eventually when they realize how very unsustainable our sprawl pattern of development is.

Then you seem to blame one political group. That doesn't make much sense. Suburbia is filled with people of all political persuasions who all will have to come to the realization each one on their own that it is not a sustainable way to live.

What's in it for me is the only thing that keeps people working for themselves, not for others. Sorry but this is the USA, not the Soviet Union in which your plan failed.

If you want to live in a rabbit warren with people in your face all the time be my guest. I hate urban areas, will never live in one, they are all filthy, crime ridden, no privacy, all public transit requires that you have skeevy strangers in your face all the time, as does living in an urban setting, even a reasonably wealthy one. No thanks. I fortunately work in a city and HATE it and can't wait, one more raise on transit fares and it will be cheaper for me to drive and park, which I will do.
Internet Banter
The Market, Responsibility
Circulation, Sustainability

Academic Hubris, Top-Down and Bottom-Up

Internet Banter

Internet Banter, The Market, Responsibility

Affordable Housing

Government and Policy, Liberal versus Conservative, The Market, Responsibility, Top-Down and Bottom-Up

HUFFPOST SUPER USER
blackranger
602 Fans
01:19 PM on 07/23/2012
craziness, autos that drive 5k miles a year and cost how much to own, insure and maintain. can't anyone do basic arithmetic anymore?

melponeme k
56 Fans
05:58 AM on 07/23/2012
The main purpose of the exhibit in the MOMA is to convince the little peons to move into the equivalent of rabbit hutches and grow little victory gardens. Meanwhile the super rich will move into castle estates with acres of OUR former suburbs turned into personal forest hunting preserves. It's a Neo-Feudalistic plan being proposed at the MOMA. They are looking for a few good Serfs.

mcmutter
A Groover has to expect a few setbacks ....
3046 Fans
06:06 AM on 07/23/2012
.... be all you can be ....

SteveDenver
Progressive and liberal, just like Jesus Christ.
4392 Fans
08:56 AM on 07/23/2012
Ridiculous. Right now, the super rich are buying up properties at bargain rates and turning them into blighted rentals. You blame smart-density housing solutions and arts organizations?

melponeme k
56 Fans
12:31 PM on 07/23/2012
I read the report this "smart density" housing is based upon. NONE of them are proposing the rich move into these hutchs with us little poor folk. Even though they pollute more than the average person with their private planes, vacations to far flung destinations, pools and under paid, illegal household help.

It doesn't matter what they are doing with the property right now. They own the land. They are getting tax discounts on it. Once we are hauled away to housing solutions they will build castles on it.

The fact of the matter is, resources are finite. And they rich have to convince us to live with no luxury in order for their lifestyle to continue.

HUFFPOST SUPER USER
PeterNPaul
Never trust a statist.
453 Fans
06:07 AM on 07/23/2012
While the communitarian argument has not provided a shred of evidence to prove their utopian vision, the synthesis does not match their own projected conclusions of the "happy" community.

We've all been duped by global elitists who plan to take totalitarian control of all nation's people, property, and produce. Communitarian Plans exist in every comer of the world spurred by the UN community redevelopment plans.

Are we overbuilt? Sure we are. But it is the government who approved it, pitched it, encouraged it, funded it, and financed it in large part to keep the "wheels of progress" churning. It is out of control government spending and meddling in private contracts that caused this by giving preferential treatment to these developments in the first place.

Now of course, we should rely on the same people that got us here to somehow get us out so we can all live in their rent controlled tenements, where only the vermin will run un-subsidized. Enjoy your tent cities, company stores, and failed infrastructure. I am quite sure it will be easy for you to walk to "work."
"...the government..." Which government? Certainly not the federal government which ultimately has scant control over land use or zoning. I have little but disdain for my local officials and my state's legislature.

You made this comment before, so please allow me to suggest a documentary you may find interesting: "Who Killed The Electric Car." There is a segment which concisely illustrates what happened when the federal government began subsidizing big oil, big oil went into cities and GAVE them bus systems (while ripping out trolley lines and tracks), buses were able to travel to outlying housing developments and then convenience fueled by low gas prices led to commuter society.

First comes the con, you have a job, pay rent, no worries you can buy a house, so you borrow and buy. All is fine while you have a job, but this does not suit the financial market as turmoil is money for them, so is more con. As offshoring ramped up, jobs went, mortgagees’ defaulted, derivatives and junk CDO’s were created to pretend all was well. Well let me tell you financial creeps something, I wish on you all what you have done to others. Solidarity.

I would like to add mortgage fraud in the form of Adjustable Rate Mortgages, that often adjusted UP by double or triple percentage points and had a balloon payment that knocked people out of the properties they called home.

also the appraisal comp approach to ratchet up housing prices - not real values.

I would also like to add to that form with the altering of the loan applications behind the borrowers back.

many of those "adjustable rates were based on libor rates which we now know were clearly being manipulated.

They all sound like wonderful ideas, but aside from vague statements about people wanting "affordable housing", there was virtually no mention of the most important detail-price. It doesn't matter how sustainable or energy friendly a home is if the average family can't afford to live in it.
This article commits what I deem a civic "cardinal sin" reflected in this seemingly innocuous sentence: "Land was accessible because the government expanded highways and subsidized gas prices." THE GOVERNMENT? Which one? Certainly not the federal government, though this is the same sin, the same bad assumption, that spawned the TEA party. Taxed enough already? How much of that is valuation of property tax for which the federal government has no say? The house-building and mall-building Bubble was not owing to the Fed or the banks so much as to local zoning boards, city councils, and even state legislatures. The exercise of eminent domain on the part of the federal government notwithstanding, these local instruments of government kept permitting home builders to build, even when it was clear that localities were hyper-saturated with shiny new homes and strip malls, many of which are empty now. If "THE GOVERNMENT" is the problem, it's likely the one that's closest to you and staffed by that guy you know who used to sleep through algebra class but now controls a multi-million dollar budget to which you contribute.

I'll tell you what government, your local county planning boards/commissions and county councils who approved these projects. Then, they gave the developers tax incentives (TIFs) to encourage development in their county with taxpayers paying for the giveaways. Given the parochial attitude of local governments to not work together, "we know what's best for our county", they failed to coordinate development with the cumulative impact on traffic in and among neighboring counties. That's who's screwed us.

Yes, and how many of those commissions had rules that meant a new building was cheaper to construct that to rehab an existing structure.

Just take as an example a new school being built next to a former big box store. That school just about looks like the box store, more windows is main difference. I bet it would have been cheaper to rehab the store and redoing the parking lot than building the school. Did not happen because "can't take off tax roles", DUH the last one you purchased took that land off the tax roles. And it will be years if ever a store replaces the empty building. Or they could have taken over the empty strip mall a block away, providing a school and community center once again taking a blight and turning into a butterfly...

Or making it more attractive to rehab an existing building rather than building a new store right next door.

Lastly, why do we have just six approved styles for the whole country... what happened to regional flavors.

City councils and local governing boards are part of the government. Local, statewide, feds - they all belong to the bureaucracy that has made a mess of things. People who seek to lower state and federal taxes will see the cost of parking, local toll roads, and city services rise. Someone has to pay for the services we have come to rely on. We are surrounded by bureaucrats and government. The little local elected guy is easily persuaded by deep, rich pockets - whether the source is subsidies or more buildings to tax. Yeah, I would say that all forms of governments help to pave the way for the rampant expansion and growth since WW II at the expense of common sense, personal savings and the once beautiful countryside and farmland that surrounded our cities.
This is a good point, it was mostly local governments who spurned suburban and exurban sprawl through ponzi taxing ... taxing existing property owners to pay for new sprawl, repeated many time over.

However, this entire scheme was also made possible by the Federal Interstate Highway system.

Unintended consequences as they say.

Foreclosed: July 2012
I've lived in several urban environments, including what were regarded as vibrant and edgy and fashionable (though not super expensive) ones in Chicago, Los Angeles and Miami. And I now live in an entirely different environment, a small midcentury ranch house with a small yard in a leafy but close-in suburb.

Between the urban situations and the modest suburban one I have now, I much prefer the suburban home — a fact that surprises my formerly happy urban self. I'm much happier here, though I can see the downsides of suburbia (particularly the hideous amount of lawn watering we apparently need to do in this intolerable drought). For one thing, having a tiny plot of land as opposed to a condo, for instance, imparts a powerful sense of ownership and pride in territory that just isn't available in the city. For another, it's quite nice not to have neighbors packed in above, below and to either side. Plus, people are nicer, no gang activity, no one spits on the sidewalks (why is this an urban constant?) and no gunfire.

As for the strip malls and suburban sameness, this is a fact. But it's not that much different from the increasingly mail-like experience in so-called vibrant or edgy urban neighborhoods these days. And these strip mall stores — just like their more picturesque urban counterparts — are run by actual human beings that you can get to know.

**SteveDenver**
Progressive and liberal, just like Jesus Christ.
4392 Fans

08:45 AM on 07/23/2012

The hottest Denver neighborhoods are close-in suburbs, that are exactly as you describe. Some people want bicycle-friendly streets, local retail/restaurants rich, walkable neighborhoods, outdoor room to hang out, garden and barbecue — without a 3/4-acre lawn to mow or 3000sf home to clean, maintain, heat and cool... or traffic signals on every comer.

