The Impact of Rapid Population Growth on Suburbs in the Rural-Urban Fringe

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

THE IMPACT OF RAPID POPULATION GROWTH ON
SUBURBS IN THE RURAL-URBAN FRINGE

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY

BY

CAROL SUSAN SONNENSCHEIN

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To Stuart
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Studies of recent population trends in the United States document the continuing dispersion of metropolitan populations into the rural hinterland (Fuguitt, Heaton and Lichter 1988; Fuguitt, Brown and Beale 1989). This phenomenon has been particularly dramatic in the six-county Chicago region, where land consumption for residential use increased by nearly 47 percent from 1970 to 1990, while the population of the region grew by only 4 percent during the same period (Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission 1991, 9).

The deconcentration of population has profound implications for small towns that lie in the path of suburban development. Although growth in the United States traditionally has been viewed as a positive indication of community vitality and has been a source of pride for residents and community leaders in small towns, attitudes about population growth have changed substantially in recent years as municipalities have found it increasingly difficult to deal with the economic and social impact of a rapid influx of new residents. In many places in the rural-urban fringe, where the conversion from agricultural to residential and commercial land use is occurring at a relatively fast pace, growth has become the central issue in local political campaigns.

This study focuses on changing attitudes toward growth in five communities in Lake County, Illinois from 1970 to 1995. Figure 1 illustrates the relative location of
Fig. 1. Map of Lake County, Illinois, showing the location of communities in the study area.
the five villages selected for study, which are the communities of Grayslake, Libertyville, Mundelein, Vernon Hills and Wauconda. Figure 1 also indicates the location of a number of other places referred to in the following chapters.

Lake County, located north of Chicago, is one of the fastest-growing counties in the state and has experienced a number of intense confrontations over development in recent decades. Therefore, the county is fertile ground in which to investigate changes in attitudes toward growth. I have chosen to focus on communities adjacent to one another in order to explore the dynamics of the interaction among neighboring places as they make decisions about development. Although this aspect of rapid growth has largely been ignored, it can have significant consequences in terms of local decision-making related to development.

Three research questions have guided this investigation: 1) What issues generate concern as the transition from rural to urban land use occurs in small towns on the rural-urban fringe? 2) How have attitudes toward growth changed over time? and 3) What are some of the social, economic and political consequences of rapid growth?

Rural-Urban Fringe Research

The general diffusion of the population around metropolitan areas of the United States has eroded many of the traditional distinctions between rural and urban places (White 1987; Frey and Speare 1988). The rural-urban dichotomy has been particularly problematic in the study of settlement patterns on the periphery of large metropolitan areas, and research in this field has suffered from the absence of a systematic conceptual framework to provide a basis for defining the issues.
The term "urban fringe" was first used in 1937 by T. Lynn Smith to refer to the "built up area just outside of the corporate limits of the city" (1937, 26).¹ Walter Firey (1946) compared the fringe to the urban "zone in transition" described in the work of human ecologists in the Chicago School during the 1920s. It might be possible, Firey proposed, to develop a theory of slums "in which the rurban fringe, the ghetto, the rooming-house area, and the rural creek-bottom or forest-farm slum all appear as varieties of a single land-use phenomenon." Marginal location in terms of transportation points meant that the fringe was caught between ecological forces that fostered both agricultural and residential use, so that:

... there exist, side by side, blocks of subdivided lots lined with sidewalks and dwellings, numerous vestigial commercial farms standing off the side roads and to the rear of platted frontages, trailer camps and squatter towns, great expanses of land grown up to weeds, well tended country estates owned by corporations and city business men -- all spottily distributed in clusters and in string-along-the-road patterns.

According to Firey, land use in the rural-urban fringe during the 1940s was characterized by erratic private development plans, instability and wide variation in the spatial patterns of land use, a tendency toward housing for the lower classes, indifference to soil capability in settlement patterns, and the withdrawal of the land from agriculture (1946, 411-21).

Sociologists in the 1950s, contemplating the rapid expansion of the suburban ring, began to move away from the notion that the population could reasonably be

---

¹The rural sociologist C. J. Galpin is been credited with coining the term "rurban" to describe the territory that lay beyond the suburbs and was characterized by a mixture of rural and urban land use.
divided into two distinct conceptual worlds. Queen and Carpenter (1952) maintained that the rural-urban fringe was marginal not only in land use but also in the degree of acceptance of urban norms. Residents of fringe areas, they argued, resembled the children of foreign-born parents, pulled between two conflicting cultures. Even within households, family members might have different levels of attachment to urban life. The breadwinner who commuted to the city was more "urban" than his spouse who remained in the suburbs. Urbanization, according to Queen and Carpenter, was an acculturation process that occurred most rapidly at the level of the market place and job and least rapidly in terms of sentiments and values.

In an effort to refine the concept and definition of the rural-urban fringe, McKain and Burnight (1953) distinguished between two types of territory that occupied distinct positions on the rural-urban continuum. The "limited fringe" was adjacent to the city and contained a mixture of commercial, amusement, and manufacturing establishments as well as subdivisions and pockets of owner-built housing. The "extended fringe" lay beyond, and was populated by former city dwellers who remained urban-oriented even though they had settled in open country and in the smaller villages of the agricultural hinterland. The intermingling of people with such divergent backgrounds led to the formation of new types of status hierarchies in the extended fringe (McKain and Burnight 1953). While some authors excluded all incorporated places from their definition of the rural-urban fringe (Kurtz and Eicher 1958) others did not. Duncan and Reiss, for example, defined the rural-urban fringe as "... that area in which the countryside is in process of transition from a rural to an urban
mode of settlement (1950, 6). Dobriner, as well, included both incorporated and unincorporated areas of the ring beyond the suburban zone (1958).

By the 1960s, the concept of "fringe" was generally understood to mean land located "just outside the limits of corporate cities and recognized suburbs, and embraces an area of mixed urban (mostly residential) and rural (mostly agricultural) land use" (Ford and Sutton 1964). Despite growing consensus on the definition of the term, there has been a good deal of variation in the methods used to determine its boundaries and no clear agreement on patterns of development and change in fringe areas. Although there is evidence to support the argument for a trend toward more complex relationships and increasing interdependence within the fringe area, a review of the literature on the urban fringe suggests that a decade of research made little progress toward a more sophisticated theoretical approach to the problem (Ford and Sutton 1964). Attempts to investigate the rural-urban fringe have suffered from the confusion of suburbs with unincorporated areas that contain a mixture of rural and urban land uses (Blizzard and Anderson 1952; Kurtz and Eicher 1958; Kurtz and Smith 1961).

The U.S. Census Bureau has changed its definitions of urban and rural areas over the years to reflect changes in population distribution. As suburban expansion into the countryside around cities made older definitions obsolete, areas with population densities of at least 1,000 persons per square mile near cities of 50,000 or more were counted as urban rather than rural. In the absence of a standard typology, however, definitions of rural and urban vary even among government agencies. In
general, the decision to designate a place as urban or rural is based on characteristics such as size and density of the population and relationship to a Metropolitan Statistical Area, as well as the degree of urbanization and primary economic activity (Hewitt 1989, 1). Although this lack of concordance cannot be dismissed as inconsequential in terms of accounting for variation among peripheral areas, literature on the rural-urban fringe still has utility in terms of identifying issues that cause concern and conflict as the transition in land use occurs.

My definition of rural-urban fringe is less orthodox than some researchers would condone. This decision is based on the desire to include areas undergoing rapid population growth that encompass both rural and urban land use. My primary purpose is not to examine the quality of the relationships among fringe residents (which was the intent of much of the previous research) but to investigate the concerns that arise in the context of rapid growth in these peripheral areas. Therefore, while I have retained the classic emphasis on the mixture of rural and urban land use, some of the places included in this study may be properly defined as urban, since they are incorporated places within the Chicago metropolitan region.

**Association Between Resistance to Growth and the Rate of Growth**

Although it is generally acknowledged that resistance to new growth has increased over the past several decades (White 1978; Baldassare 1981; Gottdiener and Neiman 1981), there is little evidence by which to judge the consequences of this resistance. Although municipalities have begun routinely to adopt ordinances aimed at mollifying those who object to the deleterious effects of rapid growth, Logan and
Zhou (1989) contend that formal growth control policies (such as moratoria, growth limits, environmental regulations, open space zoning, and public facility requirements) imposed as a result of citizen initiatives have had little effect on subsequent development. The authors suggest that formal policies may represent defensive measures taken by political leaders in response to citizens' demands, arguing that these policies tend to have "killer clauses" which make their enforcement unlikely.

In light of their finding that growth controls do not appear to affect population growth, Logan and Zhou concede that:

From the perspective of human ecology, these results may seem to indicate that political conflict over growth is inconsequential; sociologically interesting, perhaps, but not important to urban structure. That is not our interpretation. We regard them rather as a challenge to study growth politics with a finer grain of detail. Information on formal policies is inadequate without data on the balance of forces behind those policies, on their significance within a local context. And this message for researchers has a practical importance for American communities. The formal autonomy of suburban governments, the means, that is, for grassroots democracy, is not a very good predictor of its realization (Logan and Zhou 1989, 469).

The apparent lack of association between formal growth control measures and the rate of growth begs the question, Logan and Zhou argue, of the salience of political processes in determining patterns of development in metropolitan areas:

These arguments are connected theoretically to the general claim that political processes significantly affect land development patterns in the contemporary metropolis, particularly in suburbia (Coke and Liebman 1961; Danielson 1976; Logan 1976). Planning and government intervention, in this view, make a difference, whether positive (e.g., protecting the environment) or negative (e.g., limiting housing choice for minorities). Humphrey and Buttel (1980) describe this position as the "liberal paradigm" in the "growth/no growth debate." More broadly, attention to political processes is an important departure from the tradition of ecological theory. Recently Hawley (1986, p. 128) has restated his skepticism about the significance of politics: "one would like to know under what
conditions policies appear," he says, "and how effective they may be in overriding ecological principles." On this point, there is little solid evidence (Logan and Zhou 1989, 462).

Much of the research on the adoption of growth management policies relies on the quantitative analysis of large samples of communities with populations of 10,000 or more. Findings that are ambiguous or difficult to explain have prompted some scholars to suggest that there is a need for more precise descriptions of local characteristics and the social and political processes associated with the decision to adopt growth management policies (Schneider 1989; Baldassare 1981). My objective in this study is to follow the response to population change in five communities over twenty-five years in order to illuminate the dynamics of policy-making at the local level, and to explore the effects of policies on the distribution of population.

Study Overview

The unit of analysis in this study is the incorporated place. A significant factor in demographic change on the fringe of metropolitan regions is the increase in population that occurs as municipalities annex and approve residential projects on land at their borders. Although housing construction in the open country around large cities is a significant source of population growth in the rural-urban fringe as well, incorporated places are an appropriate unit of analysis for several reasons. First, municipal governments enjoy considerable autonomy in the United States and have the authority to approve or reject a developer's proposal for annexation and development. Previous studies of differential growth rates have used municipalities as the unit of
analysis, since variation in growth rates is at least partially a function of attempts by
local governments to design packages of tax rates, services and amenities that will
appeal to the residents and firms they wish to attract (Peterson 1981; Schneider and
Logan 1982; Schneider 1989). In addition, living within the boundaries of a particu­
lar village fosters a sense of collective identity for residents that is less likely to be
characteristic of life in unincorporated places. This sense of identity and shared
interests increases the likelihood of collective action aimed at influencing develop­
ment. Finally, the annexation of large parcels of land by municipalities tends to focus
public discourse on the broader implications of population growth. Since large tracts
of vacant land within the corporate limits of a town are rare, debates over growth
often are provoked when developers request that land be annexed to a village. A
local government board’s decision to annex large projects and to add a sizeable
number of new residents is, after all, a decision to drastically alter the disposition of
the community, and public hearings on the annexation of large projects elicit the type
of testimony that is useful in comparing attitudes toward growth over time.

Methods

In order to delineate the conditions under which growth-related policies are
implemented, and the connections between these policies and changing attitudes
toward growth, it is necessary to obtain fairly detailed data on the response to growth
at a much lower level of analysis. It is also important to employ qualitative methods
that can provide information about the beliefs, values and assumptions of people as
they make decisions related to development.
My analytic strategy was based on the need for information about attitudes toward growth and decisions related to development for all five communities selected for this study over a relatively long period of time. Local newspapers do an adequate job of providing this type of information. In addition, newspapers offer abundant material on attitudes toward growth in letters to the editor and in fairly detailed descriptions of public hearings. I have also relied on minutes and observation of public meetings, interviews with residents, local officials, community leaders, planners, realtors and developers, a few extant surveys of attitudes and opinions and an eclectic assortment of documents from local history collections. I have incorporated census data into the analysis in order to consider possible connections between attitudes toward rapid growth and variables such as the actual rate of population change.

Local newspapers have several potential sources of bias. First, because the profit-oriented nature of newspapers makes owners and editors sensitive to issues that can affect circulation and the sale of advertising space, there may be a tendency to downplay controversial events in order to avoid offending readers. In addition, owners and editors of local newspapers may have biases that are reflected in the type and extent of coverage. Because new development increases potential circulation and advertising revenues, editors may view any population increase as beneficial. This may foster editorial support for the opinions of "pro-growth" factions within the community.

My review of twenty-five years of newspapers for each village did, in fact,
reveal bias on the part of editors, who tended to champion the pro-growth perspective in editorials. But the newspapers also published letters to the editor representing diverse opinions that often contradicted the position taken by the paper. Small-towners are very cognizant of the web of family, friendship and business connections among leaders in their communities and do not hesitate to point out bias where they believe it exists.\(^2\) To their credit (or because they would otherwise have neither credibility nor subscribers) editors of local papers appear quite willing to include diverse points of view on controversial issues. Rather than downplaying controversial situations, the local papers tended, like their larger metropolitan counterparts, to place these stories on the front page.\(^3\)

I have used the case study approach to data collection for each community. Case studies have proven to be particularly useful in identifying variables that have not previously been associated with a research problem. This approach also enhances the

\(^2\)In a letter to the editor of one local newspaper, for example, a resident rebuked the paper's coverage of a controversial decision, saying "Isn't it ironic the favorable press given to the Library Board's position by the *Grayslake Times*? Not really, considering that the paper's Founder, Publisher/President, General Manager, and Circulation Manager all carry the same surname of the primary supporter of the board's position!" (Barry Grabert, *Grayslake Times*, 15 July 1994).