**HUFFPOST SUPER USER**
blackranger
602 Fans

01:11 PM on 07/23/2012

also, in fact, gardens are cheaper and easier to maintain than lawns

**SteveDenver**
Progressive and liberal, just like Jesus Christ.
4391 Fans

09:09 PM on 07/23/2012

And actually give something back.

**4eva**
2995 Fans

08:53 AM on 07/23/2012

There are alternatives to lawns. Some books

Food Not Lawns
Edible landscapes

**techBob**
whatever happened to peace, love and understanding
495 Fans

11:27 AM on 07/23/2012

You need to conserve the water and sacrifice your lawn. You might be cutting it too short and too often during dry times. We will all be sorry when it's all gone.
Rule of thumb is to only cut 1/3 of the height of the grass, any more than that and the grass will burn. If there is no rain in the forecast skip mowing that week it doesn't grow that fast without water.
We need to be serious about conserving our natural resources of which water is at the top of the list. The government is in the meantime giving our resources (including our fresh water supply) away to companies and foreign countries for next to nothing and we will all suffer as a result sooner rather than later.

**HUFFPOST SUPER USER**
StevieRae
Divided Govt won't work, Obamas needs the House back
1246 Fans

07:36 AM on 07/23/2012

Want to see the future?

Use Ford, the Chinese auto; food from the table; churches in the desert...
How “peak oil” will force us to “re-do” suburbia. Check out the documentary, “Escape from Suburbia.” Foreclosures will increase but this time it will be because too many people stayed in suburbia waiting for the “under water” values to go back up.

DrOWW
119 Fans
07:36 AM on 07/03/2012

Reading some of these comments reinforces some of the points of the article above. One of the things that holds back good planning is the attitude I've got mine, now you figure out how to get yours. Those who want the superhighways need to respect the ones who don’t need or want them and vice versa.

My family has chosen to sacrifice the size of our homes for living closer to work. We would all use mass transit if it were better planned in our communities. We value relationships over things. It is a matter of what you value. The plans described would work well for us. Others value space and openness and are willing to commute distances to have that. We need both mass transit to satisfy the needs of those of us who prefer to live close to work and highways and parking for the open-space people. The catch is that neither is right, but we must respect the different choices people make.

mulejenny
3 Fans
07:45 AM on 07/03/2012

Ah, the “mortgage industrial complex” and the “bankers industrial complex” at work to have us all over a barrel. Those closing costs that people pay are just a scam that is perpetuated on us by all of those who seek to make a lot of money on it. And, never mind the mortgage insurance and all of the other “screw you” fees that just keep on coming.

We are all slaves to the housing market for ticky tacky houses. In some communities, the choices are poor for any thing much else, if you work downtown.

I see lots of ticky tacky McMansions sitting on large lots with no trees. All of them just sitting out there, scattered around what was once a farmers field, looking like lost Monopoly pieces. Many of these monsters have only a couple of people living in them, when, in truth they could house a small Mexican village in them! They have expanses of expensive and high maintenance grass around them, and they must cost a fortune of a small nation to heat and cool. Never mind the amount of energy that they sop up every day! Conspicuous consumption, eh! makes me wanna holler!

Perverse values, perverse system! Is it any wonder that it was such a house of cards?

ijb8801jb
220 Fans
08:20 AM on 07/03/2012

Agree whole heartedly and many of them are furnished with cardboard boxes as the owners can’t afford to furnish. In the 60s feel in love with a planned community that had clustered homes on small lots with large green spaces between clusters, ballfields, pool, and park in the center of the community. With community center on one side of the modern town square and strip stores on opposite sides. Fast forward 10 years not much had changed as original builder went bankrupt. Add another 10 years and all the green spaces are gone being filled in by homes, the pool has been built but nothing else of the town square, no fields, no community center no stores. The community is a blight for the eyes all in the name of denser and denser greed by builders and the town which demanded taxes...

4eva
2995 Fans
08:51 AM on 07/03/2012

The bright side is, all that wasteful consumption is coming to an end. Yes, it is going to be painful, but there is no other way turns out.
My wife and I tried to buy on of these bank owned properties. It was a dream home for us, but we waited over three months and withdrew our bid. The bank is not stuck with a home they can not get over half of what we offered, even from investors.

The house has been vacant for over a year and a half and now must be gutted by anyone who buys it because of squirrel infestation.

It is better for the bank to keep the higher book value rather than sell the home at market rate and have to show the loss on their books.

Sooner or later the banks (and everyone else) is going to have to mark to market. Hang tight.

When all the trees have been cut down, when all the animals have been hunted, when all the waters are polluted, when all the air is unsafe to breathe, only then will you discover you cannot eat money.

Cree Prophecy

"Much of the new development would be dedicated to public housing. Properties would be sold using "portable" mortgages that separate the right to live in the community from claims on specific units, making it easier for people to move without buying and selling as their family composition changes."

My friend, Moho grew up in communist Romania, says this is exactly what the communists did.

"The aim, says Barry Bergdoll, the museum's chief curator of architecture and design, is to use the crisis to change American housing by altering American aspirations, replacing the propensity for sprawl with an updated appreciation for denser living."

Strive for mediocrity. The new American Dream, "appreciation for denser living." - That would make it easier on for gov't to round up the sheep. Or is it a comment on our broken education system. hmmm
they just want to herd everybody into smaller areas, better control. remember it's now a world economy, so just not the rich in America, but the rich around the world want to control Americans, and the real estate we have.

All of this growth, every bit of it was taxed, and resulted in tremendous revenues to the federal coffers. Who are the villains? Those who manipulate the free market economy for voting blocks, whether it is the poor, the middle class, or the wealthy. It is time to restore the republic. A free market must be allowed to rise, and to fall, otherwise all value is temporary and manipulated.

In a free market, all kinds of development patterns and living arrangements would have been allowed to be built (according to market demand). That is not what happened. Universal zoning codes made it ILLEGAL to build certain urban and semi-urban environments.

even if legal, money is only available for traditional building, investors don't want the risk of new concepts.

Also, traditional urbanism is not a new concept. It was suburbia that was the new concept.

There are several great points in this article, but I was hoping to see solutions to the immediate problem of foreclosure blight caused by bank owned properties. Some city councils are taking the cue pass ordinances addressing boarded up properties with properties with neglected yards.

Banks often turn off utilities, including water, so lawns and landscaping are left neglected. The first step is to prevent. Once boarded up or foreclosed, the properties are usually left until it is too late.
Banks often turn off utilities, including water, so lawns and landscaping are left neglected. The first line is requiring basic yard maintenance: weed control, mowing, trash clearing, if this is not kept up, the violator is cited.

If a citation is not answered, the city performs clean-up and maintenance and bills the offender. If the bill is not paid, collection actions are taken. In several cases, banks totally ignored citations and collection notices. So far, two properties have been seized by cities for non-payment. When the properties went to auction and banks finally showed up, they got a taste of their own medicine.

Very creative. It is estimated that currently private citizens are spending tens of millions to keep up foreclosed homes in their neighborhoods, owned by banks, to keep their own property values from falling even further.

Just another form of bailout to the banks.

My comment is to the one directly above it, not the article itself. You must know this since you replied to my post. Are you just trying to provoke for the sake of proving you have a big vocabulary? Tax payers are paying to maintain the banks foreclosed properties. Do you not see my point? It's just another expense the banks do not have to pay themselves because of the way they operate (failing to maintain their properties) and let someone else pick up the tab for them. Do you not see this as a bail-out?

What are you talking about? Argue? You misunderstand. I simply took what you said and applied logic and drew a conclusion. The banks are saving "tens of millions of dollars" (your words), do you not see that as another way the banks are getting over on us by shirking their legal responsibilities?

You're correct. I misunderstood and misspoke. Looks like I was the one tilting at windmills. Here's to peace, love, and understanding.
I, too, was hoping to see a solution offered in the essay. There was a glimmer of hope when the projects in Oregon and Illinois were mentioned, but then dashed immediately with the statement that they would never be built. Why not? They were wonderful ideas that need to be examined.

What wonderful story. I wish Florida and some of these homeowners assoc. would follow suit. I keep writing to local commissioners, newspapers etc. When banks take over these properties and leave them unkempt it hurts the whole area. You get no response. My stance has always been these foreclosed properties have owners it is called The Bank. And since we now know Corp. are people these people corp. need to pay up immediately! What is the problem!

One common hurdle for some cities is when city councilpersons are connected to bankers: they will stand in the way of progress from self interest.

You can actually get on the agenda for your city council. I would recommend meeting with city council representatives -- even ones out of your area -- until you find one or more interested in this type of action.

When Minneapolis executed similar tactics, they had the seized properties rehabbed by local contractors (on a binding bid basis) and then interviewed potential buyers: (1) had to be the primary resident for at least 5 years, (2) had to be a first-time home purchase, (3) had to qualify for housing program financing.

Whenever possible (mostly downtown) large properties were divided into condos to make them accessible to first-time buyers.