\(^3\)There was some systematic bias, however, in the quantity of coverage for each village. For example, newspapers for the villages of Grayslake and Wauconda are both published by the Lakeland Press, located in Grayslake. The *Grayslake Times* and the *Wauconda Leader* often contained more stories and letters to the editor concerning Grayslake than Wauconda. Although *The Independent Register*, published in Libertyville, also printed special versions of the paper for Mundelein and Vernon Hills, news and letters to the editor tended to favor issues in Libertyville. I have tried, whenever possible, to find accounts of events from other sources, such as the Waukegan *News-Sun*, a newspaper with county-wide circulation, and metropolitan newspapers such as the *Chicago Tribune*. 
opportunity to understand a complex situation by examining behavior in context (Majchrzak 1984, 63).

Much of the research on the impact of growth in small communities has been based on the notion of the community as a social system that acts to minimize the impact of external changes and to maintain equilibrium (Warren 1978). An alternative approach views the community as a field of social interaction rather than a concrete collectivity that can act on its own behalf (Kaufman 1959; Wilkinson 1970, 1972). Baldassare suggests that "... specific reasons commonly given to limit growth may have little to do with growth per se. Residents may also be responding to unfounded prejudices and ill-conceived priorities when they support certain growth policies" (1986, 99). In fact, I found that in some cases strong support for limiting growth occurred during periods of unusually slow population increase. This suggests the importance of understanding the meaning of growth to those who promote or oppose it. The interactional approach, by focusing on shared meanings and interests in a community, is useful in investigating the dynamics of confrontations between pro-growth and anti-growth factions. Therefore, while many of the assumptions of more traditional approaches to the study of conflict in small towns are implicit in this research, I have made a conscious effort to understand the meaning of particular events and decisions to the actors involved in growth controversies.

Throughout the following chapters, traditionally-held beliefs about the effects of variables such as population size and density are reflected in the concerns expressed by residents and public officials of small towns. The skill with which pro-growth and
anti-growth factions are able to draw on deeply-held values and beliefs can have a profound effect on their ability to mobilize support for their cause. Therefore, I have been particularly attentive to the use of rhetoric in public discourse related to growth.

This study also traces the social effects of ideas. One historian has observed that "The new ideas of a handful of men in one generation become the fashionable thoughts of the upper class in the next, and the common beliefs of the common man in the third." For example, the marked increase in support for the values promoted by the environmental movement has had a profound impact on attitudes related to development in the rural-urban fringe.

I begin by tracing the development of the suburban ring of Chicago, delineating the major factors that have contributed to the present form of the metropolis in order to provide the context in which contemporary attitudes toward growth have evolved. Knowledge of past attitudes toward growth is necessary in order to distinguish contemporary responses that represent notable departures from more traditional ones. This approach also reveals some of the enduring themes that have remained a perennial aspect of the effects of growth on small-town life. For example, rapid population growth has always raised concerns that the traditional patterns of relationships in a rural community will be altered, that the rural landscape will be despoiled, and that newcomers will bring urban values (and problems). But new issues have gained

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significance and legitimacy as well. Environmental concerns and the growing demand for the preservation of open space have become major obstacles to development since 1970. The amount of money available to local governments from state and federal sources has declined precipitously since 1980, compelling residents and public officials to evaluate the costs, as well as the benefits, of growth. This has led to rising expectations about the responsibility of developers to mitigate the financial impact of additional population on infrastructure and services.

The case study method used in this research enhances the opportunity to explore the linkages between contemporary events and those that occurred earlier in the history of a town. Although every student of suburban growth patterns is familiar with the remarkable stability of the socioeconomic characteristics of places over time (Farley 1964; Guest 1978; Stahura 1979), in this study it is possible to observe some of the mechanisms associated with this phenomenon. For example, the original developers and early government officials play fundamental roles in shaping the direction of future growth. Each proposal for new development invokes a specific response from local leaders and residents. As decisions about growth accumulate over time, they contribute to the collective identity of a community and determine the type of new growth likely to be considered appropriate. Beneath the surface of every significant controversy over growth lies a legacy of other conflicts and other resolutions. These accumulate to create a repertoire of responses to be used as new situations arise, and discussions of the pros and cons of a specific proposal in small town meetings are rife with references to the handling of situations in the past.
A history of citizen involvement in growth controversies also tends to reinforce cleavages among various factions within a community. Working together to defeat (or support) a particular measure strengthens the ties among individuals and groups, making it easier to mobilize support the next time a similar issue emerges. Enmities accrue as well, however, and can contribute to the polarization of a small town.

Focusing on communities in a relatively small geographic area, as this study does, permits the exploration of changes in the relationships among neighboring communities over time as well as the effects of competition among places for residential and commercial development. The process of community expansion through the annexation of unincorporated land decreases the buffer between towns and thus increases the potential for conflict. As the boundaries of communities grow together, decisions made by one town are more likely to affect the daily lives of residents of neighboring villages. Suburbs often have very different images of themselves and how they want to grow, and this can generate conflict over growth-related issues. A village that aggressively annexes large amounts of land for retail and corporate development, for instance, may be resented by residents of neighboring communities who must deal with the consequences of such growth, such as additional traffic on local roads.

As large-scale developers move into an area, villages begin to adopt rule-based controls on land use rather than to rely on relational controls when conflicts occur (Rudel 1989). As disputes over boundaries, or recriminations about the negative impact of growth in one community on its neighbors accumulate, relationships
between rural communities change. A series of disagreements over land use alters the way that public officials and residents in neighboring communities view one another. Village boards, citizens' groups, developers and landowners may begin to assume from the outset of a potentially contentious issue that the situation will ultimately have to be resolved in court. This tends to intensify the adversarial nature of the process, cutting off informal lines of communication among parties that may otherwise have been used in the resolution of differences. As the following chapters illustrate, border skirmishes over the annexation of territory have become more common over the past decade, leading not only to an increase in conflict among municipalities but to new forms of inter-governmental cooperation as well.

The process of negotiation between local government boards and developers typically focuses on issues such as the density, type, and price of housing to be built, as well as the responsibility of developers to bear some of the costs of additional population by donating land or funds to local taxing districts. Citizen opposition increasingly has converged on attempts to influence these decisions. The outcome of this process, which is the final approval or rejection of a particular plan for development, can have significant consequences in terms of the spatial structure of the community. Therefore, successful campaigns to stop a large development or to reduce its density have a very real impact on the distribution of population.

The case studies that follow suggest that the response to population change is highly contingent on a number of factors. In one community in this study, for example, where the majority of political and business leaders were enthusiastically
united in support of a development that would have tripled the town’s population, the project was thwarted by a small but vocal minority of residents. When developers appealed to an adjacent town for annexation, the same project met virtually no resistance. Over the twenty-five years covered in this study, anti-growth coalitions have won some battles and lost others. But in every case where there was substantial, organized opposition, the ratio of final density to the density proposed in the original plan was significantly lower than in cases where there was little public debate.

I do not question the primacy of variables that traditionally have been used to explain the differential growth of suburbs, such as access to transportation routes and markets. I am suggesting, however, that the negative perception of development is becoming an increasingly salient factor shaping the suburban fringe. As growth controversies have swept across the nation in the past two decades, local, state and regional governments have adopted more comprehensive controls over land use. I see no indication that the frequency and intensity of growth controversies is likely to diminish. On the contrary, as issues of growth management become part of the agenda for disparate groups trying to influence the direction growth will take, the potential for conflict grows.

To a great extent, the spatial distribution of the metropolitan population represents the sum of myriad decisions by local governments to approve or reject requests from developers to change their communities in a significant way. In the absence of a planning authority with the power to affect regional growth patterns, the distribution of population reflects the competition of municipal governments for the
most desirable development. According to one observer:

Land use planning in any comprehensive sense really does not exist in our large urban areas. What does exist is a complex game of chess among localities, each attempting to palm off the undesirable applicants for urban space upon their neighbors . . . . This is warfare, not planning (Vernon 1964, 101).

Increasingly, decisions related to growth are linked to regional, national and global forces that constrain the options of local governments. But as the following chapters will show, small towns can be remarkably fertile ground for grassroots organization. Reading newspaper accounts and listening to residents articulate their fears and anger about developers' plans, I have been impressed by the emotional attachment people have to their communities. Like ghosts in a Dickensian novel, they conjure up images of the past and offer prophesies of impending doom -- of what their small towns will become if rapid growth is not stopped.

Having described what this project is, it is important to emphasize what it is not. Although I have been attentive to the reasons offered by various actors to explain their positions on growth-related issues, I have made no attempt to discover a "hidden agenda" or "true motivation" underlying their statements and behavior. I have simply followed events as they occurred, describing the public efforts of individuals and groups to influence the outcome of development plans.

This, then, is the story of one fragment of the suburban fringe of Chicago. Charting changes in attitudes and policies related to growth at the local level reveals the conditions under which decisions about growth management are made and the implications of such decisions. This study demonstrates that when attitudes toward
growth are acted upon by determined citizens and community leaders, there can be real consequences in terms of the size, density and distribution of population within a county. Therefore, attitudes toward development must at least be acknowledged as one of the factors shaping settlement patterns in metropolitan areas of the United States.
CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE RURAL-URBAN FRINGE

By the middle of the nineteenth century, the landscape around the mushrooming city of Chicago was strewn with a constellation of small settlements. Some of these faded quickly and disappeared, lacking the advantages that might have secured their place on the map. Others prospered and grew into the suburbs that surround the city today.

There is a good deal of variation in attitudes toward rapid population growth among residents of different types of suburban communities. Understanding the factors that have contributed to the differentiation of suburbs augments the explanation of variation in the response to growth. The history of a community, for example, establishes its reputation as a particular kind of place and shapes the collective identity of the people who live there. Factors such as the size and price of lots in the initial subdivision of land have consequences in terms of the type of development that is likely to be considered appropriate in the future (Farley 1964; Guest 1978; Stahura 1979). This chapter traces the expansion of the Chicago metropolitan region, focusing on the ways that demographic, social, economic, political and technological changes have contributed to the characteristics of communities on the urban fringe.
Early Development of the Rural-Urban Fringe

The real estate boom that followed the opening of the Erie Canal in 1825 and the subsequent negotiation of treaties and forced migration of Native Americans brought the first wave of white settlement into the countryside around the new city of Chicago. Small trade and agricultural processing centers appeared along the trails, cattle paths and plank roads that served as highways in the early years. By 1840 at least ten villages, each with fewer than five hundred residents, had been established in Cook County (figure 2). Forty years later, most of these places were oriented toward agricultural processing and related industries and served as market towns for the surrounding countryside. Between 1841 and 1860, twenty-two new communities were settled in Cook County. These, too, began as trade centers, although after the Civil War a distinction began to emerge between "commuter/resort/ industrial settlements and agricultural market/service centers" (figure 3). Thirty-seven new settlements appeared between 1861 and 1880, and eleven additional communities were founded and incorporated in Cook County between 1881 and 1900. More than half of those in the latter group were created by developers as commuter or industrial suburbs (figure 4).¹

The nineteenth century was an era in which a multitude of tiny settlements appeared in the shadow of large cities. Many of these took root and flourished. Untold others, however, vanished after only a decade or two, leaving little evidence

¹These were the communities of Chicago Heights, Grossdale (later called Brookfield), Harvey, Kenilworth, Riverview, and Edison Park (Keating 1988, 30).
Fig. 2. Major Settlements in Cook County, 1840. Reprinted, by permission, from Ann Durkin Keating, *Building Chicago: Suburban Developers & the Creation of a Divided Metropolis* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1988), 209.
Fig. 3. Outlying Settlements in Cook County, 1841-60. Reprinted, by permission, from Ann Durkin Keating, Building Chicago: Suburban Developers & the Creation of a Divided Metropolis. (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1988), 210.
Fig. 4. New Settlements in Cook County, 1861-80. Reprinted, by permission, from Ann Durkin Keating, Building Chicago: Suburban Developers & the Creation of a Divided Metropolis. (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1988), 211.
that they had ever existed at all. The factors contributing to the growth or decline of rural communities in the nineteenth and early twentieth century received some attention from early rural sociologists (Hoagland 1912; Galpin 1915; Zimmerman 1930; Lively 1932; Brunner 1936; Brunner and Smith 1944), although the lack of consistent definitions or measures of growth impeded the development of a coherent theory that could account for trade center decline.²

The process in which some places declined as others gained population and commercial investment was a subtle and complex one. Local boosters who regarded rapid growth as the direct result of their own entrepreneurial skill in fact interacted with elements beyond their control, such as overall population increase, changes in transportation and the expansion of manufacturing. Although the claims of boosters routinely crossed the line between reality and fantasy, relying on "hope and hype, exaggeration and self-deception" (Monkkonen 1988, 83) promoters did formulate a fairly sophisticated model of urban expansion. In his eloquent narrative of the growth of Chicago, William Cronon maintains that boosters saw the great engine of development in the symbiosis between the city and its surrounding countryside. This vision, which was quickly appropriated by newspaper editors, businessmen, chambers

²Hodge, for example, argues that the use of population change as a measure of growth or decline of a trade center is not an adequate gauge of its viability, since the small size or unincorporated status of hundreds of places meant that they were excluded from official censuses. Even where accurate data are available for the population, growth may not be a true reflection of viability. Increase in the size of a village, for example, may simply be a function of the movement of residents from open country into a town, which would not bring an increase in the demand for goods and services (Hodge 1966, 187-88).
of commerce and speculators, permeated the public consciousness and guided thinking about the potential of a particular location. Unlike the Darwinian paradigm offered by Frederick Jackson Turner, in which great cities were viewed as the final product of various stages of social evolution, boosters identified a host of "natural advantages," such as climate, soil and transportation routes, that determined the potential of a geographic location. This view of development, in which key places were identified as having all the characteristics that guaranteed profit and prosperity, made investment in Chicago irresistible. To someone eager to exploit the riches of the west, "nature became the world's most reliable real estate broker" (Cronon 1991, 35).

The substantial migration of young people from farms to burgeoning cities like Chicago kindled a strong backlash from rural groups such as Grangers and Populists, who marshalled forces to remind city dwellers that their urban existence was dependent upon the labor of farmers. Grange bulletins also warned parents of the dangers that awaited young people who left the farm for the unimaginable opportunities for sin and corruption in the city. One response to the crisis of outmigration and the perception of exploitation by city dwellers was to urge the practice of a new kind of agriculture in which advancements in science and technology would be applied to farming. Farm families were encouraged to make the farm a more attractive place by planting lawns and flowers around the farmhouse, and to enrich their lives by gathering the family to read stories and poetry (Cronon 1991, 357-61).
At the same time that agricultural organizations were championing the incorporation of urban culture and ideas into farm life, urban residents were being counseled to recapture some of the moral benefits of the simple joys of farming. Nowhere was this movement embraced more fervently than in the new railroad suburbs on the edge of the metropolis.

Life in commuter suburbs was extolled in magazines and advertisements as the perfect blend of city and country. The movement of population outward along the rail lines spawned a host of periodicals that targeted commuters eager to learn how to be successful at farming while traveling to jobs in the city each day. The financial benefits of backyard farming were undoubtedly appealing, but its popularity also grew out of a philosophy that filled the pages of magazines with romanticized images of farm life that evoked powerful feelings of nostalgia. Between 1880 and 1935, hundreds of thousands of families eagerly applied the scaled-down agricultural management techniques described in the magazines to their suburban lots. Suburbanites were urged by publications such as *Quarter Acre Possibilities* and *Suburban Life* to give their children the character-building experience of farm chores. Poultry-raising, in particular, became a fashionable suburban pastime during the 1880s, and traditional chicken house designs were modified to make them more harmonious with suburban architecture. By the 1920s even the U.S. Department of Agriculture was publishing bulletins containing tips on how to turn a suburban lot into a miniature farm (Stilgoe 1983, 267-79).

The notion that rural life bestows moral benefits that cannot be acquired in the
city is a theme which has endured for more than a century. Developers engaged in
the obliteration of farmland on the periphery of metropolitan regions today rarely fail
to use images of traditional rural life in their advertisements for new subdivisions.
The tension between the proponents of development and those who long to hold on to
the arcadian ideals of rural life has been a recurring theme in small towns in the
rural-urban fringe.

Early Development of Lake County

The population of Lake County increased from 2,634 in 1840 to 18,257 in 1860.
Early migration into the county followed its waterways: along the shores of Lake
Michigan, the Des Plaines and Fox Rivers, as well as through the marshy areas along
the north branch of the Chicago River called the Skokies (Halsey 1912, 29; Mullery
1989, 17). Many settlers from eastern states traveled west through the Erie canal and
lakes, landing at Southport (now Kenosha) and traveling south by wagon to Lake
County. Indian trails grew into the main roads that traversed the area and during the
late 1840s and early 1850s plank roads were built.

Communities in Lake County took advantage of the permissive attitudes of the
state toward municipal incorporation and by 1910 twenty cities and villages had been
incorporated in the county (Teaford 1979, 8). Early incorporations were sometimes
prompted by concern that another settlement would gain a competitive advantage.
The incorporation of the tiny hamlet of Hainesville in 1847, for example, reflects the

3Teaford also reports that by 1910 Illinois had 1,066 incorporated municipalities,
more than any other state (1979, 8).
fierce competition among places for any advantage in the incessant quest for growth.

One observer described the incorporation as an attempt to thwart efforts by two nearby communities to have a road relocated further from Hainesville, reporting that "the real object of the incorporation of this place was to obtain the power to prevent the design of its enemies from being carried into effect, which succeeded, and the place continued undisturbed. Indeed, the rivals in question in time disappeared" (Partridge 1877, 247).

Evidence of the cycles of birth and decline of small settlements can be found in the historical records of Lake County. A number of communities appear on early maps only to vanish in subsequent decades, leaving only roads bearing their names to indicate that they ever existed at all. Newspapers throughout the nineteenth century devote considerable space to issues associated with population growth, reporting the relative success of places in the competition to attract new migrants. Local leaders were vigilant in monitoring activity that might affect the fortunes of their own village, casting suspicious eyes at neighboring communities that appeared to be gaining an advantage.

Sometimes the outcome of local wrangling had long-term consequences. The

4For example, the communities of Everett, Gilmer and Rosecrans in Lake County, located along railways, never incorporated and eventually disappeared. Incorporation appears to have afforded some insurance that a town would at least be included on maps, even when its population was very small. Hainesville, a thriving social and political center in the 1840s, lost population and eventually abandoned efforts to maintain a municipal organization until 1901, when a new branch of the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railway stimulated a revival of the village government (Partridge 1902, 653).
earliest instance involved the attempt to relocate the county seat not long after the creation of the county. Libertyville, centrally located on the main road between Chicago and Milwaukee, had been the original choice. A group of residents from the community of Little Fort, however, was determined to have the center of government in their lakefront settlement, which they believed had great potential to become a large port city. After succeeding in electing one of their own to the office of county commissioner, the group managed to stall the erection of a county building in Libertyville. In the following year of 1840, the state census taker was enlisted to aid the cause of Little Fort. According to the *Little Fort Porcupine*:⁵

During the census taking by state authority, Mr. Robinson was busily engaged in promulgating his views on the subject of removing the county seat from Libertyville to Little Fort, and did much to prepare the question with the people, and thereby caused much hard feeling and ill will to creep in among the people, which nearly destroyed the politics of the county (Halsey 1912, 75).

In 1841 the Illinois legislature called for an election to decide the issue and the county seat was relocated to Little Fort (Haines 1852, 31). When Little Fort was incorporated its name was changed to Waukegan, the Potawatomi equivalent of "fort" or "trading post." "Little" was omitted entirely, since that was precisely what the citizens intended to change (Mullery 1989, 19-25).

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⁵The *Little Fort Porcupine and Democratic Banner* was a newspaper published from 1845-57. As the organ of the Democratic party, Halsey reports, "it slashed right and left mercilessly in local matters and probably died of too much acid in the system" (Halsey 1912, 89-90).
Metropolitan Expansion

By the turn of the century, some observers were heralding what they saw as a new urban age in which rural civilization would pass away as the city became the central feature of modern civilization (Howe 1906). Descriptions of the interdependence of metropolitan places in a system of exchange of goods and services contributed to the development of the hypothesis of metropolitan dominance, which holds that a large city "exercises an organizing and integrative influence on the social and economic life of a broad expanse of territory far beyond the civil boundaries, and thereby dominates all other communities within this area" (Queen and Carpenter 1953, 82). Work by Gras (1922), McKenzie (1933), Bogue (1950) and Hawley (1950) emphasizes the importance of transportation and communication technology to the expansion of the territory dominated by the central city.

Using variables such as the extent of metropolitan daily newspaper circulation (Park and Newcomb 1933), wholesale and retail trade, enumeration of bus and train tickets to and from peripheral communities, toll telephone calls, radio audiences, and bank usage as measures of metropolitan influence, researchers documented the tendency for involvement with the central city to decrease as one moved outward toward the periphery. Bogue classifies suburbs within the first twenty-five miles from the central city limits as the "zone of direct participation." Land between twenty-five and sixty-five miles from the city (which includes that identified here as the rural-urban fringe) is designated the "zone of interchange" because "it mediates between the metropolis and its direct participants and the outlying zone of exchange. From
outlying centers in this zone, secondary highways radiate to the more remote portions of the hinterland, and for this reason cities in this zone have been called "hinterland-access cities" (Bogue 1950, 54).

At the same time that the hypothesis of metropolitan dominance was gaining acceptance, however, it was becoming apparent that decentralization and deconcentration were significant trends. Thompson (1947) attributes the substantial growth of satellite areas to the increasing use of automobiles, improvements in public transportation, the prestige associated with living in certain residential suburbs, the relocation of city industries, and extension of telephone and electric service to all parts of the metropolis (Thompson 1947, 17).

Population gains in satellite areas over the first forty years of the century were particularly striking. Thompson found a substantial difference between the growth rate of central cities (33.6 percent) and their satellite areas (38.2 percent) in the first decade of the century, despite the massive migration to cities during this period. The trend toward decentralization continued from 1910-1920, when the difference in the growth rate between central cities (23.4 percent) and satellite areas (31.3 percent) increased.

Between 1920 and 1930, central cities grew at a rate of only 20.5 percent while the growth rate in satellite areas rose to 48.7. Within these satellite areas, rural places grew much more rapidly than urban areas. During the 1930s, the contrast between satellite cities and nearby rural territory was even more notable, with a rate of only 7.3 percent for satellite cities and 28.1 percent for satellite rural areas.
(Thompson 1947, 5-8). This reflects the national trend toward rural population retention during the Great Depression, when migration losses to urban places were significantly lower than in either the 1920s or the decades that followed (Johnson 1985, 17).

Patterns of population distribution in the Chicago region have generally mirrored national migration streams. Industrial decentralization, which began with the railroad era, escalated after 1920. While Chicago's share of manufacturing employment fell from 84 percent in 1920 to 81 percent in 1940, its suburbs gained more than 400 new manufacturing facilities between 1926 and 1940.6

The relocation of industry to the outskirts of large cities was partially due to the massive scale made possible by new processes, mergers of companies into giant corporations, increased export trade and new building materials and techniques. In addition, a new type of "slow-burning construction" replaced the traditional multi-story factory with a pitched roof with a design that featured flat-roofed one-story buildings. This innovation was enthusiastically promoted by insurance companies, whose insistence on the new type of construction spurred the relocation of plants to the urban fringe, where land was inexpensive and abundant (Stilgoe 1983, 82-85).

The functional specialization of places in the metropolitan area increased substantially in the decades after 1920. This specialization tended to decrease with

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6Most of these went to Clearing (94), Cicero (37), Waukegan (25), Joliet (13), Aurora (12) and Chicago Heights (11). Chicago had 343,900 production workers in 1940, while the number in the suburbs had risen to 78,800 (Northern Illinois Metropolitan Area Planning Commission 1960, 20).
distance from the central city so that outlying communities were generally less
differentiated and internally homogeneous than those in the inner ring of suburbs
(Northern Illinois Metropolitan Area Planning Commission 1960, 87).

**Political and Social Fragmentation of Metropolitan Regions**

One aspect of the evolution of metropolitan regions that has had significant
implications in terms of conflict over development has been the remarkable degree of
fragmentation of metropolitan regions into the patchwork of autonomous communities
that surrounds every large city in the United States. This partitioning of regions into
a tangled web of municipalities and special service districts has been denounced by
some as an unjust and archaic structure set up to perpetuate unequal access to valuable
resources. Defenders of the present system, however, view the same pattern as
nothing less than the legacy of Jeffersonian democracy and a testimonial to the
fundamental right of self-determination. Attempts by generations of regional planners
to foster cooperation and consolidation have generally gone unheeded by suburban
officials and residents who have seen little advantage in moving toward centrali-
ization.\(^7\)

Consequently, local governments vary widely in the services provided to
residents and in the taxes levied to pay for these services. Within a metropolitan

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\(^7\)During the 1920s and 1930s, however, campaigns to create a federal form of
metropolitan rule gained popularity with suburbanites as well as residents of central
cities who believed that the change would result in greater economy and efficiency.
See, for example, Jon C. Teaford, *City and Suburb: The Political Fragmentation of
region, local governments compete with one another to attract and retain residents and businesses (Tiebout 1956; Hirschman 1970; Schneider 1989). This competition has had a profound effect on the conflicts that have arisen between communities as well as on the internal controversies over the type of growth that is perceived by public officials, business leaders and residents to be beneficial. Cognizance of the evolution of the contemporary metropolitan form, with its multitude of separate governments representing communities that vary greatly in wealth and status, is central to understanding recent controversies over development.

The Role of Government in the Distribution of Population

Before 1850, the basic unit of government in Illinois was the county, with incorporated places generally limited to cities. The General Town Incorporation Act, revised in the 1849 state constitution, granted taxing power to townships and encouraged a movement toward adoption of the township form of government. Eventually, the incorporated township was replaced by the incorporated village as the most popular form of local government. One of the most significant powers granted to municipalities was the authority to make special assessments to pay for improvements such as streets and sewers. This made it possible for communities to meet the demands of residents and real-estate developers who were eager for the kinds of services that previously had been available only in central cities. On the rural-urban fringe, municipal incorporation allowed developers of subdivisions the freedom to provide the facilities demanded by migrants from the city without the approval of rural township officials who tended to resist expensive amenities such as sewers and
Although Illinois' general municipal incorporation law, enacted in 1831, required a minimum of one hundred and fifty persons (raised to three hundred in 1872), this prerequisite seems to have been generally disregarded, so that even the smallest places could exercise the right to self-government (Teaford 1979, 6-9). To some extent, the increasing number of incorporations also was associated with the splintering of urban society into increasingly diverse sectors. The deconcentration of population made possible by new transportation technologies enhanced the differentiation of places according to function. Industrial, manufacturing and commercial areas grew increasingly distinct from residential neighborhoods. This separation was due not only to the desire of the middle class to escape the nuisances associated with heavy industry, but also to efforts by corporations to avoid heavy taxation and regulation by creating independent municipal governments.

As the moral crusades of the late nineteenth century swept the nation, incorporation was also used as a barricade against the corrupting influences of the city.

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8Teaford reports that in 1910 the "mass of municipal midgets" that had been spawned by a permissive attitude toward incorporation included three villages in Cook County and two in Lake County with populations under three hundred (Teaford 1979, 9).