You give some really helpful advice. I have written or called my county commissioners, have really seen no satisfactory response. Have gone to Commission meetings and been told it isn't on the agenda will take up at later time. But I still find your advice helpful and has inspired me to take some further action. I live in a small East Coast Community of Florida. The sub division I live in has over 1,000 homes. And the Homeowners Assoc. is run by the residents not a professional organization. Nor am I unhappy with the members. They have performed very well in these trying times and keep our monthly fees down while still keeping up with common area. I just find in frustrating, that the banks get away with not keeping up the properties. Other than accessing fines and turning off the gray water sprinklers for the yard that is their limit. It is the country commissioners that need to take action and that is where the biggest problem lies. Thanks again.
Government and Policy, Land Use and Density, Reference and Comparison

Internet Banter, Government and Policy

Internet Banter, Government and Policy

Government and Policy, Responsibility

Homeownership

Cities and Suburbs, Circulation
You hit the nail on the head when it comes to transportation for the unemployed. Without efficient mass transit systems, the poor, who cannot afford cars and their upkeep, including gas and insurance, have no way of finding good employment, much less full time jobs that will help raise them out of poverty. Already young people are gravitating towards cities, leaving the suburbs to their parents.

I have lived in the suburbs once after leaving my parents’ home. Never again. Those antiseptic cookie cutter developments are for others; give me the city - even a small one - any day.

You may not have a choice for much longer. Here’s something crazy to think about: The government, under the guidance of the elite is closing off exits and putting in toll booths on major highways that are being sold to foreign interests, turning some rural towns into ghost towns. The goal is to reforest a huge percentage of the country, forcing people back into the cities where they can be better "controlled" for the hopes and desires of the 0.01%. They are using the environmentalist movement to accomplish this w/o the environmentalists realizing they are being used as pawns. Once the people are gone the corporations will have free reign taking all natural resources, scaring the environment, polluting the water and profiting wildly. These resources truly belong to all Americans but our government is bought and paid for and happy to give away the earth’s bounty for some bribes and the promise of a powerful position.

We need to make certain the pendulum does not swing too far in the opposite direction (abandoning the country and suburbs for cities) because that plays into the hands of those who want to reduce world population by 80% (Bill Gates, Warren Buffet, Bilerberg Group) and enslave the masses for the purpose of fulfilling their own greedy self interests. Conspiracy nonsense? Time will tell. How do you best wipe out 80% of the world population? Inoculations (a pet project of Mr’s Gates and Buffet) of deadly virus’? Not in your America? Really?

the goal seems to be to sell off America to the highest bidders, thru companies just like bain. check out just who put money up to create bain in the first place.

i guess i live in the suburbs, it’s not the city, but it’s definitely not cookie cutter. cities are nice to visit, that’s about it.

I knew the narrative was turning when the third paragraph opened with "But." Goodman opens with a terse synopsis of the housing issue based on the wants of individual buyers - the drivers of the market. It was too good to be true, though. Come paragraph three he turns and those same buyers driving the market are now the market’s victims: poor, seemingly illiterate (they obviously couldn’t read the contracts they signed), and immature souls sucker punched by bad businessmen (aren’t they all bad?)

It seems I live in what you people deem as "the future." My town, a suburb south of Boston, passed a Right to Farm bylaw allowing any and all property to be used for the purpose of agriculture.

No matter where you live, no matter the size or location of the property, you are free to use it in any agricultural capacity.
We're encouraged to dig up our front yards to install gardens, and 3 families (including me) just on my street where the houses are RIGHT next to each other have chickens.

At least my town understands the unequivocal right of property owners to use your land to feed yourself!

Where aren't you people organizing to demand your rights instead of whining against the system? Our town didn't just magically pass the Right to Farm: citizens organized, formed the Agricultural Commission in the town government, and the AgCom wrote the bylaw and got it passed at Town Meeting.

HUFFPOST SUPER USER
smitten
30 Fans
09:10 AM on 07/23/2012

I agree. About 6 years ago I was walking down my urban city block when three bankers jumped me, threw me in a van and brought me to their bank office. Then they proceeded to torture me and holding a gun to my head made me sign mortgage papers for a nice house in the suburbs where I could raise my young family in a nice crime free environment. Terrible, just terrible.

LegallyBlondeNYC
24 Fans
10:09 AM on 07/23/2012

Suburbs are not "crime-free." That's an illusion.

HUFFPOST SUPER USER
slocompg
1111 Fans
10:19 AM on 07/23/2012

Not too bright are you?

HUFFPOST SUPER USER
1dabut1
Power is not alluring to pure minds. Thomas Jefferson
117 Fans
11:10 AM on 07/23/2012

I looks to me like this is just another version of, the company store. Hopefully my house will be paid off in the year, and if I can I will move farther from the city.

whochi
Liberals think 2 + 2 = Bush
270 Fans
09:10 AM on 07/23/2012

"...The roads got there because of a government program, one that has subsidized debilitating suburban sprawl..."

Absurd. Everyone knows from listening to Obama that that the roads got because that's the only way you can be successful in America....

HUFFPOST COMMUNITY MODERATOR
SmartladyDem
Woman for OBAMA!
5001 Fans
09:32 AM on 07/23/2012

the roads got? I don't even know what you were trying to say.

ruthinking
157 Fans
09:58 AM on 07/23/2012

When did the President make a statement ?? could you provide a cite or website??

HUFFPOST SUPER USER
Jose Hill
Predictor...has a good ring to it.
438 Fans
11:22 AM on 07/23/2012
His quote was taken out of context when he was making a speech in OH.

FAIL. That's not a reasonable theory even if it was presented with better grammar. The new "roads" referred to (that "got") are the actual side streets that the developers built not town, county, state or federal roadways....and you absolutely need state and federal roadways to exist let alone succeed.

There a point here somewhere? Rush comes on at 11:00.

No you have your facts wrong. It was Dwight E. that made that statement that is why he built the huge interstate system! He said when the construction started it was to connect cities and towns and bring commerce and success to America.

If you want to reinvigorate a suburb run a commuter rail line out to it. That simple public amenity turns a suburban ghetto into a hot property.

I live in all, we have a vote in the 10 county metro area to raise sales tax 1 penny for improved transportation. I know exactly how the vote will go -- suburbs are unsustainable, built on perceived notions of austerity and entitlements. You do it to yourself, you do. I kind of enjoy going up to Newtland and watching bighairs pick over goodwill with undocumented immigrants. Comeuppance.

Truer words were never spoken....I remember looking at housing years ago in a small town in eastern West Virginia -- you could get a brand new split-level for $80K. Then they extended the MARC train from DC to there and BAM!! house prices through the ROOF!! Noone from DC would ever have thought about living that far out before, but with the train and lower property taxes the small town exploded.

For the cost of that, you could buy everybody a Rolls in the suburb. Better to put the money in a hole and burn it.

Tell that to every major metropolitan city on the planet.
While true, it would, it is not realistic to run a commuter rail line out to every suburb. We are too sprawled out for that to be practical. The rail line would still be miles away from most people who would have to get to some kind of hub.

We can connect by a system of busses and other transit options to light rail running in a smaller urban in inner ring suburban areas.

I saw the exhibit last week and it is impressive. Particularly the project for Oregon. To me it made the best use of clean energy, space, and wild life. I would move there in a heartbeat. The take away for me was that we need to rethink what’s important about how we live, how our self worth is connected to how much space we have, and a sense of community and collective work. Even though I live in a 1 bedroom apartment in Brooklyn, I’m still trying to downsize and simplify. Too much stuff is burdensome and adds to stress. People have millions of arguments over their lawns or house trim color everyday. These things are unimportant in the big picture. Circumstances over the last decade is forcing us to revalue. The question is, what are we going to come up with? Ideas such as the ones in the exhibit, in my view, are a great start. Here’s a link to the exhibit’s site. For those of you in NYC, I’ll advise you to check it out in person.

http://www.moma.org/visit/calendar/exhibitions/1230

You had me right up to the Ciceron, IL part. Busted out laughing. Ciceron?
Mention that word to any Chicagoan.
Poster child for city and political corruption.
Betty Lorenz, Frank Lorenz, Johnny Torrio, Al Capone any of those names ring a bell?

Average single family homes were once places that were much more self sufficient, especially if you were out of a city. When there wasn’t work you could still feed yourself. Nowadays most new single family homes are as useless in that regard as apartment buildings, regardless of the land you have.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/07/20/illegal-kitchen-garden_n_1687558.html

It is not the suburban model that failed but speculation by banking that allowed this to happen. The model is sustainable, bring back well paying jobs.
Trains are bs, no one rides a bike in the rain and public control of land and water is not the answer. Cities are crime infested, they have trains, city water control etc.
Why do we have to try new things when the model worked fine.
This is all about more quick profit for the elite.
Sounds like they want to build concentration camps.
It’s not that difficult. Rezone residential areas for mixed use to permit light businesses. No reason not to turn some of these empty houses into hair salons, convenience shops, medical & rehab offices, piano schools, gardening shops, ice-cream parlors ... Let the neighborhood build a bit of a small-business base. Likely though - suburbanites will disapprove. “Too much noise, too much traffic.” But it’s mixed use activity that makes an area vibrant and desirable.

This is a wonderful article showcasing how new ideas can create a shift in the paradigm of what housing should be. Of course we can’t change this system overnight, but change must happen as the old ways no longer work. Kudos to MOMA and to Goodman for keeping these ideas in the forefront of our minds. It takes everyone working together toward a positive future to create needed change!

"of what housing should be", living on top of each other. it's all yours.