9This approach was first taken by the Standard Oil Company, which decided against a site in Chicago because of high taxes demanded by the city as well as protests by citizens concerned about pollution. In 1891 the corporation escaped the regulatory and taxing authority of Chicago by locating in unincorporated Whiting, Indiana. When the adjacent town of Hammond began proceedings to annex Whiting, Standard Oil promoted the idea of incorporation. Two of Whiting's first three mayors were Standard Oil officials, and residents appear to have generally accepted the view that what was good for Standard Oil was good for the community (Teaford 1979, 14).
The temperance movement, in particular, had a significant effect on the increase in municipalities during this period, since the state granted the power to legislate for or against the sale of liquor to incorporated places. Attitudes toward alcohol frequently reflected ethnic and social class divisions that had been deepening between adjacent settlements for years, and temperance was often the spark that ignited the movement to incorporate. One of the motives for the incorporation of the Chicago suburb of Oak Park, for example, was the desire of residents to disengage from the community of Cicero, where citizens seemed to have no aversion to the presence of saloons. To many of the native-born Protestant residents of Oak Park, close proximity to the town of Cicero was a problem. According to one Oak Parker, the neighboring community "was filling up with a class of people who . . . would be likely to oppose Oak Park's well-known temperance policy, and already the Ridgeland neighborhood was forming 'an unholy alliance with the saloon and race-track element of Hawthorne' on Cicero's south side" (Teaford 1979, 18). On the other hand, permissive incorporation laws were also used by those who resented the missionary zeal of the moral reformers. Race track developers, saloon keepers, and gamblers sometimes used incorporation to exclude "the pernicious forces of morality" from their communities (Teaford 1979, 18).

**Zoning**

By the 1920s, zoning had gained wide support as a means of maintaining residential segregation by class and protecting property values. Although ordinances to restrict businesses such as laundries, dance halls, slaughterhouses, and other uses
considered potentially injurious to residential neighborhoods had been adopted since 1885, the first attempt at a comprehensive zoning ordinance occurred in New York City in 1913. The ordinance served as a model for numerous ordinances adopted in other states over the next several decades, so that by 1936 eighty-five percent of cities had adopted some sort of zoning laws (Jackson 1985, 242). Although the use of zoning was popular with city officials and residents, there was uncertainty as to its constitutionality. When the case of *Village of Euclid v. Ambler Realty Co.* reached the United States Supreme Court in 1926, however, the Court upheld the legality of zoning law, establishing the right of communities to protect citizens from nuisances, which the court defined as "the right thing in the wrong place, -- like a pig in the parlor instead of the barnyard."  

Jackson (1985) has commented that zoning "became a cudgel used by suburban areas to whack the central city. Advocates of land-use restrictions in overwhelming proportion were residents of the fringe." Zoning preserved the exclusivity of suburban communities and protected the financial investments of absentee landlords, who frequently owned land in the city but lived in the suburbs. The ideal situation for these speculators, Jackson says, was to enhance the value of their city parcels by having them rezoned for commercial or industrial use. This type of pressure for rezoning of land in Chicago meant that three times as much land was zoned for

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10 The collar counties of the Chicago metropolitan area all adopted zoning ordinances in the latter half of the 1930s (Monchow 1939, 4).

industrial or commercial use as could have ever been used for these purposes (Jackson 1985, 242). Inner suburbs showed the same tendency toward over-zoning of commercial land. A study of Evanston in the early 1930s, for example, found that of 80,034 frontage feet zoned for business, only 33,136 feet were used for this purpose.12

Transportation and Expansion of the Rural-Urban Fringe

Railroads and the temperance movement combined to foster the creation and growth of very different types of communities. In 1889, for instance, Turlington Harvey began to buy land along the Illinois Central Railroad south of Chicago for the development of an industrial town. Harvey used temperance covenants in real-estate deeds to lure settlers from other Midwestern states who were assured that in the town of Harvey there were "factories where men could earn good wages and where their children could grow up surrounded by the best influences." Industrial firms were drawn by the promise of a sober local workforce, and by 1892 the suburb had ten manufacturers and five thousand residents (Keating 1988, 27).

Robert Fishman has observed that one of the paradoxes of urban history is that the extremely unequal cities in eighteenth-century England were characterized by a great measure of tolerance for close physical contact between rich and poor, while the more democratic cities which came later have become more and more partitioned

according to social class. The desire on the part of the middle class to avoid contact with the lower classes, Fishman says, "fueled that search for single-class neighborhoods securely protected from the poor which was to become a powerful motive in the spread of suburbia" (1987, 32-33). Fishman describes the middle-class suburb as a bourgeois utopia that "existed in an inevitable tension with the bourgeois hell -- the teeming world of the urban slum -- from which suburbia could never wholly escape because the crowded city was the source of its prosperity" (1987, 135).

Fishman argues that the commonly held notion that the automobile was responsible for the growth of the suburbs tends to divert attention from an important aspect of suburban evolution. The mobility made possible by the automobile, he says, actually contributed to the destruction of the basic conditions necessary for the existence of the classic suburbs. It was the relative inconvenience of the railroad that created the ideal circumstances for growth of the middle-class suburb by combining accessibility and inaccessibility. The rail system, according to Fishman, not only protected the most affluent from invasion by the lower classes, but actually existed as a diagram of the class structure of the metropolis, since "each income group was distributed along the system according to how far it could afford to travel from the center and which line it could afford to take" (1987, 136).

Until the middle of the nineteenth century, Chicago remained a relatively integrated agglomeration of rich and poor (although both rich and poor were overwhelmingly white and Protestant). As industrialization and immigration increased, improvements in transportation made it feasible for the middle and upper
classes to isolate themselves in suburban enclaves far removed from the factories and their workers. The technology that had begun to weave together far-flung communities also played a part in sorting the population into settlements that were differentiated from one another by social class. The impact of the railroads was clearly reflected in the spatial distribution of various types of suburbs. As manufacturing moved outward along the tracks of the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe, the Chicago and Northwestern and the Illinois Central, working-class suburbs flourished. The Calumet region underwent substantial industrial development during the 1880s with places such as Hammond, East Chicago and Whiting, Indiana mushrooming with workers from the steel mills and oil refineries. The company town of Pullman, Illinois was built during the same period to house workers at the vast sleeping-car works.

The coming of the railroads "drew Lake County forever from its rural isolation, and drove the great lines of commerce through its heart" (Halsey 1912, 135). The aspirations of Waukegan citizens who had dreamed of seeing their town grow into a major port were never realized. In 1895, the Waukegan Gazette reminisced about the early days of the city, saying that:

Older heads than ours recall the time when farmers forty and fifty miles distant from Little Fort vied with each other to get their grain to this market to be shipped from Little Fort docks. They will tell of three hundred teams standing in line for their turn to put wheat on the boats, and of the three big piers extending into the lake, to which boats were brought and loaded.\textsuperscript{13}

\textsuperscript{13}Waukegan Gazette, 5 January 1895.
By 1855 the Chicago and Milwaukee Railroad had brought Waukegan within two hours of Chicago and the time decreased with each improvement in the rail system.\textsuperscript{14} In 1871 the \textit{Gazette} suggested that Waukegan abandon the notion of becoming a center of shipping and adopt a new approach to growth in which there would be "an attempt made to draw the attention of those who are seeking quiet pleasant homes, beyond the dust and turmoil of Chicago" (Halsey 1912, 167). This strategy had worked splendidly for suburbs in the "string of pearls" along the North Shore, and the Lake Counties communities of Lake Bluff, Lake Forest and Highland Park had prospered as havens for the families of men who made their fortunes in Chicago but were eager to move their families to the tranquility of the new suburbs.

Smaller communities in Lake County vied for the advantages conferred by a railway station, forming committees to negotiate with railroad officials and convince them that the community would be an asset to the railway.\textsuperscript{15} The first interurban service in the county began in the early 1890s between Waukegan and North Chicago.

\textsuperscript{14}The Illinois Parallel Railroad Company was chartered on February 17, 1851, but soon changed its name to the Chicago and Milwaukee. Before the link with the Milwaukee and Chicago Railroad at the Wisconsin state line, stages met trains at Waukegan and carried passengers on to Kenosha, Racine and Milwaukee (Mullery 1989, 26).

\textsuperscript{15}In an essay recalling "The Booms," one local historian describes a meeting in 1878 when a committee was formed to persuade officials of the St. Paul Railroad to build a spur to their town. The railroad agreed, provided that local residents would grade the roadbed, build a bridge over the river and prepare the grounds for a depot. Funds were raised by holding social functions as well as by direct solicitation of cash and labor from residents. Farmers, who were expected to benefit most from the shipping facility, were asked to pledge one hundred dollars in labor at the rate of $2.50 per day (C.E. Carroll, "The Booms," document number 56 in \textit{Historical Essays of Libertyville}. Published by the Libertyville-Mundelein Historical Society, n.d.).
Eventually, the North Shore Line ran between Milwaukee and Evanston, where it connected with the Chicago Rapid Transit system. A branch from Lake Bluff west to Libertyville and Mundelein was completed in 1904. By the 1920s the system had added bus service, with coaches carrying passengers from small towns as far as Woodstock, Lake Zurich, Fox Lake, Antioch and Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, and the number of passengers had grown to over sixteen million passengers per year (Middleton 1968, 38).

The horse-car suburbs that grew up around the city of Chicago in the latter half of the 1800s provided the lower-middle and working classes with affordable housing in outlying areas. Muller identifies the invention of the electric streetcar as a turning point in the history of suburban settlement. The increase in speed brought by the new technology meant that "at least five times the surrounding area of the horse-car city now potentially came within thirty minutes travel time of the CBD" (Muller 1981, 31). The streetcar also contributed to change in the social geography of the metropolis by eliminating the need to live close to one's place of work. As factories relocated along rail lines further from the center of the city, working-class families moved to outlying neighborhoods.

The expansion of the middle class and the application of the electric traction motor to the streetcar also facilitated the growth of a new string of suburban communities beyond the city limits. As developers promoted the dream of escape from the evils of city life, those who could afford to buy a house in these neighborhoods were buying more than just shelter from the elements. Muller submits
that it was at this point that a strong class consciousness and sense of shared values with neighbors became the hallmarks of mass suburban society. By moving to the suburbs, a middle-class family gained social distance from the working-class and poor (as well as from their own origins). A single-family, detached house in a suburban neighborhood was ideally suited for status display, and advertisements for these new communities were aimed directly at the American longing for upward mobility.

Belt railways also contributed to industrial and residential location in the urban fringe. In 1912, twelve belt lines encircled the Chicago region (Monchow 1939, 91). Wherever one of these belt railways intersected with a trunk line, a manufacturing center grew up. Land speculation by transportation and utility tycoons is sometimes viewed as the primary factor driving suburban development. In his discussion of street-car suburbs, for example, Jackson insists that "transit tycoons were less interested in the nickels in the fare box than they were in their personal land development schemes" (1985, 120). Although there is certainly evidence that this was true in many cases, the relationship is more complex than is generally acknowledged. As Monkkonen explains in his history of urbanization, the interaction between transportation and population change was a process of mutual reinforcement:

... it would be as incorrect to say that city settlement patterns caused the success of rail transport as to say that rail transport caused a particular city settlement pattern ... In the mid-nineteenth century aggressive railroad entrepreneurs and city officials both recognized this. Cities often sold bonds specifically to underwrite railroad expansion, sometimes for laying track to the town, sometimes for building a terminus, and sometimes for general financial assistance to a fledgling railroad company. Cities took these risks because the railroad's arrival, a terminus for its convenient stopping, and its general success
almost guaranteed the city's future economic expansion and subsequent ability to repay the bonded debt. Of course, railroad entrepreneurs recognized the local importance of their routes and building plans, and they courted cities, subtly arranging bidding contests among them (Monkkonen 1988, 81).

Although the electric interurban railway system had a relatively brief existence, its effect on patterns of suburbanization was important. The convenience and flexibility of the interurban systems facilitated mobility and brought thousands of small towns within commuting distance of their metropolitan neighbors. Most towns on the outer segments of suburban rail extensions began in the 1870s and 1880s as residential suburbs for workers commuting to Chicago. These places served as trade centers for residents living three to six miles from the station (roughly half the distance to the next stop on the line). The changes brought by improvements in railway technology, shorter working hours and higher incomes contributed to the extension of the commuting area from roughly 300 square miles in 1910 to more than 1500 square miles in 1930 (Northeastern Illinois Metropolitan Area Planning Commission 1960, 19).

The introduction of automobiles and paved roads reinforced the star-shaped pattern of settlement around Chicago, with major highways running parallel to rail

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16 Keating illustrates the reciprocal nature of the process by which commuter stations were opened and a schedule established. Railroad companies were often pressured by local residents or developers who wanted a commuter stop in their community. The Ravenswood Land Company, for example, was formed in 1868 for the purpose of buying and developing farm land eight miles north of Chicago. The businessmen who undertook this venture predicted that Ravenswood would "be the first station of the continuous suburb that will extend before many years from Chicago to Waukegan" (Keating 1988, 17).
lines. The mobility offered by the automobile, enhanced in the 1950s by massive expressway projects, brought many rural fringe communities within an hour's drive of the Loop. The proportion of the metropolitan population living within the city of Chicago reached its highest mark in 1920, when Chicago's share was 79.6 percent. Each decennial census after this point brought a drop in the relative size of Chicago's portion of the metropolitan population, so that by 1970 city residents made up only 48.3 percent of the six-county total (table 1).

Public Utilities

By the middle of the 19th century, large cities in the United States had begun to provide the infrastructure for water, sewers, gas and electric service, and in the decades that followed, the extension of such amenities throughout the suburbs further encouraged the deconcentration of population and industry. In metropolitan Chicago, the number of suburbanites with electric service increased by about 200 percent between 1919 and 1929, from 97,000 to 275,000 households. The Public Service Company of Northern Illinois promoted migration to the suburbs in its newspaper advertisements, encouraging city dwellers to "respond with confidence to the alluring call of country life and its healthful recreation . . . make your plans now to live out where the country begins." Advertisements reassured readers that one could move out to the "edge of tomorrow" and not sacrifice the convenience of gas and electric service (Platt 1991, 252-53).