The point is people should have a choice. There is plenty of suburbia, we’ll never run out of that. But there is very little good semi-urban housing. What there is available was built mostly before zoning took hold and is VERY expensive … which means it is valuable.

Unfortunately it was made illegal to build good urban environments after around 1965. So there was little CHOICE for people who did not want to live in suburbia.

There is plenty of room for people of all different persuasions to live in the kind of environment they want. The roadblock to this choice has been government intervention preventing one kind of development.

Good story, makes you think. However, there is too many cynics and they could care less about affordability of any kind. The NIMBY theory (not in my back yard). Now those are the very folks who lost their back yard. The American dream was always elusive for most and when the money came, we rushed in. Now we are sitting on the sidelines broke and devastated. Yes we need new thinking but its too late for most!
Massive expansion of the suburbs was a tremendously bad idea. It was done at a time of extremely cheap gas and economic expansion and was very short-sighted. The long-term impact is an even greater reliance on cheap gas (because getting to work is required) and dilapidated conditions in many parts of urban centers.

“We need another housing boom.”

Unfortunately, we did the wrong thing for a number of years. When it comes to city planning, you can’t make mistakes of this magnitude and think there is an easy “fix.”

Comments on Foreclosed

The fact is that our housing finance system was the envy of the free world. Greed ruined an excellent system. The Fed did not make money free in 60s, 70s. and 80s. Great systems do not survive greed for power or profit.

This is what caused the housing bust and it’s being done again the same way

http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/04/opinion/obama-house-of-cards.html?_r=0

It’s, of course, a matter of taste where people chose to live but I find it hard to see how people can want to live in these cookie-cutter developments, usually with no or few trees, with the garage stuck in the front of the house—a statement re the value of cars over public transportation and the illusion of separateness. There must be some good marketing involved in selling them telling people they have “arrived” safe and sound behind their garages. I can imagine feeling stranded in these places. Give me bustling urban life with lots of small businesses and public transport and public spaces.

In a capitalist country, land is not a public good.
Yes, but we don't live in a completely capitalist country. That notion is a fiction dreamt by libertarians. Because in our country, the government can claim private land using eminent domain and all it needs to do is compensate the owner based on market value, NOT the private value perceived by the owner of that land. And it can even do it if it ends up giving the land to some other private party provided that the intent is to promote economic growth in the community. So, land in the US is actually a conditionally public good.

I live in a suburb of Detroit, people walk their dogs in the evening, little kids ride around on bikes, we know a good number of our neighbors, there is nothing cool or edgy about it. The neighborhood is so normal that things that are unusual really stand out and get noticed. It is safe, quiet and virtually crime free. Not very cool or hip but a great place to live.

"We need another housing boom." Have at it. Help yourself. The first crime was never investigated. And I'm not ever going to go through all that again.

Our government (all three branches) has got to be slapped around, seriously slapped around. We then need monetary reform, regulatory reform, and tax reform. We can probably get it done in a day or two at most. -grins sarcastically-

This will happen when the average middle class can no longer afford the "suburban dream". This happened to me and I found I was more that ready to step out of my 2800 square foot single family to a 1000 square foot condo. The cost of upkeep, taxes, and AT&T the rest were a huge burden.

With the diminishing real earnings for most Americans the McMansion and hour commute in an Escalade is fast becoming the major regulator for housing choice.
And I would not live in an urban area if someone gave me free upscale housing. I work in one and I hate it. I am happy to take my train home every night, but HATE that also, and as soon as I can I will be driving.

This is cool, representing the kinds of corporate innovation we use to have and need today before the funds were squeezed out to avoid taxes and hoarded in the Cayman Islands and we started playing with riderless vehicles before making manufacturing plants on the South Side of Chicago, in Detroit, Providence, RI, places where private enterprise is needed to invest.

The main reason people live outside of the city is because they don't want to live in the city. Why would the average person trade 5 acres in the country and a simple 25 minute ride into a city for the pollution and crime and high costs that come with living in the city.

"The main reason people live outside of the city is because they don't want to live in the city."

That may be the reason "you" want to live outside the city, and I can see why. If you see an urban center as a congregation of criminals, high costs, and pollution it makes sense to want to escape. But, if you see the urban center as something that is good, then maybe you'd want to live in the city.

Many people confuse their personal taste with objective reality.

Because it is still relatively cheap to live in suburbia versus the city. And a significant reason is because our government heavily subsidizes living in suburbia as mentioned in the article. America's transportation and housing infrastructure is very energy intensive relative to the rest of the industrialized world AND the developing nations like China and India. As long as we have cheap energy, it is not a problem. But we are spending hundreds of billions of dollars in military expenditures each year to be sure that the oil keeps flowing from the trouble spots of the world and that cost is part of how our government subsidizes cheap gasoline.

There can be crime in the burbs too. Some burbs are major white collar crime zones, where credit card numbers and identities are stolen, and some cheap foreclosures can be marijuana greenhouses.
Art (not) imitating life: MoMA hosts foreclosure-themed exhibit

But should developers, architects, marketers and financiers just hit the restart button and repeat the patterns that led to the U.S. foreclosure crisis? According to the Museum of Modern Art exhibition, “Foreclosed: Rehousing the American Dream,” the answer is no.

Instead of letting the recent crisis go to waste, the MoMA’s Architecture and Design Department and Columbia University’s Temple Hoyne Buell Center for the Study of American Architecture created some dynamic new architectural visions to address the needs of American communities.

The five interdisciplinary teams of architects – led by principals at MOS Architects, Studio Gang, WORKac, Visible Weather, and Zago Architecture – were each assigned a site within a U.S. mega-region. The teams spent time in their assigned megaregions, visiting potential sites for intervention, meeting with local residents and officials, and considering what type of architectural program would respond to the local needs and realities of the existing population. Then they developed proposals to address the issue of foreclosure in each area, based on ideas drawn from The Buell Hypothesis, which rethinks housing and infrastructure in ways that could transform American suburbs.

Each team engaged in a cross-disciplinary conversation, analyzing and eventually imagining the redesign of their specific sites, from older East Coast suburbs with rail connections to newer subdivisions accessible only by highway. As a result, the proposals developed for the five sites provide radically different visions of a rethought suburbia.

The proposal for Temple Terrace, Florida, calls for a new financial structure that transfers ownership of land from private developers back to the taxpayers, and proposes a reconvening of the town meeting as a forum.

The exhibition’s model for East Orange, New Jersey (seen as it currently is below) suggests transforming public streets into mixed-use ribbon buildings.

The installation for Keizer, Oregon, seeks to increase the density of the city to increase the public’s access to nature.
American Dream, A New Conversation


The Exhibition, A New Conversation

Role of the Museum

American Dream, A New Conversation

"The financial and foreclosure crisis was such a psychic shock that it created the perfect moment to have this discussion. Before the crisis, the ubiquitous American Dream image being marketed to people was the suburban house of the 1950s — living in the perpetual hereafter of television. When the rumbling financial and foreclosure crises disturbed that dream, a new conversation became possible. Topics and ideas that had been "foreclosed" by the housing boom, could be re-opened after the bust.

In the forward to the exhibition's catalogue, MoMA director Glenn Lowry says it is fitting that the museum should present the new ideas, pointing out that 80 years ago, the museum's "Modern Architecture; International Exhibition" not only promoted the aesthetic principles of the International Style but advocated housing reform in the slums of New York and other cities as the effects of the worldwide economic depression began to make themselves profoundly felt. Sound strangely familiar? The show runs until August 13.

The answer is not that she has studied these issues in 5th grade nor is it that I have spent
The exhibit at the MoMA includes film presentations, interactive multimedia, and incredibly detailed scale models, which are surely the highlight of it all. A blog also shares insider perspectives on the work done by the teams, as well. Whether or not any of the five ideas come to fruition, Foreclosed is definitely a not-to-miss stop among the collections. On display through August 13th, with a closing lecture scheduled that day, there is still time to enjoy the exhibit this summer.

August 2012
MoMA Takes on the Foreclosure Crisis (And the American Dream)

The impact of the crisis is ubiquitous, even penetrating the Olympics, where talk of swimmer Ryan Lochte’s parents’ impending foreclosure has rivaled the attention paid to his swimming achievements. Intimately tied to the American dream, single-family home ownership has long been a measure of success.

Though aesthetically divergent, each model revolutionizes the concept of community. In favor of communal practicality, the ability to express oneself through the appearance of one’s home has been obviated. As one might infer, we are not only forced to rethink the meaning of home, but also our understanding of the echelons of wealth and success.
Barry Bergdoll (BB): Along the way, we have been much accused of perpetuating a metropolitan view of the suburbs. So, I thought it was interesting to kind of a little bit flip back and say, “What might we learn, might we discuss, might we debate, in the process of this inquiry, from the metropolitan perspective?” because in the end the foreclosure crisis knows no borders. One has only to look not only, as we will in a moment, at Queens or Jersey City, or of course to what’s happening today in Europe where much of our debt is bundled together with theirs.

BB: These are all sites in metropolitan corridors. So, there are a number of characteristics that are incredibly important about these. First of all, obviously there is a substantial rate of foreclosure, well above the national average, in each of these regions and in the particular suburban locations that were chosen. All of them lie somewhere on or near—you remember high-speed rail? A once-projected vision of some kind of communal transport along corridors which might, in fact, rewrite some regional geographies. And, also, they all lay in metropolitan areas with substantial projected growth. So this is not an exercise in rust-belt downsizing or shrinking cities, but rather in places where to think about housing-infrastructure-development actually made some sense even if they were invited to look at areas where there were large amounts of—and this is another important factor—large amounts of publicly held land that might be subject to development perhaps in a private-public partnership.