The cost of bringing rural communities into this system, however, was formidable, and utility companies were reluctant to invest in areas with declining farm
Table 1.--Population Growth in Northeastern Illinois, 1860-1970 (in thousands)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1860</th>
<th>1880</th>
<th>1900</th>
<th>1920</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cook County</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>608</td>
<td>1,839</td>
<td>3,053</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Chicago</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>503</td>
<td>1,699</td>
<td>2,702</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban Cook</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>351</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Du Page County</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kane County</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake County</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McHenry County</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will County</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total 6-county area</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>771</td>
<td>2,086</td>
<td>3,394</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1940</th>
<th>1950</th>
<th>1960</th>
<th>1970</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cook County</td>
<td>4,063</td>
<td>4,509</td>
<td>5,130</td>
<td>5,494</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Chicago</td>
<td>3,397</td>
<td>3,621</td>
<td>3,550</td>
<td>3,369</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban Cook</td>
<td>666</td>
<td>888</td>
<td>1,580</td>
<td>2,124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Du Page County</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>313</td>
<td>492</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kane County</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake County</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>383</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McHenry County</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will County</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total 6-county area</td>
<td>4,568</td>
<td>5,178</td>
<td>6,221</td>
<td>6,979</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

populations. In 1925-26, only 1,000 out of nearly 20,000 farm households in the Chicago region was serviced by the Public Service Company of Northern Illinois. Electricity usage in rural villages was far less than that in residential suburbs closer to Chicago (Platt 1991, 266).

One answer to the problem of providing infrastructure for residents of the communities adjacent to Chicago lay in annexation to the city. In Cook County, incorporated townships experienced extraordinary population growth in the late nineteenth century, increasing the burden on the township government. Demands for water and sewerage systems, in particular, led to support for annexation by residents of outlying communities who viewed Chicago's infrastructure as superior to their own (Keating 1988, 104-5). The inconvenience of maintaining records of special assessment accounts, as well as resistance from city residents who opposed the idea of providing services to annexed communities, however, began to slow the rate of consolidation with the city. By 1893, annexation had come to a virtual halt, and the metropolis assumed its present form of a central city encircled by a vast conglomeration of independent governments and special districts (Keating 1988, 114-15). 17

The real estate boom that accompanied the opening of the North Shore Line's

17Most of the territory annexed to Chicago lay in five incorporated collar townships. According to Keating, the shift in the fundamental form of government in outlying areas from incorporated townships to incorporated municipalities effectively ended all major annexations to Chicago. It was the inability of townships to meet the service demands of settlements that secured the hold of incorporated villages on suburban government (Keating 1988, 115-16).
Skokie Valley route in the 1920s illustrates the web of relationships between improvements in transportation and utilities and the role of speculators in directing the path of suburban growth. The history of development in Lake County cannot be told without a nod to Samuel Insull, who commanded a vast empire of utility companies.\(^\text{18}\) In 1924, using the right-of-way acquired by the Public Service Company of Northern Illinois for its transmission lines, the Insull-controlled North Shore Line began construction of the Skokie Valley route from Evanston to Mundelein. Word of the new rail service set off what has been described as a "spectacular real estate boom" around the sites of the nine new stations planned for the railroad (Middleton 1968, 52). Monchow cites this wave of subdivision activity as perhaps the clearest example in the Chicago area of the effect of transportation extension on real estate development (Monchow 1939, 96).\(^\text{19}\)

Samuel Insull's influence on development in Lake County came not only through

\(^{18}\)Insull's holdings included the Commonwealth Edison Company, Peoples Gas, Light and Coke, the Public Service Company of Northern Illinois (which provided electricity to the suburbs of Chicago), Middle West Utilities (a holding company that brought gas and electricity to 5,000 communities in thirty-two states) and Midland United Company, a supplier of gas and electricity to 700 communities in Indiana. Insull also controlled North American Light and Power Company, the elevated railways in Chicago and the three interurban electric railroads linking Chicago and the suburbs (McDonald 1958, 2).

\(^{19}\)Insull, who owned approximately six thousand acres of land in Lake County, did not hesitate to capitalize on the interest stirred by the promise of the new route to participate in the real estate boom. Insull planned to build a residential community of 35,000 residents, most of whom would use his railroad to commute to Chicago (Peck 1989, 8). The Depression and his own subsequent financial problems prevented the execution of this scheme, but he is frequently mentioned in local history documents as one of the most influential men in the development of the Lake County communities of Libertyville and Mundelein.
his speculation in rail systems and real estate but also in his use of the county as a demonstration of the feasibility of rural electrification. In an address before the Franklin Institute in Philadelphia, Insull described the experiment, which included twenty-two towns with more than 300 residents. Ten towns had electric lighting from dusk to midnight, twelve had no electric service at all, and a few farms received electricity from the private generating station on a local estate. Insull purchased the ten existing part-time plants and erected a transmission network linking twenty communities as well as approximately one hundred twenty-five farms (McDonald 1962, 138-39). The success of the venture convinced Insull that rural electrification could bring a good return on the original investment. In 1928 he opened a demonstration electric farm near Libertyville, attracting over 50,000 visitors in the first year and a half with activities and lectures. With a five-year program to finance rural electrification in which the Public Service Company provided extensions for customers who agreed to pay a minimum bill for fifty months, Insull induced a fivefold increase in the number of electrified farms in the Chicago area by 1935 (Platt 1991, 269-70).

Real Estate Development

Real estate developers played a critical part in the shaping of suburban settlement. Developers understood that expectations about the kinds of services provided by a community could be used to target specific segments of the housing market. Keating’s analysis of the development of suburban forms of government in Cook County delineates the pivotal role played by developers in the process of
suburban differentiation:

. . . metropolitan residents were not of one mind concerning the improvements they wanted in a suburban setting. Real-estate developers catered to this variety of demands, not by providing a variety within one subdivision, but by creating a range of internally homogeneous subdivisions across a metropolitan area. They physically brought together people with similar demands for improvements, essentially those able to afford the same amenities. Thus, developed subdivisions fostered class (and, to a more limited degree, ethnic and racial) segregation which, while crude in its early stages, is still found in a more refined state today (Keating 1988, 6).

In a study of real estate subdividing in the Chicago area from 1871 through 1930, Monchow (1939) considers the factors that accompanied fluctuations in subdivision activity and challenges the assumption that a direct relationship exists between the rate of population growth and the number of lots available in a community. Based on estimates of the number of surplus lots in municipalities in each decade she concludes that speculation, rather than need, drives subdivision activity. Monchow's description of the timing of real estate booms in the Chicago area is fairly consistent with that of nine urban areas described by Fisher (1928), suggesting that national economic cycles may be the critical variable in determining variation in subdivision activity.

The type of real estate activity that intensified during the 1920s drew a fair amount of disapproval from critics who argued that the number of subdivided lots was outrageously high. By the late 1930s, the surplus was sufficient to accommodate a population of 15,000,000 -- about three times the number of residents in the Chicago area (Monchow 1939, 1). The effects of wild fluctuations in subdividing activity were clearly visible to the observer:
One day he sees the vacant areas surrounding our cities dotted with real estate agents' offices, the highways bordered with banners flaunting the sales appeals, and the newspapers carrying full-page advertisements and feature stories about the fortunes being made and to be made in urban real estate "investments." Then follows a period when these same areas show nothing but a few scattered, weather-beaten stakes, a stray ornamental gateway or two, some sagging street signs; and the newspapers carry long lists of delinquent taxpayers (Monchow 1939, 2).

One group of Lake County realtors conducted its own survey of vacant lots in the 1920s to determine whether an unreasonable surplus existed. Although the realtors announced that the surplus "was proven to be a fallacy," their reaction suggests that subdivision activity was perceived to be a fairly significant problem.20 Concern about surplus lots and the problems associated with rapid growth is apparent in newspaper stories that appeared in the midst of the building boom of the twenties. Misgivings about the quality of construction and its effect on property values of existing homes, as well as the need to provide infrastructure to accommodate new residents appear to have been the primary factors in opposition to rapid development during the 1920s. One account of a proposed subdivision in Lake County was careful to reassure readers that house plans for the 450-acre development would be closely supervised "so that some high pressure Chicago builder, whose idea of an attractive home is a flat roofed shirt front packing case, won’t amble into Thornbury Village and wreck the landscape with an architectural atrocity." 21

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20 "Realtors in Lot Survey," *Lake County Register*, 6 August 1927.

21 "Form Corporation to Build New Village East of Libertyville," *Lake County Register*, 19 April 1927.
The Depression brought an end to the housing boom of the 1920s, although there was one portion of Lake County that experienced unusually rapid growth during the 1930s. Many people who owned summer cottages in the northwest Chain O'Lakes portion of the county gave up their city residences and became year-round residents of the small vacation enclaves, thus reducing their living expenses considerably (Mullery 1989, 67).

The Second World War revived the county's economy, and the return of servicemen and the subsequent baby boom prompted high rates of construction in Lake County during the 1950s. The housing shortage was so critical that the census of 1950 showed fewer than sixty vacant dwelling units in Waukegan (Mullery 1989, 77). Chambers of Commerce pushed for development, stressing the benefits growth would bring to their communities, urging cooperation and an optimistic attitude of "'It will be done' rather than 'It can't be done.'"

22 "C.C. Speakers Optimistic As To Growth," The Independent Register, 16 June 1949.

By the time the Federal Housing Administration began insuring long-term mortgage loans, millions of Americans were determined to escape the city by purchasing their own piece of the American dream in the suburbs. The urgent need for housing which came with the end of the war and the first rumblings of the baby boom spurred Congress to approve billions of additional dollars for the FHA. Between 1950 and 1960 Chicago's share of the six-county population dropped from 69.9 percent to 57.1 percent. During the following decade, the percentage of the
Table 2.--Vital Statistics for Northeastern Illinois Counties, 1950-1969

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1950-1959</th>
<th>1950 Pop.</th>
<th>Natural Increase</th>
<th>Births</th>
<th>Deaths</th>
<th>Migration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cook</td>
<td>4,508,792</td>
<td>635,561</td>
<td>1,141,102</td>
<td>505,541</td>
<td>-14,628</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Chicago</td>
<td>3,620,962</td>
<td>447,124</td>
<td>861,140</td>
<td>414,016</td>
<td>517,682</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban Cook</td>
<td>887,830</td>
<td>188,437</td>
<td>279,962</td>
<td>91,525</td>
<td>503,054</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DuPage</td>
<td>154,599</td>
<td>37,537</td>
<td>53,203</td>
<td>15,666</td>
<td>121,323</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kane</td>
<td>150,388</td>
<td>24,844</td>
<td>41,702</td>
<td>16,858</td>
<td>33,014</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake</td>
<td>179,097</td>
<td>42,581</td>
<td>59,911</td>
<td>17,330</td>
<td>71,978</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McHenry</td>
<td>50,656</td>
<td>9,510</td>
<td>15,921</td>
<td>6,411</td>
<td>24,044</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will</td>
<td>134,336</td>
<td>24,282</td>
<td>38,879</td>
<td>14,579</td>
<td>32,999</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.E. Illinois Total</td>
<td>5,177,868</td>
<td>774,315</td>
<td>1,350,718</td>
<td>576,403</td>
<td>268,730</td>
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</tr>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cook</td>
<td>5,493,529</td>
<td>5,129,725</td>
<td>577,071</td>
<td>1,135,799</td>
<td>558,728</td>
<td>-213,267</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Chicago</td>
<td>3,369,359</td>
<td>3,550,404</td>
<td>348,709</td>
<td>771,865</td>
<td>423,156</td>
<td>-529,754</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban Cook</td>
<td>2,124,170</td>
<td>1,579,321</td>
<td>228,362</td>
<td>363,934</td>
<td>135,572</td>
<td>316,487</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DuPage</td>
<td>492,181</td>
<td>313,459</td>
<td>51,954</td>
<td>75,448</td>
<td>23,494</td>
<td>126,768</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kane</td>
<td>251,005</td>
<td>208,246</td>
<td>29,283</td>
<td>49,139</td>
<td>19,856</td>
<td>13,476</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake</td>
<td>382,638</td>
<td>293,656</td>
<td>45,476</td>
<td>68,303</td>
<td>22,827</td>
<td>43,506</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McHenry</td>
<td>111,555</td>
<td>84,210</td>
<td>10,992</td>
<td>19,799</td>
<td>8,807</td>
<td>16,353</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Will</td>
<td>247,825</td>
<td>191,617</td>
<td>29,129</td>
<td>46,572</td>
<td>17,443</td>
<td>27,079</td>
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<tr>
<td>N.E. Illinois Total</td>
<td>6,978,733</td>
<td>6,220,913</td>
<td>743,905</td>
<td>1,395,060</td>
<td>651,155</td>
<td>13,915</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

metropolitan population living in Chicago fell to 48.3. Table 2 shows net migration from Chicago and the gains made by suburban Cook and the collar counties from 1950 to 1970.

Before 1970, traditional models of metropolitan structure, in which a central city was viewed as dominating the suburban ring, fit the reality of the urban system fairly well. The deconcentration of population, industry and retailing that has radically changed relationships among places in the metropolis since 1970, however, has prompted a number of attempts to describe this new form of spatial organization.23 Ongoing deconcentration of population and industry to the rural-urban fringe and beyond has raised questions about the changing functions and relationships of cities, suburbs and nonmetropolitan communities.

Although post-war development was welcomed by many municipalities, the problems associated with the surge in subdivision development often brought complaints about the cost of providing water and sewerage extensions, additional teachers and classrooms and complaints about the nuisances associated with construction work.24 Zoning laws that had been on the books for years were

23In "Metropolitan Structure and the Suburban Hierarchy," American Sociological Review 58 (June 1993) Holly L. Hughes evaluates alternative models of metropolitan form and suggests that the metropolitan area is a complex system of differentially dominant places rather than either a monocentric or multinodal system.