Marc Jahr (MJ): I think it’s also important to note that I’m neither an architect nor a city planner. My background is as a community and tenant organizer and as an affordable housing finance practitioner. And clearly those are the lenses I look at the world through because I’ve come to realize that if you can’t finance it, you can’t build it. And if it doesn’t resonate with neighborhood residents, if they’re not involved in some way in the planning and implementation of the initiative, then the odds of it being durable are going to be slim. I suppose that’s why I took mild umbrage at Andrew Zago’s comment—Andrew, where are you?—as part of Foreclosed, his team focused upon Rialto, California, that the pedagogical lesson is that with all the value other disciplines bring to urbanism, new urban projects should be not only architect-led but architecture-led. I think that approach can lead to playful, intriguing, but problematic architectural plans.

MJ: If the subprime crisis has cruelly afflicted some suburban areas, the great transformation of the city's economy from one based upon manufacturing to a service-based economy dominated by the financial services industry initially gutted the city's neighborhoods.

MJ: In fact, amidst the rubble and smoldering ruins of the South Bronx, building these 1950s, Beaver Cleaver, suburban tract homes was as provocative and improbable an act as building any of the five projects proposed in Foreclosed. It went contrary to and undermined every conceivable narrative about the South Bronx and the folks who lived there. It provided people with hope, an ineffable but indispensable quality that something could be done to roll back the firestorm of devastation. And it provided them with a model for how to do that: draw upon the ambition, energy, and resources of organized community residents, marry it with significant philanthropic and more importantly government resources and political will, and use those relationships to leverage private capital.
In some ways, in its effort to strengthen the demographics of certain communities, the city used the crisis of the '70s and '80s to subtly suburbanize low- and moderate-income neighborhoods through its land disposition and financing strategy. It pushed the needle just a bit in the direction of homeownership, and under Mayor Bloomberg’s plan up until the real estate bubble burst, homeownership—single-family, cooperative, and condominium—continued to be integral to the plan. But what has been and remains truly integral to the plan has been a commitment to encourage mixed-income and mixed-use development based upon the belief that this strategy will result in stronger developments and more stable, durable, and healthier communities.

While we didn’t fall prey to the siren song of large-scale master plans, our fine-grain plans have sometimes also proven to be small-bore. And although we’ve done much better in recent years, fine architecture has been far more the exception than the rule. And that’s where this project serves as a wonderful provocation. It reminds us not to allow the urgency of the crisis and the need for immediate solutions to blind us to the larger opportunities the crisis presents to us.

But East Orange’s riff on transit-oriented development is a very smart proposal as well. It stretches our thinking, residing on the edge of the practical and the ideal. It proposes a politic trade: save revenue and therefore tax dollars by eliminating many of the neighborhood streets and the costs associated with maintaining them. Additionally, this approach radically diminishes the role of the automobile in the community. It treats the streets like we’ve treated vacant land in the city: as an opportunity for infill housing. It increases density in the area near an existing rail station and incorporates mixed uses enriching the area’s amenities while, again, reducing the residents’ reliance on the car to get things done. Curiously, however, while calling for the end of the ghetto enclave, its uninterrupted ribbon development results in a densely packed community that reminds me of my image of the kasbah, a true enclave, impenetrable from the outside, labyrinthine from the inside, and devoid of large, open, public spaces where people can meet and talk and relax. To relegate these opportunities, as they say in the paper, to the ground floors of new developments which might contain a variety of shops and services is to subordinate community to commerce.

It’s refreshing that the team unabashedly suggests that much of these new ribbons of housing would be developed as public housing. But if this is a serious idea, not simply a gesture or metaphor, then one must confront the fact that public housing in the United States, apart from unfortunately being in ideological disrepute, is also grossly underfunded.

We can reverse engineer these communities, or as the HUD Secretary calls for, rebalance the mix of single-family and rental development with the financial tools we have at hand: discounted land prices, tax abatements and exemptions, capital subsidies, taxable bonds and tax-exempt bonds, housing revenue bonds, low-income housing tax credits and brownfield tax credits, inclusionary zoning strategies and long-term regulatory agreements and covenants that preserve the public investment and character of the developments. The techniques to fund these developments aren’t missing. What is needed are the necessary subsidies and their predicate political will.

But we’re still only tentatively seizing these opportunities. In some sense, when public bodies dither, private developers leap. In Huntington, Long Island in 2010, after three years of planning and endless meetings, a mixed-income, mixed-use rental and homeownership development proposed by Avalon Bay Communities and located less than a half-mile from the Long Island Rail Road station was defeated. The politics of change are extremely hard.
expressed in community charrettes. Instead on the stylistics of nostalgia and the will of the public as apparently without the appearance of Architecture (again, big A) or authorship, relying failed, by quietly steering its supposed cure. But, they've sought to do so void where traditional public housing and modern architecture reportedly through their involvement with HOPE VI, have inserted themselves into the Congress for New Urbanism, coauthors of this fine document here, the fifth densest city in the United States. It actually has over 16,000 people per square mile. (To give you some frame of reference, New York only has 27,000 people per square mile, and the drop-off after New York is rather rapid.) So, I applaud MOS for their somewhat backhanded recognition that, despite this density, there still aren't enough services, there still isn’t enough affordable housing, and “Oh, and by the way, you’re all fat.” The answer they came up with, which I don’t disagree with at all, is that we actually need to make it denser, and what they suggest is essentially Smart Growth on steroids. […] The way Smart Growth is essentially practiced now is in increments, it’s working. But if it were practiced at a much larger scale, as on steroids. […] The way Smart Growth is essentially practiced now is in increments, it’s working. But if it were practiced at a much larger scale, as
BL: "Properties with Property" occupies the only site that anyone who doesn't live in Manhattan would call a "real suburb," which Marc alluded to, and unapologetically so. In so doing, Team Zago really brings to the fore, in the most aesthetically exciting way possible, issues of the overlaps between public and private space that are paramount to any affordable housing development since the introduction of Newman's Defensible Space. [...] But the question that automatically brings up, especially when compared against MOS's project, is that even though the density in some places in Rialto is quadrupled from what it was or what it was proposed to be, is that still enough density to survive? Even though that density is camouflaged, would the people that want to be in a low-density area still want to be there? And would the people who need the density in order to survive, and predominantly those are low-income families, would they be able to get the supportive services that they would need in a community with that level of density?

BL: What I think was really innovative about this project ["Simultaneous City"] was the coupling of mixed-income residential with various public amenities and civic spaces, and it's not too far off from what is currently being pushed in the CHOICE Neighborhoods Initiative, which if you're unfamiliar is essentially a follow-up to HOPE VI.

BL: I don't think there are too many conversations you can have in the public discourse where a term like "unwed welfare mother" is completely commonplace and assumed as being an acceptable term to throw around, but when you talk about public housing it is. In fact, it's almost assumed. So, in a lot of ways we need to get out from our own bad image.

BL: The five teams, although each one of them in their own way tried to saddle up to the issue of public housing, no one really took it dead-on. No one really looked at it square in the eyes and ran at it, because it is so controversial, or that would be my guess from being on one of the teams and watching the other four teams work closely. It still has such a stigma to it. There is still such reluctance by the architectural community to reengage this issue of public housing that everyone kind of walked up to the edge and then shied back from it.

BL: From the outset, I think it was clear that the public was welcome to come in and be part of the conversation, but hoping that MoMA continues to move forward and have other activities and exhibitions that focus on housing, I would hope that the next iteration of this conversation is actually brought forward and have other activities and exhibitions that focus on housing, I
In and be part of the conversation, but hoping that MoMA continues to move forward and have other activities and exhibitions that focus on housing, I would hope that the next iteration of this conversation is actually brought out to the public as opposed to asking the public to come in. [...] There are three necessary components to a productive dialectic: the abstract, the negative, and the concrete. Similarly, though not immediately corollary, there are three necessary participants in a healthy discussion on housing: the architects, the policymakers, and the public. So, speaking on behalf of the policymakers and in the hopes that we both endeavor to include the public early and often, I say, “Welcome Back.”

BL [in response to an audience question]: Quite frankly, the financers don’t come without the policy. Maybe as a policymaker or someone who’s directly involved in policy, that might seem narcissistic if not naïve, but you did not see the widespread investment in personal mortgages until there was a tax break. You didn’t see the widespread investment and the ability for private-public partnerships until there was a tax break. And those tax breaks were enabled with policy.

BL [in response to an audience question]: In a lot of ways I think the community engagement process can be grossly misused, and it has been misused. [...] And it’s unfair because nine times out ten you’re working with a community that doesn’t have your background. They don’t have your vocabulary. They certainly don’t have your resources. In a way, what we try to do is unstack the deck when we start.

Reinhold Martin: So it’s an election year. The question is, really, as people kind of operating around municipal and regional public sectors, what it would take to move this discussion we’re having in the big city here out into America, broadly construed whether we’re calling that “suburbia” or not. In other words, out into a space, a sphere, a site of discussion, in which the underlying values are on the table in a manner that is at least comparable to the way the practice of finance is currently on the table or the way, say, healthcare was on the table a few years ago. It’s quite striking that, during an election year after four years of this crisis, housing is still not on the table. What do you think?