24A survey of local newspapers during the period suggests that village boards were reluctant to place many restrictions on developers, although it was not uncommon for a trustee to blast builders for what was perceived as detrimental to the long-term interests of the community. One trustee, for example, lamented the development of look-alike housing and suggested an ordinance requiring more variety in house plans. According to the report, other trustees came to the defense of the builder and the
reviewed and measures taken to tighten their enforcement. Residents of unincorporated areas were sometimes fiercely protective of their rural lifestyle, and the desire to prevent development set off a flurry of incorporations in Lake County in the late 1950s.

The problems of Joseph Brickman, a builder with a reputation for building large, high-density subdivisions, illustrate the determination of some Lake County citizens to keep their communities rural. According to local legend, homeowners of an unincorporated area of Lake County learned in 1957 that Brickman planned to transport a prefabricated house into the area. When the builder reached the one-lane bridge leading into the community, he found twenty angry residents (one armed with a rifle) standing across the road to block his path. In a defensive move, the village was incorporated the following year, and has remained a small, low-density enclave. Although the one-lane bridge has been the site of numerous accidents over the years, attempts to have it widened have been resisted by residents who see the bridge as a bulwark against encroachment from the outside world.

Brickman was thwarted at every turn by surrounding communities, which incorporated and quickly drew up zoning and building ordinances aimed at preventing dense development. The founders of Long Grove, for example, incorporated in order "to protect this area from the encroachment of irresponsible real estate development promoters" and "to maintain the semi-rural character of the neighborhood." These village attorney advised that such a prohibitive law would stand little chance of surviving a lawsuit ("Dowden Opens Fire On Town Builders," The Independent Register, 5 April 1956).
communities have retained their rural character, with single-family homes on large lots, without many of the services provided by more densely-populated municipalities. According to a local historian:

This shows Long Grove to be a Village not proposing to furnish unlimited services in the generally accepted sense, but to preserve its rural identity. Herein lies one of its claims to uniqueness, and its ability to attract the kind of residents who truly appreciate its historical and its natural environmental delights, and who are willing to forego certain aspects of municipal life in other places. 25

Population and Employment Growth in Lake County Since 1950

The population of Lake County increased from 179,097 in 1950 to 293,656 in 1960 and to 382,638 in 1970. Federal subsidies for highway construction improved the road system and created the Tri-State Tollway which bisects the county. The creation of the Regional Transportation Authority led to the coordination of commuter systems, making the county even more accessible to Chicago and other suburban counties.

Lake County has experienced extraordinary growth over the past twenty years. The population of the county grew from 382,638 in 1970 to 440,372 in 1980 and to 516,418 in 1990. There has been a slight decline in the average household size from 2.98 persons in 1980 to 2.85 in 1990. Families with young children and persons over the age of eighty are two of the fastest-growing household types (Lake County Department of Planning, Zoning and Environmental Quality 1991).

Of the 223,600 persons who were employed in August of 1992, 51,100 worked in manufacturing, 152,200 in non-manufacturing and 30,300 in government. The unemployment rate for the county in August, 1992 was 3.9 percent. This relatively low rate (compared to 7.3 percent for the nation and 6.5 percent for Illinois in the same month) is partially explained by the fact that although Lake County had only 6 percent of jobs in the six-county Chicago area, it accounted for 19 percent of job growth. This trend is expected to continue for the foreseeable future. A 1991 survey of national real estate markets ranks Lake County as one of the leaders in office and warehouse growth, and in 1989 the county was ranked as the 12th fastest-growing county in the nation (Lake County Economic Development Commission 1993).

Optimism about Lake County’s ability to attract business has been tempered by concern about workforce recruitment. The aging of the workforce and smaller cohorts of young people not yet employed indicate that there will be a serious shortage of workers in the future. A 1993 business retention survey of firms conducted by the Lake County Economic Development Commission found that the availability and quality of the labor force was a major concern of employers with more than 100 employees. Fifty-one percent of these employers reported difficulty in recruiting workers with the necessary skills to fill available jobs. Although a smaller percentage of owners of small businesses (24 percent) echoed this complaint, the rapid increase in the number of small businesses in the county suggests that the problem is likely to

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This includes employees of the Great Lakes Naval Training Center in North Chicago.
become more significant (Lake County Economic Development Commission 1993).

The fastest-growing occupational categories in Lake County during the 1980s were Executive, Administrative and Managerial, Professional Specialty and Sales, which account for 51.8 percent of all jobs in the county. There has also been an increase in the need for Administrative Support (including clerical) and service workers, and these positions now account for nearly 24 percent of the total. The number of Machine Operators, Assemblers and Inspectors, however, has declined to only 5.5 percent of all jobs (Lake County Economic Development Commission 1993, 16).

Population redistribution in Lake County over the past two decades has been driven by the same forces that have reshaped the metropolitan region as a whole. The availability of large undeveloped parcels of land still in agriculture and proximity to Chicago make the county attractive to developers, corporations and migrants seeking to escape the problems of more urbanized areas. Development that has brought affluent residents and attractive new corporate investment, however, has not been evenly distributed. As some portions of the county have prospered, others have declined. The effects of deindustrialization in the northeastern portion of the county, for example, have been severe. The city of Waukegan, which for many decades was the county’s industrial, commercial and retail center, has lost a significant number of employers since 1970. Workforce reductions at major industrial plants have severely damaged the once strong working-class neighborhoods of Waukegan, as well those in the neighboring cities of Zion and North Chicago. Many commercial and retail firms
have left these lakefront communities as well, leaving little to attract residents or outsiders to downtown business districts.

As the northeastern portion of the county has declined, other areas of the county have experienced phenomenal growth. Seven townships in the southern and central part of the county accounted for 98% of the county's total population increase from 1970 to 1980 and 85% from 1980 to 1990 (Lake County Department of Planning and Zoning 1992, 7). Many new employers have relocated in new corporate campuses and retail malls along major highways in the southern and central portion of the county.

New residential growth has followed the same pattern. The single largest land use in the county is low-density residential development (between one and four housing units per acre). Thirty-one percent of residential land is zoned as "estate residential," a category specifying single-family detached units on lots of one to five acres. While very low density luxury development is desirable from the point of view of municipal governments trying to enlarge their property tax base, there are problems associated with this trend. Providing water, sewer and other infrastructure to homes in low-density subdivisions is expensive and inefficient. Inflation in the market price of housing in central and southern Lake County, where the growing opportunities for employment are located, means that many workers cannot afford to live close to their jobs.

Shifts in the concentration of population within the county have a number of implications in terms of housing. According to the Lake County Department of
Planning, Zoning and Environmental Quality:

As the supply of developable land in Vernon, Ela, Libertyville, and Warren townships diminishes, adjacent Avon, Fremont, Wauconda, and Grant Townships will experience an increased demand for land for new housing construction. However, large areas of these last four townships remain unsewered, in part because of the small-town, rural orientation of its older residents and the high cost of sewer extensions from serviced areas. This almost guarantees that any new housing constructed will be large-lot, single-family detached and, therefore, generally priced well above what moderate income households can afford.

At the same time, it is unlikely that many new and younger County residents with moderate incomes will seek to purchase or rent in the older, seweried communities along the County’s northern lakeshore -- such as Zion, Waukegan, and North Chicago -- because of their negative images, higher crime rates, and lower property appreciation rates (1992, 7-8).

Negative perceptions of these communities may also affect the willingness of older people to move to the housing that is available for senior citizens. Although the number of senior citizens in the county grew almost thirty-two percent during the 1980s and there is a long waiting list for senior citizen housing, the housing authorities of North Chicago and Waukegan have been unable to fill the many vacant units in these cities. The housing director of North Chicago attributes the unwillingness of county residents to move to North Chicago to the racial change that accelerated over the past decade:

Ten years ago I had about 70 percent white tenants and 30 percent black . . . . Now it is 30 percent white and the rest are black. I beg for someone to come in to keep an equal mix. Some will come in, look at the building, put a deposit down, but when they come back, they say they don’t want the apartment (Thomas 1993).

There has also been a decrease in the construction of multi-unit housing even though there is a strong demand for rental units, particularly among low-income
families. The strong market for luxury housing makes it unlikely that the supply of housing affordable to low- and moderate-income families will increase.

In the vast majority of communities in Lake County, black residents constituted less than one percent of the 1970 population. There was very little change in the percentage of minorities in most places over the twenty year period. There was a dramatic change, however, in the proportion of minorities in the three northeastern communities. In North Chicago, for example, the percentage of black residents increased from 16.6 in 1970 to 34.43 percent in 1990, while the Hispanic population grew from 2.4 percent in 1970 to 9.19 percent in 1990. Thus, the proportion of the population of North Chicago that is black or Hispanic grew from 19 percent in 1970 to nearly 44 percent in 1990. Zion and Waukegan also had significant increases in the proportion of their populations that are black and Hispanic.

The causes of the continuing balkanization of Lake County are complex, but the loss of manufacturing jobs and lack of investment in the older industrial cities, the inmigration of affluent professionals and strong market for luxury housing and increasingly restrictive building and zoning ordinances in central and southern Lake County communities have contributed to the increasing residential differentiation of

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27 According to the Bell Federal Survey of Building, for example, the number of new multi-family units constructed in Lake County dropped from 953 units in 1988 to 628 in 1989 and 505 in 1990. The vacancy rate for complexes with no more than 199 units is 1.8%, and the average rental is $459 per month for a studio apartment, $564 for a one bedroom and $659 for a two bedroom apartment (Lake County Department of Planning, Zoning and Environmental Quality: Community Development Section, "Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy," 12 November 1991).
the county’s population.

The populations of the five communities chosen for inclusion in this study have remained overwhelmingly white and non-Hispanic. Nevertheless, demographic change in the larger context of the county affects attitudes toward new development in these small towns. As the following chapters will demonstrate, attitudes about new development sometimes reflect anxiety that newcomers will not be of the same racial or ethnic background as longtime residents. As apprehension about racial change, gang activity, homelessness and unemployment in the industrial lakefront communities has grown over the past several decades, public discussion of growth-related concerns has reflected a desire to prevent minority and lower-income families from moving into a village. Except in cases where concerns about race and social class were explicitly stated, it is not possible to discern the extent to which opposition to new development was based on these concerns. But the larger demographic changes in the city of Chicago and the industrial communities in Lake County provide the backdrop against which local conflicts over growth have taken place in the five villages selected for study in this investigation, and must be considered if we are to understand the response of residents and public officials to the prospect of rapid growth in their communities.
CHAPTER 3

THE CASE STUDY COMMUNITIES

This chapter provides a brief description of the growth and development of each of the five villages included in this study as well as an overview of their demographic and economic characteristics. Tables and figures illustrating these characteristics are located at the end of this chapter (beginning on page 82). The communities are located in central Lake County, roughly equidistant (approximately forty miles) from the cities of Chicago and Milwaukee. Each village operates under the trustee village form of government, with trustees elected from the village at large.

In 1970, the area in which these communities are located was typical of places described in earlier investigations of the rural-urban fringe. Each village was surrounded by agricultural land planted primarily in corn and soybeans, although a number of nurseries that grew trees and other landscape material were common as

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1Because of the small population size of the village of Vernon Hills in the early 1970s, data are not available for some community characteristics during this period. I have not estimated the net migration into Vernon Hills for persons in various age categories, for instance, because the lack of data for births during this period as well as information on the age structure in 1970 would make such an estimate unreliable. With a population of 1,056 in 1970 and 9,827 in 1980, (with virtually all annexations comprised of uninhabited territory), it is reasonable to assume that most of the 1980 population of the village were persons who had moved into Vernon Hills during the past decade. Data for the communities described in this chapter are from the Bureau of the Census.
well. The diversity of land use was typical of the rural-urban fringe, with residential, commercial and industrial sites intermingled in the unincorporated areas between villages.

Table 3 and figure 6 indicate the differences among villages in the amount of new territory annexed into the municipalities during the 1970s and 1980s. While Libertyville and Mundelein each added little more than a square mile in size, Wauconda, Vernon Hills and Grayslake more than doubled the amount of land within their boundaries. The density of population, which represents an average number of persons per square mile of village territory, has been included because the issue of density is frequently raised by those who object to new development. Population density is also associated in the minds of many people (as well as the literature on urban problems) with some negative aspects of urbanization, such as emotional stress and crime.

There has been little change since 1970 in the racial and ethnic characteristics of village populations, which have remained largely white and non-Hispanic. Exceptions to this include the increase in Hispanic residents in Mundelein from 2.4 percent of the total population in 1970 to 13.5 percent in 1990 and the increase of Hispanic residents in Wauconda from 2 percent in 1980 to 4 percent in 1990. Wauconda residents report that this figure underestimates the 1995 Hispanic population of Wauconda, reporting that a number of Hispanic residents have moved to the village (as well as to adjacent unincorporated areas) since the last census was done. Vernon Hills gained a number of Asian families during the 1970s and 1980s, with Asians comprising 6.2
percent of the total population of the village in 1990.

Tables 4 and 5 and figure 5 document population change in villages from 1950 to 1994, with figures 7 through 11 indicating estimates of net migration for people in various age categories for each village during the 1970s and 1980s. The percentage of homeowners in each village is shown in figure 12, and figures 13 through 17 indicate changes in the number of housing units approved for five-year periods in each of the five villages. As the following chapters will show, the relationship between attitudes toward new development and the actual increase in housing construction and population increase is a complex one. Some of the most fervent opposition has occurred during periods of slow population increase, while very rapid growth in another community has sometimes met little resistance at all. In order to understand why attitudes and policies on new development have occurred when and where they have, it is necessary to briefly describe the history of growth in each village.