BL: One of the things I thought to do in preparation for this talk was to chart, from the Bush administration through the Obama administration, the number of times the word “housing” appears in the State of the Union address. I got really depressed, so I stopped. In essence—again, because it is so polarizing, and I can’t wait to see what they said on Fox News—you’re going to have to wait until December. You’re going to have to wait until he gets reelected. You’re going to have to wait until Shaun Donovan has four more years. Then we can start to have a meaningful discussion. But until then, I don’t think anything that you put on the national political agenda that talks about “public” or “housing” other than possibly bailing out mortgages and/or bailing out more banks—I don’t know how that’s going to gain any traction or do anything other than alienate more voters. But once December comes, then it’s a different story.

MJ: I wouldn’t disagree with that. I think there’s a curious rupture between the importance of housing in our lives and the importance of it in the political discourse, if you will. I think in New York City there are two things that are important to New Yorkers: real estate and romance. And real estate inevitably trumps romance. “Who’s got the right rent-stabilized apartment? I’ll take that one!” “Ok, you’re moving in with me. I’m not moving in with you.” Here it is so central to our lives. Go to a party in a single-family house in a neighborhood or something: “So, did you hear the house down the street went for so-many dollars?” It dominates our conversation in so many ways, and yet it’s so difficult for it to enter into the discussion even in the aftermath of this colossal, this calamity that has occurred. [...] In some ways, when it gets into the public policy realm, it’s like “My eyes glaze over.” I’m talking about QRMs [Qualified Residential Mortgages], and you’re falling asleep.
it gets into the public policy realm, it's like “My eyes glaze over.” I'm talking about QRMs [Qualified Residential Mortgages], and you're falling asleep. Let's admit it. It is hard. It's really hard to raise this issue in an effective manner.

Audience Member: I used to be a homeowner in Fort Lee, but the taxes got to be too high. As you know in New Jersey the taxes for homes are among the highest in the country. So, I sold the home at a loss in this economy and received a HUD voucher to get a rental space. In my town, I was told there is a lack of public housing. If I were to go into a HUD building, I could move in but not move out. It would be better for someone of my age to get a HUD voucher and just try to find affordable housing with that voucher. Now that new development is not taking into consideration affordable housing, so my question to you is since the housing authority in my town said they cannot approach the developer, and the town that is making the deal with the developers cannot request affordable housing, can gentlemen like you make any suggestions? I understand that Governor Christie of New Jersey has the idea that affordable housing, the HUD program, is something where the developers that have put in money into the fund for these things, the funds have not been used, and that money he wants the government to take. So, the affordable housing in New Jersey is stagnant and looks like it's going away. Can you make any suggestion how affordable housing can have a future and how there can be better communication with developers that are getting a great deal for people like me?

BL: What you essentially did in maybe two minutes is cut a broad swath right through just about every problem that we kind of touched upon up here and hopefully to some extent a lot of these projects started to poke at. I would, with all due respect to my colleagues, suggest they didn't really get into that cut. And, when Barry said this would be a little more nuts and bolts, I didn't realize we were talking this nuts and bolts, but you're absolutely right. You point out a whole series of problems starting from the fact that you've been displaced, put in a position where you could no longer afford your house because of the taxes on that house. Now you're being left with very few options. I would hope on a really basic level that your voucher is portable, so that you aren't stuck just looking for housing in Fort Lee which I know can be somewhat challenging. [...] The whole Affordable Housing Trust Fund is a problem because it's like the old George Bernard Shaw play Major Barbara: It allows these guys to buy their way out of providing affordable housing. [...] As long as you continue to take what amounts to developers' ransom money, you're going to continue to have segregated neighborhoods. You're going to continue to have folks like yourself who are stuck, getting forced out of their neighborhood...
Janet Varney (JV): We were looking at this HuffPost article. I’ve got it pulled up here. It’s on the Business vertical, and it’s Peter S. Goodman’s post “Foreclosure Crisis Spurs Quest to Reinvigorate Suburbs.” It’s a great read. Of course, it engages the reader with regard to all of the things we were just talking about: this idea of the real estate bubble, the collapse, all of these people being turned out of their homes, and what it’s going to mean to the bouncing back, to the recovery, and what that’s going to look like.

AM: And to the American dream, right?

JV: And to the American dream and what that even means anymore.
Janet Varney (JV): We were looking at this Huffington Post article. I've got it pulled up here. It's on the Business vertical, and it's Peter S. Goodman's post Foreclosure Crisis Spurs Quest to Reinvigorate Suburbs. It's a great read. Of course, it engages the reader with regard to all of the things we were just talking about: this idea of the real estate bubble, the collapse, all of these people being turned out of their homes, and what it's going to mean to the bouncing back, to the recovery, and what that's going to look like.

AM: And to the American dream, right?

JV: And to the American dream and what that even means anymore.

JV: So the idea isn't necessarily that these are exhibits that will then be transformed into actual developments. It's really more about an imagining and an inspiring of the American public. Is that right?

Amale Andraos (AA): Definitely. It's really an architecture exhibition, and the idea is to project alternate visions, you know, where people can actually look at models and say, “I would live there.” And “there” would be, in our case, five times the density from typical suburbs, three times the open space, a wide range of diversity in terms of typology of housing, a wide range of diversity in terms of landscapes, etc, etc. So, they're pointing at something that is completely opposite and different to what exists there now.

AM: It's very cool, actually. I went to this exhibit when I was in New York just a little while back, and it forces you to think outside of the box.

JV: Literally outside of the tiny little box.

AM: Which is hard for everyone to do, you know? Even I, myself, was walking around the exhibit, and everything shows this very condensed communal style of living. And, at first, you get this kind of reaction like “I wouldn't want to do that. What about my privacy? What about my personal space?” because I feel like we've been conditioned to want these single-family large homes with our own driveway and our own yard and to block ourselves off from everyone else. But I think it's a really incredible thing, this exhibit, because it just makes you envision the world and the way that we live in a different way.

Courtney Poulos (CP): There's more to it, I think, than just high-density. In northeast Los Angeles, where there was a huge impact after the market crashed, and there are so many bank-owned homes, it's not just about mixed-use, but also creating communities—building community with what's already existing, like the greenest way of building and rebuilding.

JV: Will you tell us a little about what you actually do with your organization? Because you buy up places that have been foreclosed upon, and you essentially transform them, but you use what's there.

CP: That's right. So, my biggest client is Better Shelter. And Better Shelter is one of the rehab firms that pioneered the transformation of northeast LA. They took these foreclosed homes which you could buy very cheaply and did a higher-end design and started to draw people who couldn't get what they wanted on the west side and bring them out to our neighborhoods. Now what that's turned into for our organization, the NELA Business Culture, is attracting small-business owners, attracting tech companies, so that we can create a community where people can live, work, and play. And there's also turning abandoned gas stations into parks, and the community is really working together to improve what we've already got. And these areas were neglected, and now they're flourishing.

AM: Can I just read you a comment really quick before we get into this? Jamesguy74 says, who is watching this right now—thank you for your comment—said, “I think that this foreclosure crisis gives the typical American suburbs to basically start over.” I guess, the chance to start over. “Housing prices are down dramatically, so it makes the American Dream more affordable for first time home buyers.”

CP: That's it.

SW: My brother's buying a house right now.

AA: I think one of the things, though, that the exhibition tried to do is question (and I think Peter Goodman in his article makes that clear) the connection between the American Dream and the ownership of the single-family home. This is a very constructed link that is actually very recent historically. You can also redefine or reexamine the American Dream as, you know, better education, leaving a more sustainable world to your children than it is now. It is really critical to untangle this kind of ownership model of the single-family home with the American Dream. There are incredibly positive aspects to the American dream that don't necessarily rely on this kind of ownership model.

JV: Absolutely.
AM: Well if anyone's going to do it then—we have some of our commenters that are weighing in that are part of a younger generation—it seems like they would be the ones to do it, right? Let's take this comment from JamesPowers who says, "I'm 26 years old, and it's been said my generation will change jobs 13 times before we retire. Why would I want to be saddled with the obligation of a mortgage. Condo or apartment. Fine with me."

CP: What are the benefits of homeownership? Is that the question?

AM: A young person says, "Well, yeah. If you change jobs thirteen times ..." Who knows where that takes you? Around the world or across the country. Just rent.

CP: We all have to rent, that's true. But definitely owning a home allows you the possibility to build wealth ...
CP: But I want to talk about the suburbs for just a moment if I may. I think that the suburbs kind of get a bad rap. We all want a backyard for our kids to run around in, and I think that's completely fair. I used to work in Washington, DC, and they built out, during the boom, pretty far. So people were traveling twenty, thirty miles to get into the city, and all the streets were jammed, and there was kind of nothing going on in those suburbs. And I think that's the problem—not that the suburbs exist. It's that people can't live, work, and play in their communities. So, they're spending all their time in the car. What I'm saying is whether it's twenty miles away from the heart of the city or whether it's at the edge or border of the city, which is where I work like northeast LA, it's about building a community that can sustain employment and where people can live and work and play together. That's what makes life valuable, and that's why people want to live here. That's why people want to move here. You can knock on the door and know your neighbor.

AA: Absolutely, I should add that your backyard could be on your roof.

CP: I wouldn't want my kid running around on the roof.

SW: The MoMA exhibit, it inspires. It shows out-of-the-box thinking, ways to totally reexamine the types of dwelling we would like to own or be a part of in the future if we want to ever have a home again, and that's different than having a mortgage. When we were going through this, we said, “We’ll never own a home again unless we can pay for it outright.” […] One of the conversations we have more often than not is the type of places that we would like to live in. And it's gone from being a traditional-type home to “What if we had a completely sustainable home where it's completely solar-powered?” and things that we never really considered previously. And I think that that's what's so inspiring and that's what's so exciting about these types of exhibits. I can't see the value of homeownership right now from where I'm sitting as the only answer because I had been so bitter on it for that period.
Internet Banter

hp_blogger_Jonny Stewart
SheilaKhani, high-speed mind you.

Typical_Boston_Liberal
Ha a printed out version....

disclosureproject
when one doesn't have much to start with doesn't mean much to lose much

Tom_Servo
Hello there everybody.

SheilaKhani
hp_blogger_Jonny Stewart, faved

Gadea268
Yay! Janet & Alyona - two great looking ladies.

nancyredd
i love you james' wife! u are super kewl!

hp_blogger_Jonny Stewart
hi courtney!

paubx44
Typical_Boston_Liberal, Yeah, I understand that e-book texts used to actually be printed on paper

Progressives_LoveAmerica
I think the lighter side of foreclosure would be the obvious catharsis people being foreclosed upon get from willfully neglecting the state of their homes & basically turning them into trash heaps in the knowledge that the banks will be taking them

Robert_R_Best
I wonder if they fight over who gets the couch and who has to sit in the folding chair.

Tsstryker
Progressives_LoveAmerica, LOL

SheilaKhani
can we discuss the purpose of property tax? or table it for future topics?
Foreclosed: August 2012

Internet Banter

Homeownership

MajorWibbit
I was lucky...I was able to sell...but took a big hit

American Dream

Eplphony2345
No more dream. Just one big of' neverending nightmare!

Homeownership, The Market

Luanne_Taylor
try selling a NONforeclosure in the midst of it!

A New Conversation

tlstrykor
my blood pressure rises when we talk about foreclosures. I don't even own a home. I just tie it to all that has happened. A reminder of the peak behind the curtain we all got...then nothing changed. Damn!

Homeownership

disclosureproject
or we can just discuss the idea of property

Homeownership, The Market

Typical_Boston_Liberal
Please discuss the fact that cash-in-hand contractors are buying a huge portion of the available homes around most major cities and chopping them up for rental.

Internet Banter

 Hp_blogger_Jonny Stewart
let's start having foreclosure parties!

Homeownership, The Market

Jamesguy74
I think that this foreclosure crisis gives the typical American suburbs to basically start over. Housing prices are down dramatically, so it makes the American dream more affordable for first time home buyers.

Homeownership, Internet Banter, The Market

Progressives_LoveAmerica
tlstryker, it's true & I don't blame them. If I were being foreclosed on, I'd do the same thing: Put out rotting food all over the place & put out the welcome wagon for rodents, possums, raccoons, vagrants, etc. The bank will be welcomed by stench

Internet Banter

Hp_blogger_James Poulos
Hp_blogger_Jonny Stewart, Funclosure?
Luanne_Taylor
most banks won't loan on a foreclosure

paule44
jamesguy74, It's not the best way to achieve that goal, but I see what your saying

Incognito-ergo-sum
Typical_Boston_Liberal, Once they own all the rentals, they will cut care and raise prices.

Eddie_VanderMolen
Progressives_LoveAmerica, What happened to the idea of squatting in your own foreclosed home?

allx
The people should foreclose on the banks

Progressives_LoveAmerica
hp_blogger_Jonny Stewart, personally, I'd much prefer it if the government would EXPROPRIATE these homes & give them to the would-be victims of foreclosure, just to teach banks something about risk management.

Typical_Boston_Liberal
incognito-ergo-sum, Yeah, that's what I'm afraid of...

Luanne_Taylor
so only those with enough cash can purchase the foreclosures.

hp_blogger_Jonny Stewart
Progressives_LoveAmerica, now we're talkin.

toncuz
hopefully everyone knows that Fannie and Freddie were VICTIMS of Wall Street and Republican deregulation of derivatives...NOT the cause

tstryker
same type of heist the same powers that be did at the great depression. they got the bailouts and the properties. total money grab by the rich.

Progressives_LoveAmerica
Eddie_VanderMolen, people do that too...but vandalism & neglect of the home are the order of the day once it's apparent that all hope is lost & the bank is taking the house

Tom_Servo
The day I left my home was one of the saddest days of my life. I did not trash it. I cleaned it. I loved it I was there 22 years,

ShellaKhani
Progressives_LoveAmerica, great idea! but not the same gov't that bailed them out - may be a pro socialist gov't
Progressives_LoveAmerica, great idea! but not the same govt that bailed them out - may be a pro socialist govt

westward1
The FBI reports 80% of mortgage fraud was committed by lenders.

disclosureproject
earthships

toncuz
Except FDR told those banks ...you are no longer in the loan business...the loans belong to us now...here's some chump change

Eddie_VanderMolen
Tom_Servo, OMG. I'm so sorry for you.

Typical_Boston_Liberal
Not if contractors buy the house first with cash on hand.

Nadia_Joseph
I just wanted to throw a couple of ideas for future segments. The first one is asylum seekers; countless number of families have lost their lives searching for a better life elsewhere only to be met with death or living in limbo.

Luanne_Taylor
no no, only if they enough cash!

hp_blogger_ClayChiles
I want to see some nonprofit buy up foreclosed homes and then give them away to people who lost their homes to foreclosure after falling victim to predatory lending.

StephensRG
thanks for not ignoring the neglected areas!! We shouldn't only talk about the rich areas! My parent's first house was in the suburbs. But not the nice ones!!

MarlJman
hp_blogger_ClayChiles, they couldn't pay the taxes

Nadia_Joseph
The second thought that came to mind is to do a segment on Medicare and Social Security and cover more health care related topics of concern. Thank you.

Eddie_VanderMolen
hp_blogger_ClayChiles, Churches in Harlem did just that.

altix
I would like to see a segment with Rick Wolfe, professor from U. amherst
Comments on Foreclosed

Gadea268
hp_blogger_Clay Chiles, That is a fantastic idea.

Tom_Servo
I can't talk about this. It makes me ill. check you people out tomorrow.

JamesPowers
I'm 26 years old and its been said my generation will change jobs 13 times before we retire. Why should I WANT to be settled with the obligation of a mortgage. Condo or apt fine with me

Luanne_Taylor
Alabama gives you a year to come back and reclaim your home...

MarlJman
Want to do something important do shows constantly on the last area of legalized discrimination in America, pot smokers

Eddie_VanderMolen
Tom_Servo, Chin up buddy. :)

pauth44
JamesPowers, I'm 18 and feel the exact same way. Apartments work for me.

toncuz
Or we can CLAW BACK foreclosure losses from the bank accounts of the criminal bankers

Progressives_LoveAmerica
, or might I suggest a favela?

pauth44
28*

Typical_Boston_Liberal
JamesPowers, That number goes way down with a college education, and even further with a graduate level education. If you find a job you love, you'll want a house some day. There's no feeling like it, and that's why this is such a sad story.

Luanne_Taylor
foreclosures have COST Americans way too much net worth...

Eddie_VanderMolen
Ugh,... SHORT sales suck.
Affordable Housing, Government and Policy, Reference and Comparison

Internet Banter

A New Conversation

Internet Banter

Homeownership, Internet Banter, The Market

Affordable Housing

Internet Banter

Government and Policy, Homeownership

The Exhibition

Internet Banter, Jobs

Affordable Housing

Affordable Housing

Internet Banter

Government and Policy, Homeownership
Eddie_VanderMolen
MarJman, there's an idea out there for a progressive property tax.

hp_blogger_Vanessa Smith
Typical_Boston_Liberal, We are going to try to get to that. Great question.

SheliaKhani
all, will do my best

paulx44
yeswecanjane, And it's kinda warm if you stand outside close enough to the windows of your former home

Enock_Zamora
I went to the 'slash and burn' chamber of commerce in the (8) district in Denver last night in the 'redevelopment' on Welton St.. The Renewal agency now say they are 'reformed'. What a concept.

Adlerrealstate
I started working NELA area 18 months ago feel in love with it and now have moved my Fam here.

Luke_Cloran
Suburbs are becoming more and more desolate, more young people are moving toward the urban home-lives.

MarJman
Eddie_VanderMolen, you know the banker fat cats and government lifers will never go for anything progressive when it comes to money

Luanne_Taylor
26 is very young to buy a house!

tstryker
there are indeed a ton of reasons not to buy. buying a home has never been for everyone (but they sure did hand those loans out fast).

yeswecanjane
paulx44, Yes we can look warmly at their future and not be so jealous!

VenusBlivinaJohn
MarLman, tell the truth! there's no true homeownership -- even with Home Affordable refinance program -- banks extent your "rent" to another 40 years. Renting is much less stressful

BrianDion
It can be cheaper to own a home then to rent and if you move alot because job changes you can always have a realestate company manage the property to rent.. I think that business may grow massively over the next couple of years with banks not knowing what to do and people moving.
Foreclosed: August 2012

- Luke_Cloran
  There's a difference between suburb "developments", and actual communities.