Grayslake

The construction of the Wisconsin Central Railroad in 1886, and the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad in 1899, prompted the first subdivisions of land in the area and early growth of the village of Grayslake, when the town functioned as

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2The village was incorporated in 1895 under the name of Gray's Lake, Illinois. When the U.S. Postmaster General issued a directive ordering local post offices having separate words in their names to combine them into a single word, the village became Grayslake (at least for postal purposes). Both forms are used today and either usage is considered correct in the village (Ronald G. Brown et al., comps., *Grayslake: A Historical Portrait*, Grayslake Historical Society, 1994), 107.
a trade center for farm families. Grayslake quickly acquired lumber, feed and grist mills, a cannery and milk processing plant as well as the retail and service industries common in small towns at the turn of the century.

The Grayslake Gelatin Company opened in 1922 and has been the village’s longest-lived industry. During the 1940s and 1950s, a number of businesses, including a textile manufacturer, masonite processing and millwork plant, and factories producing paint, violin strings and electronic instruments expanded the village’s manufacturing base. The 1970s and early 1980s brought a loss in the number of retail, service and manufacturing businesses in the community, sparking a concerted effort by business and civic groups to encourage economic development. By 1990 a number of new retail, office and production facilities had located in newly-annexed territory on the fringe of the village. In addition, the main campus of the College of Lake County was built in the early 1970s. With an enrollment of 15,000 students and 1,000 employees, the community college has been a significant addition to the social and economic life of the village.

The population of Grayslake grew from 325 at its incorporation in 1895 to 736 in 1920. A number of new subdivisions were constructed during the 1920s and the population reached 1,118 by the 1930s. The community grew by only 64 residents during the 1930s, but the population began to increase once again in the late 1940s, nearly doubling during the 1950s as young families moved into new housing being constructed in the village.

The 1970 census proved disappointing to Grayslake officials, who were miffed
that the official population of 4907 did not reach the 5,000 they had hoped for. In fact, the new decade was to bring very little growth for the village, as the rate of population change dropped from 30 percent in the 1960s to 7 percent during the 1970s. Yet, in the early 1970s local leaders were optimistic about the possibility that the village would soon feel the onslaught of development that they saw in other small towns in the area. Grayslake, with its easy access to major highways and location on the commuter rail line, appeared to be in the direct path of growth. The local newspaper lost no time in pointing out that the village had the attributes that migrants from Chicago were seeking:

They’re coming from the city to the country in droves. And they’re looking for ’a castle on 40 acres, surrounded by a moat, with a drawbridge and an alligator.’ That’s how [a builder in Grayslake] described the situation. The truth is, city dwellers are forsaking both the city and suburbs for the exurbia of Lake and Kenosha Counties. [The builder has] noticed a considerable increase of homebuyers from Chicago and the near north suburbs. He says they are trying to get away from the changing neighborhoods and looking for better schools.

Although the growth Grayslake leaders had hoped for did not materialize during the 1970s, when the population grew by only seven percent, developers’ attempts to win approval for a large planned unit development propelled the issue of growth to the top of the local political agenda. The proposed development, to be called "Heartland," was expected to add at least 28,000 people to the village. The conflict

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3 A population of 5,000 would not only have brought additional motor fuel tax funds but also would have permitted the formation of a Fire and Police Commission, providing greater security for policemen. (Grayslake Times, 10 December 1970).

4 "New Suburbia -- It’s Here," Grayslake Times, 1 July 1971.
that arose in the course of the debate over the Heartland project played a significant role in shaping attitudes and policies related to growth during this period. Although the original Heartland project was never built, by the late 1980s the village had annexed thousands of acres, approved a number of new subdivisions and by the early 1990s had become one of the fastest-growing communities in the metropolitan area. A special census conducted in 1993 showed that the 1990 population of 7,388 had grown to 11,293.

The ratio of renters to homeowners in Grayslake has been increasing since 1970, with the percentage of homeowners falling from 71 percent in 1970 to 57 percent in 1990 with the construction of a number of multi-family buildings in the mid-1980s. The value of a single-family home has risen from $64,800 in 1970 to $111,600 in 1990 (figure 18). Median family income in 1990 was $50,302, slightly lower than the $52,308 median for the county as a whole (figure 19).  

Migration into the village during the 1980s, particularly after 1985, consisted largely of adults in their twenties and thirties and their children, who moved into the burgeoning subdivisions at the edge of the community (figure 7). While fewer than twenty single-family homes were built in the first three years of the 1980s, more than 1,800 homes were approved from 1990 through 1993 (figure 13).

A history of Grayslake published in celebration of its centennial compares the ideology and concerns of residents in 1895 with those in 1995. Noting that the

\footnote{These figures do not include the post-1990 increase in population and housing, which would probably raise the median for housing value and income.}
village has always maintained a conservative Republican character, the account points out the tendency for leaders consistently to support banking, agrarian and business interests. Local historians also noted the topics of greatest concern to residents of Grayslake in recent decades: the overgrowth of the area through development, economic expansion through the attraction of business and industry, the impact of growth on wetlands and wildlife habitat, rising property taxes and the need to find new ways of financing public projects, the "insidious effects of gangs, drugs, vandalism, drunk driving, etc. as they reduce the social viability of the communal setting," and the loss of farmland with the advance of urban sprawl.6

Libertyville

Located on the Des Plaines River and bisected by several railway systems, Libertyville was incorporated in 1882 and has always served as a trade center for the surrounding agricultural area. Early industries brought prosperity to the town, which experienced several periods of rapid expansion until 1930 and then grew at a slower pace until the late 1940s, when the post-war migration from Chicago began to contribute substantially to population growth.

Generations of civic leaders have fostered the image of Libertyville as an idyllic small town -- a good place to do business and to raise a family. The community identity that was reinforced in numerous ways by local booster organizations and public speeches is summarized in a publication from the early 1940s:

6Ibid., 22-23.
Libertyville stands today as the typical American town. Its chief elements are cleanliness, old-fashioned independence, and friendliness. We do not offer glamour and bright lights. What we DO offer is life in the genial mood—that kind of life that has been the bulwark of a great and free nation. Our Town never expects to become great. It is happy with its growth only in this respect: the new people who have arrived in Libertyville came for the most part because of choice, and not compulsion. This is the way Our Town wants its growth to continue—steadily, simply, serenely—by those of us who enjoy the friendly way of life.7

Libertyville grew quickly during the 1950s, with a 58 percent rise in population. Although the village had abundant vacant land within its corporate limits in 1950, annexation of peripheral territory was used as a means of controlling development in the fringe. By 1956, controlling construction on the periphery of the village was the primary issue facing the plan commissions of both Libertyville and Mundelein.8

Concern that annexation was contributing to the loss of farmland around villages prompted an editorial in the local newspaper:

What was a soy bean patch a year or so ago is a subdivision today with vast crops of school-age children pressuring the constantly growing capacity of our schools . . . . The demand for new homes is coming principally from two sources -- the movement from Chicago to the suburbs and the youngsters of our own community growing up in increasing vast batches and wanting homes for their own new families . . . . Every city and village in the country, consequently, is facing an almost identical situation. On the outskirts of each developers buy up farms and turn them into subdivisions. Often with these developments come problems in sewage, water and the normal fire and police protection needed by an incorporated town.

More and more frequently these areas are being annexed by the incorporated

7Lowell Nye, Our Town: The Story of the Growth and Development of a Typical American Town. (Libertyville Lions Club [1942]).

town largely for two reasons: 1. The outside-the-village development needs adequate municipal services. 2. The village itself wants to, in self defense, get control over the outer area so it can be zoned to keep out obnoxious enterprises such as auto wrecking yards, trailer camps that swell school enrollment without paying more than a token in taxation, and problems in drainage and sewage.9

Libertyville grew by 37 percent during the 1960s, reaching a population of 11,684 in 1970. Rapid growth persisted during the 1970s, but slowed considerably to 16 percent during the 1980s as annexations tapered off and the availability of buildable sites diminished. Libertyville has remained largely a community of homeowners, with the percentage of renters falling from 30 percent in 1970 to 20 percent in 1990. During the 1980s the strong market for luxury housing attracted developers who built large houses on sites of one acre or more at the edge of the village during the 1980s. The median price of an owner-occupied home rose from $30,000 in 1970 to $188,500 in 1990 (compared to the county-wide median of $24,500 in 1970 and $136,700 in 1990). Median family income rose to $70,397 in 1990 (compared to $52,308 for Lake County).

Figure 8 indicates the inmigration of large numbers of young children and their parents during the 1970s. The relatively large outmigration of young adults may reflect outmigration to college and jobs in other places as well as the growing shortage of affordable housing and rental units in the village.

Although Libertyville experienced a net loss of retail and manufacturing businesses during the mid-1970s, the community has maintained a relatively strong

9"To Annex or Not, Stands As Growing Area Problem," *Independent Register*, 1 March 1956.
tax base over the past twenty-five years. Fourteen automobile dealerships in the village contribute nearly 65 percent of sales tax revenue collected by the village. Manufacturers of industrial machinery and equipment, wholesale establishments and business and health services also contribute to a relatively robust local economy.

Mundelein

The community of Mundelein has had a succession of name changes since the mid-nineteenth century, when it was first known as "Mechanics Grove" because of the carpenters and millwrights among its early settlers. The name was later changed to Holcomb in appreciation of a man who donated land for the railroad as well as for a substantial amount of territory for the village. When residents learned that William Rockefeller, an investor in the railroad, would be riding through town on the train’s first run, they quickly changed the town’s name to Rockefeller, Illinois, hoping to gain a benefactor who would invest in their town. According to local legend Rockefeller rode into town, stepped off the train and looked around, then got back on and disappeared, never to be heard from again (Mullery 1989, 62).

The opening of a business school in the community prompted yet another name change, this time to the acronym of the motto of the school — Ability, Reliability, Endurance and Action. The village was known as AREA until the school went bankrupt. In 1921, when Cardinal George Mundelein purchased the land on which the school stood for a seminary, the community was renamed in his honor.

Mundelein prospered and grew during the 1920s, largely because of the financial investment of utilities magnate Samuel Insull. Owner of the Chicago and Milwaukee
Electric Railroad, Insull built the Skokie Valley route from Evanston through Libertyville to Mundelein, buying hundreds of acres of land at the end of the line and drawing up a master plan for Mundelein’s development. Insull laid out streets and installed water and sewer lines in the subdivisions that he predicted would eventually be populated by 35,000 residents, who would commute to Chicago each day on his railroad. The Great Depression, Insull’s legal problems, and his subsequent death curtailed his plans for the development of Mundelein.

Many people who purchased lots from Insull during the 1920s lost them through foreclosure during the 1930s. But Insull had set the stage for Mundelein’s boom during the 1950s, when young couples used GI benefits to finance new homes in the subdivisions and Mundelein’s population tripled. The pre-existence of roads, water and sewer lines made it possible to buy a home in the village at an average savings of $2,000 over a comparable house in Libertyville and the rate of growth soared to 231 percent.

Throughout the 1950s, local newspapers championed the growth of both Libertyville and Mundelein, reporting with pride the results of each interim census that documented the rising numbers of residents. Newspapers also supplied the names, occupations and ages of children of new families in the area as part of the "Hello Neighbor" service. Despite the problems associated with accommodating such large numbers of new residents, the consensus in both Libertyville and Mundelein seems to have been that new homes, as long as they were relatively large and well-constructed,
were a welcome addition to the community.

In the 1960s Mundelein grew by 53 percent, reaching a population of 16,128 by 1970. In the 1970s, however, growth came to a virtual halt as the village struggled with water and sewer systems that were woefully inadequate. Between 1977 and 1987, fewer housing units were built in Mundelein than in any other village in central Lake County. Student enrollment in Mundelein schools decreased by more than 20 percent for the same period. In 1987, village officials estimated that Mundelein's growth rate since 1970 had averaged only nine tenths of one percent annually.

Although sewer and water problems contributed substantially to Mundelein's slow growth, the mayor credited the village's "controlled growth" approach to development:

By strictly controlling the size, mix, and density of new residential areas - and by requiring any such additions to our town to pay their own way, we have been able to allow very modest growth while simultaneously maintaining our smaller town lifestyle . . . Our rejection of more than 1,300 acres for annexation, and acceptance of only 340 acres in the last decade had contributed to the success of our "controlled growth" policy which has carried through 1987.11

The number of retail businesses in Mundelein declined slightly between 1977 and 1982, with the loss of miscellaneous establishments, gas stations and home furnishings stores. During the same period, however, the village had a net gain of manufacturing and service industries. In 1990 the largest industries were general merchandise stores (particularly large discount chains), miscellaneous manufacturing

industries, industrial machinery and equipment and a number of wholesale trade companies.

In 1970, the largest segment of Mundelein’s population was made up of persons under twenty years of age. Evidence of the constraints on construction of new housing during the seventies can be seen in the net outmigration of persons in their thirties and their children (figure 9), and in declining enrollment in Mundelein schools, where the number of students in one grade school district fell from 2,185 to 1,297 during the 1970s. During the 1980s, as water and sewer capacity was added and new subdivisions were built, young adults and children once more began moving into the village. By 1990 the largest portion of the population consisted of adults from twenty-five to forty.

Vernon Hills

The village of Vernon Hills began as a twenty-house subdivision in unincorporated Vernon Township in 1957, built by two friends who joined forces to form L&H Builders. As houses were completed, subcontractors and employees working on the project were encouraged by the developers to move into the homes (at no cost to the workers) and to add their names to a petition for incorporation as a village. The rather extemporaneous nature of this "paper village" is reflected in early public officials who served the community: L&H Builders’ general manager became the first mayor of Vernon Hills, the sister of one of the partners was appointed police magistrate and also served, along with the partner’s brother-in-law and stepmother, on
the village board.\textsuperscript{12}

Vernon Hills' incorporation was not welcomed by local farmers, who immediately filed an objection to the petition, arguing that "those who signed the petition did so under compulsion or in an attempt to perpetrate a fraud upon the state by utilization of apparently legal means."\textsuperscript{13} The ensuing battle between residents of the area and the developers eventually involved two cases before the Illinois Supreme Court, which ultimately upheld the legality of the incorporation even though it violated state laws forbidding municipalities to incorporate within one mile of one another (the village of Indian Creek was within this one-mile limit and was incorporated at the same time). One of the original developers of Vernon Hills explained many years later that he and his partner had used incorporation to evade the county's one-acre zoning laws in order to build houses on smaller parcels. The same strategy was used in their development of Streamwood, Illinois, the developer reported, commenting that this was a common practice among builders at the time.\textsuperscript{14} Vernon Hills grew slowly over the next decade, reaching a population of 1,056 by 1970. A four-man police force was established in 1965, with officers using their own cars to patrol the village on a part-time, unpaid basis.