- Luanne_Taylor
  at 51 I wanted to try to live in some new cities...

- Adlermalestate
  York Blvd is changing every day it's amazing

- SheillaKhani
  building wealth from buying a house is like building wealth for people like Mitt- the 1%- is not for everyone in fact it has had anti-building wealth affects

- Luanne_Taylor
  now I continue to either LOSE big bucks on sells, or I am stuck!

- Typical_Boston_Liberal
  Minimum lot sizes ruined our country. Talk to a zoning board in the suburbs and they'll say how much it has handcuffed suburban development.

- MariJman
  VenusBlvnsJohn, I agree renting is much less stressful because for the most part the government isn't there with their hand out

- JamesPowers
  that's what is so brilliant about this...I think the old guard is going to get a real wake up about how america has changed. I dont want a damn yard i have to mowe haha I admit it im lazy

- Luanne_Taylor
  every day a new foreclosure pops up and you think, great another decline in the neighborhood prices

- Sharon_Morell
  tis tryker, With interest rates this low if you can afford to buy you would be wise to do so

- yesweanjane
  SheilaKhani, Added Bonus We get to help share the cost of their taxes:)

- eastcoastprogressive
  How about one of those Futura homes. Only 100 were made. http://www.berting.nl/futuro I'd like to see these make a come back.

- disclosureproject
  defensible moat hmm...

- tis tryker
  Sharon_Morell, not buying in at this point, sorry.
Comments on Foreclosed

Luanne_Taylor
interest rates won’t help to buy the foreclosed properties

MarlJman
Once you get my age (50) you start realizing you can’t take it with you

Luanne_Taylor
look at the houses that are NOT selling in an area and you will find the folks trying to NOT compete

disclosureproject
I would like to live in a 55 and over community

Luanne_Taylor
so again, WE are stuck

Gadea268
In NYC a $200.00 a night, pet hotel has just opened up. Maybe 10 blocks from the Chelsea Pet Hotel, on the FDR drive, there are homeless families that would love to share a room in the hotel with the pet.

tlstryker
the situation is different for every individual for mortgaging for sure.

JohnBryansFontaine
World’s Easiest-to-Build House http://www.houselogic.com/blog/home-improvement/easy-build-house/?utm_campaign=Feed%3A%20houselogic_blog%20%28HouseLogic%29&utm_medium=feed&utm_source=feedburner&nicmp=outbrain&nicnh=cpc&niseq=hillblog

paulx44
Thanks for sharing your story with us Stephanie :)

MarlJman
Luanne_Taylor, Life is not a competition

paulx44
lol she just tagged out to Jaboc off set

Enock_Zamora
Native’s never owned property they just used it. European’s sold you what God gave you for free?

VenusBlvnsJohn
MarlJman, on the other hand, if you have children entering college, you can sell or refinance your home to pay for it
Index: Themes, Articles, Images and Video
Academic Hubris. The issue of whether architects, and architects in academia in particular, can or should be considered cultural leaders is a controversial one. These comments discuss the extent and effects of such leadership, whether actual or imagined.

Affordable Housing. At the center of the exhibition were questions regarding housing affordability, whether through homeownership or renting. These comments specifically discuss the issues surrounding what approaches can or should contribute to providing affordable housing.

American Dream. The Buell Hypothesis posits that changing the American Dream can change the American city. These comments discuss aspects of this dream and the effects they have on the development of housing in the American suburbs.

Art and Architecture. The disciplines of art and architecture are related but not synonymous. These comments discuss the nature, extent, and appropriateness of the relationship between the two.

Challenge of Suburbia. The suburbs present unique issues nonexistent in cities and rural areas. These comments discuss some of those challenges including changing demographics, land use patterns, approaches to homeownership, and the particular ways that these questions affect suburbia.

Circulation. How we move around is a fundamental consideration for the design of cities, suburbs, and housing. These comments discuss topics of transportation, walkability, and commuting.

Cities and Suburbs. Historically, suburbia has been defined relative to the city. These comments discuss the relationship between the two and the extent to which their definitions may be changing.

Community Participation. Public participation is widely seen as a critical part of urban planning processes. These comments discuss aspects of community input as it relates to the issues presented in the exhibition.

The Exhibition. While the exhibition provides the basic prompt for this discussion, these comments specifically discuss choices made by curators and designers regarding the exhibition and the materials presented.

Family. American suburbia has long been conceived as a place for families. These comments discuss the relevance of family, children, and multigenerational households, especially as the average household size and makeup change.

Government and Policy. Federal, state, and municipal government decisions affect suburban housing from issues of finance and subsidy to questions of land use regulation. These comments discuss the political and governmental role and the extent to which it should be exercised.

Homeownership. The concept and structure of homeownership is inextricably linked to the questions of the American suburbs, housing, mortgage finance, and foreclosure. These comments discuss the significance of homeownership, the rise of renting, and different financial relationships between residents and their homes.
Comments on Foreclosed


Infrastructure. Proposals for development at the scale of the housing unit, neighborhood, city, or region, all include infrastructural necessities. These comments discuss the complicated question of infrastructure, including how it should be planned and funded.

Internet Banter. Public and often anonymous discussion through the Internet enables a certain type of back-and-forth rarely found in other forms of discourse. These comments include discussion either about this forum or resulting from the forum.

Jobs. Designing for how and where people live will necessarily include discussions of how and where those people will work. These comments discuss issues of jobs and job creation.

Land Use and Density. Urban planning issues such as land use (including residential, commercial, industrial, institutional, and mixed uses), density, and the zoning policies that dictate them are often used as guiding principles in design. These comments discuss the decisions proposed in the exhibition as well as their projected consequences.

Liberal versus Conservative. Questions of housing affordability in suburbia involve questions of lifestyle, economic and financial practices, environmentalism, government investment and regulation, and social ideology. These comments discuss the issues presented by the exhibition within the terms of liberal and conservative debate.

The Market. Housing constitutes a cornerstone set of industries that are essential to the US economy. These comments discuss issues of the housing market, the mortgage and financial structures surrounding it, whether we create supply to meet existing demand, as well as arguments against providing affordable housing options through the private market.

In the wake of the foreclosure crisis, many have called for a discussion on strategies for housing affordability and development. These comments discuss the need for a new conversation and new ideas on the topic.

Landscapes and Demographics. The demographic makeup of cities and suburbs is changing. These comments discuss these changes (including population sizes, racial and ethnic makeup, and socioeconomic factors) and their effects.

Press and Links. These comments include press releases and links to articles presented elsewhere, including many in this volume.

Professional Practice. Architecture and urban planning activities operate in academic institutions and in the field, in theory and in practice. These comments discuss the realities of practice and common understanding of these professions.

A New Conversation. In the wake of the foreclosure crisis, many have called for a discussion on strategies for housing affordability and development. These comments discuss the need for a new conversation and new ideas on the topic.

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Professional Practice. Architecture and urban planning activities operate in academic institutions and in the field, in theory and in practice. These comments discuss the realities of practice and common understanding of these professions.
Quality of Life. Access to services, open space and recreation, and a vibrant neighborhood, among many other things, all contribute to the quality of life within any neighborhood or city. These comments discuss these issues along with the means for ensuring their presence within communities.

Reference and Comparison. Architecture, urban planning, and real estate development each have long histories. These comments discuss or include references and comparisons to historical precedents, best and worst practices, and different schools of thought.

Responsibility. Questions regarding responsibility are often controversial. These comments discuss who or what can or should be responsible for housing and development issues past, present, and future.

Top-Down and Bottom-Up. Today, most cities and suburbs are developed and evolve through a combination of processes stemming from the "bottom" and decisions made at the "top." These comments discuss the influence from each direction and the balance between the two.

Retrofit or Redesign. The extent to which the American suburbs should and can be retrofitted or entirely redesigned involves a complex set of considerations. These comments discuss these issues and the advantages and disadvantages of wiping the slate clean.

Role of the Museum. Cultural institutions such as the Museum of Modern Art are generally believed to hold a certain position with a specific function in society. These comments discuss the role of the museum with respect to the topics of this exhibition, including whether an art museum can or should function as a platform for discussion on planning and spatial politics.

Scale. The design and development of housing and suburbia occur at several scales from the national level with federal policy and banking practices to the local scales of neighborhoods and communities to the scale of the individual home. These comments discuss the relationships between different scales and whether some should be prioritized over others.

Silliness and Seriousness. The projects included in the exhibition have been variously described along a spectrum ranging from whimsical to serious in terms of their proposals and presentation. These comments discuss whether the projects can, should, or were intended to be taken seriously.

Sustainability. The long-term impact and maintenance of any proposal is an important factor in its design. These comments discuss issues of sustainability whether environmental, economic, or social.

(Un)Realistic Proposals. The projects included in the exhibition have been described as “propositions” rather than “blueprints.” These comments discuss the extent to which the proposals include a realistic understanding of the issues at hand and offer realizable solutions.

The Workshop. The projects exhibited resulted from a six-month workshop process which included opportunities for public discussion and feedback. These comments include discussions from the workshop and about the impact of the collaborative design process.

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