The fortunes of the tiny community changed dramatically in 1971, when it


\textsuperscript{14}Barney Loeb, interview by author, 26 April 1994, Libertyville, Illinois.
annexed the property on which a multimillion dollar commercial and residential development was to be built, and village leaders launched an aggressive campaign aimed at attracting additional development that transformed the sleepy village of Vernon Hills into a major retail and employment center.

Vernon Hills mushroomed in the 1970s, increasing its population by 830 percent during the decade to reach a population size of 9,827 by 1980 (tables 4 and 5). The 1990 census indicated that the village had grown to 15,319 and a special census conducted in 1994 showed that the population had reached 18,500, nearly matching that of neighboring Libertyville.

A number of multi-family dwellings built before the construction of New Century Town meant that a majority (60 percent) of units were renter-occupied in 1970 in Vernon Hills (figure 12). With the building of single-family homes and condominiums in the 1970s this fell to 23 percent by 1980, rising to 30 percent by 1990. Vernon Hills has an unusually large proportion of condominiums, which in 1990 made up 39 percent of all housing units. The median price of a home rose from $90,000 to $140,000 between 1980 and 1990, as luxury housing began to be built in the village.

In 1970 the median age of the village’s population was 20.3 years, with 46.2 percent younger than 18 and only .6 percent over 65 years of age.\(^{15}\) The large number of persons in the 25 to 35 year age categories in 1980, as well as the

\(^{15}\)Because of its small size in 1970, data on the number of births during the decade and detailed characteristics of the population in 1970 are not available.
relatively large numbers of children under 10 years old reflects the immigration of families into new housing built in New Century Town. Figure 10 shows the substantial immigration of young adults into the village during the 1980s. The construction of subsidized housing for the elderly is also apparent in the relatively large increase in the number of persons over sixty-five between 1980 and 1990.

**Wauconda**

Wauconda was settled in the 1830s by farmers from Vermont, and during the nineteenth century was the largest village in the county not located near a railroad station. Built on the shore of Bangs Lake, the village became a popular summer resort as well as a trade center for farm families in the area. By 1900 the village had a flour mill, three hotels, a number of stores and factories and three churches. Incorporated in 1877, Wauconda’s year-round population had reached 400 by the turn of the century. The completion of the Lake Zurich and Wauconda Railroad in 1913 brought the summer population to nearly 4,000. With the construction of Route 12 in the early 1920s, however, the railroad closed and the number of tourists decreased over the next two decades. By the 1940s most of the summer cottages had been converted to year-round homes.16

Wauconda’s population nearly doubled in the 1950s, from 1,173 persons in 1950 to 3,227 in 1960 (table 4). The 1960s brought a 69 percent increase in population, and in 1968 the village adopted a comprehensive plan that stressed the need for more

diversified industrial and commercial growth. Like Mundelein and Grayslake, however, Wauconda experienced a dramatic decrease in new development during the 1970s, when the growth rate plummeted to 4 percent. A number of large housing projects were rejected by the village board, whose members were particularly eager to keep housing densities low. Some of this concern stemmed from the projections of regional planners, who were predicting a growth rate of 130 percent for the Wauconda area for the 1980s and early 1990s. The net population gain for the 1980s, however, was only 228 persons, or an 11 percent increase for the decade.

The village had annexed a considerable amount of the farmland at its edges in the late 1970s and 1980s, doubling in size from 1970 to 1990. By the late 1980s, the issue of density had become paramount. Whether Wauconda could retain its rural atmosphere had become an issue in political campaigns, as pressure from developers grew. By 1990, a number of new subdivisions were either in progress or proposed for the village, with the potential for an additional 2,770 persons. By 1995 a pro-growth village board promised that the nineties would bring even more development to the village, and the April election in that year was a fiercely-fought battle between incumbents and a slate of candidates who promised to preserve Wauconda's small-town, rural character.

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17 List of developments compiled by the village of Wauconda, dated April 3, 1990.
Fig. 5. Population of Villages in Study, 1970-1990.
Fig. 6. Village Boundaries, 1970 and 1993. Shaded areas indicate annexations after 1970.
Table 3.--Land Area and Population Density of Villages, 1970-1990

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grayslake</td>
<td>1895</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>1.6</td>
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<td>2.2</td>
<td>2,394</td>
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<td>7.6</td>
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<td>37</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>2,601</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2,436</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>2,829</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vernon Hills</td>
<td>1958</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>. . .</td>
<td>. . .</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>2,808</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>2,220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wauconda</td>
<td>1877</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>3,640</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>1,961</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>6,294</td>
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Note: Density indicates the average number of persons per square mile within village boundaries.
Table 4.--Population of Villages in Study Area, 1950-1990

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<tr>
<td>Grayslake</td>
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<td>19,174</td>
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<td>17,053</td>
<td>21,215</td>
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<td>...</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>1,056</td>
<td>9,827</td>
<td>15,319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wauconda</td>
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<td>3,227</td>
<td>5,460</td>
<td>5,688</td>
<td>6,294</td>
</tr>
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Table 5.--Percentage Change in Population of Villages, 1950-1994

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<td>7.2</td>
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<td>758.5</td>
<td>830.6</td>
<td>55.9</td>
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<td>175.1</td>
<td>69.2</td>
<td>4.2</td>
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Fig. 7. Grayslake Net Migration, 1970-1990.
Fig. 8. Libertyville Net Migration, 1970-1990.
Fig. 9. Mundelein Net Migration, 1970-1990.
Fig. 10. Vernon Hills Net Migration, 1980-1990. (Data not available for 1970).
Fig. 11. Wauconda Net Migration, 1970-1990.
Fig. 12. Percentage of Homeowners in Villages, 1970-1990.
Fig. 13. Number of Housing Units Authorized by Building Permits in Grayslake, 1970-1993.
Fig. 14. Number of Housing Units Authorized by Building Permits in Libertyville, 1970-1993.
Fig. 15. Number of Housing Units Authorized by Building Permits in Mundelein, 1970-1993.
Fig. 16. Number of Housing Units Authorized by Building Permits in Vernon Hills, 1970-1993.
Fig. 17. Number of Housing Units Authorized by Building Permits in Wauconda, 1970-1993.
Fig. 18. Median Value of Owner-Occupied Housing in Villages, 1970-1990.
Fig. 19. Median Family Income for Villages, 1970-1990. (Data not available for Vernon Hills in 1972).
CHAPTER 4
GROWTH POLITICS

This chapter charts the effects of changing attitudes toward growth on the political process in the five communities examined in this study, as well as in the larger context of the county. As Chapter 2 illustrates, local political officials have sought to affect the growth process for more than a century, competing with their counterparts in neighboring communities for the most desirable types of new development. But over the past several decades, the question of how to control and manage growth has become a salient political issue in small towns in the rural-urban fringe, with pro-growth politicians challenged by a new type of candidate who promises to rein in the rampant forces of development.

A number of factors converged to make growth the central political issue during the 1970s and 1980s in central Lake County. The need to expand infrastructure and services to meet the growing demands of additional population, the concerns of oldtimers about the loss of the familiar landscape, newcomers’ admonitions about the effects of unbridled growth in the suburbs from which they had come, anxiety about the spread of urban problems to small towns, the growing awareness and acceptance of the values and goals of the environmental movement, and the widespread trend toward grassroots organization and citizen involvement in public life have all
contributed to the salience of growth as an issue in local politics.

The 1970s brought a notable increase in the number of growth management policies instituted by local governments in the United States. First adopted in western and southern states where growth was extraordinarily rapid, growth management tools were readily appropriated by municipalities and counties across the nation. The enactment of growth management policies by local governments generally represents an attempt to limit the number of new housing units, slow the rate of growth, shift a portion of the burden of new residents to developers (who pass the cost on to homebuyers), reduce the density of development, or restrict entrance to those who are of equal or higher socioeconomic status than current residents. Growth management policies used by local governments include:

- Large-lot zoning
- Moratoria or caps on building permits
- Moratoria on water or sewer hookups
- Minimum square foot requirements for housing units
- Developer donations of land or cash for schools or parks
- Public purchase of open space
- Conservation easements prohibiting development of land
- Floodplain zoning
- Covenants restricting the use or design of buildings and lots
- Requirements for archeological, environmental and endangered species impact studies before approval
- Maximum population density limits for planned unit developments
- Service boundaries limiting growth to a specific area around a municipality
- Agricultural protection programs that restrict subdivision of land

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\(^1\)Planned Unit Developments are large-scale projects with mixed uses. This approach, in which a development is built in stages over a long period of time, permits greater flexibility for developers, since changes from the original concept may be implemented at the discretion of those reviewing and administering the project.
The causes and consequences of decisions to implement growth management policies has varied considerably from one place to another. For example, the passage of California’s Proposition 13 in 1978 reduced property taxes and led to a shifting of the burden for new infrastructure to developers. In Vermont, environmental concerns inspired the implementation of policies aimed at slowing growth. In Oregon, a state with a long history of cooperative state-local planning, the requirement that each city establish an "urban growth boundary" was an attempt to alleviate problems associated with low-density development. The conflicts that arise over growth and the response of local and state governments are determined to a great extent by the history, economic structure and balance of political forces in a place. Although there are similarities in growth controversies across the United States, the trajectory of a controversy and its outcome are affected by the distinctive set of circumstances in a particular place in any given period of time.

Lake County’s location on the edge of the expanding Chicago metropolitan region meant that by the late 1960s long-term residents of the county were bracing themselves for an onslaught of developers. A prominent Lake County realtor remembers:

I became really agitated about the fact that there was not enough housing in this county. In 1968, the North Shore Gas Company did a study that showed that we had a housing unit shortage for the people who were here of 15,000 units. There was already a lot of no-growth feeling around . . . I got myself appointed to the Lake County Regional Planning Commission, chairing it for eight years. At the time that I got on the commission, they were anticipating 1,000,000 people in this county by the year 2000. A few years later, when we took on the first comprehensive plan, we had scaled it back to 800,000. Everyone had expected the megalopolis effect to occur, without reckoning on the factor that more than 70 percent of the land that was undeveloped was held
speculatively -- some of it very long term [by families who owned large estates]. . . . Through that twenty-five year period, "no-growth" and "pro-growth" cycles would occur, depending on the politics of the situation. But underlying the whole circumstance -- which I don't believe is politically-driven at all -- is the desire of people not to live like they do in Skokie and Niles and the famous Schaumburg. [Growth politics] was the eruption of that element that already lived here in Lake County (including me) who were galvanized in the 1980s by the environmentalists who came and raised our consciousness.²

Through the years, environmentalism and politics have become inextricably woven into a new type of public debate over development. Three factors were critical in shaping this debate in central Lake County over the past twenty-five years. The first involved the construction of New Century Town in Vernon Hills, one of many "new towns" championed in the United States during the early 1970s as solutions to the problems of urban sprawl. The second involved a proposal to build a similar planned unit development, "Heartland," that would have added at least 28,000 people to the village of Grayslake. Although this project was never built, the conflict over whether or not the development would be constructed continued for more than a decade, and debate about the potential impact of such a large project brought the issue of growth to the forefront of political life in the area. The third factor was the growing demand by residents and community leaders for the preservation of land as open space, and the debate over the methods by which this should be accomplished. In order to understand the response of residents and public officials in central Lake County to rapid growth, it is necessary to describe these three situations in some detail.

New Century Town

In July of 1970, a plan to construct a $250 million residential and commercial project, to be called New Century Town, was announced. The land on which the new community would be built was located in unincorporated territory on the site of the Hawthorn Mellody Farm, a 591-acre tract owned by John Cuneo, owner of a Chicago printing firm. This parcel was part of a large estate that had once belonged to utilities magnate Samuel Insull, and constituted what some called the "hole in the doughnut" -- a tract of undeveloped land surrounded by the communities of Libertyville, Mundelein and Vernon Hills. To be built in two stages over a five-to-seven year period, New Century Town was expected to add from 15,000 to 18,000 residents to the area. Beginning with the construction of a shopping center anchored by Marshall Field and Sears Roebuck, the project was a joint venture of Sears, Field’s and the Urban Investment and Development Company of Chicago.\footnote{The idea of self-contained "new towns" was suggested by Lyndon Johnson as part of a strategy for alleviating urban problems, and was part of the impetus for the Urban Growth and Development Plan of 1970, legislation that included loan guarantees for projects with a mix of housing types and/or a combination of residential and commercial development. Federal funding for the program ended in the mid-1970s.}

Promoted as a model for future development, New Century Town was marketed as a solution to the problems of modern life:

Like a river, the complicated events and socio-economic pressures of the past decade prepare to flow on, with even greater force, into the '70's. Riding its crest are millions of people who are seeking the security and satisfaction of a 'life style' that can flourish and exist within this tide of changing times. The quality of life in our nation’s urban areas has been most affected. It is here that the environment of man has been most upset -- and is now most in need of help.
Recognizing the priority of this problem, Urban has created a prototype 'new town plan,' in which every essential element will be structured to restore a viable balance to the patterns of our daily lives. A plan for symbiotic urban environment.

Designed to induce orderly development of a much larger region than the town itself, NCT [New Century Town] has both a regional commercial and town center. Together they will serve the surrounding region by providing many of the modern conveniences and cultural activities that help make up a full and satisfying way of life. NCT will help erase the social inequalities in housing, jobs, education, and bring about social advances and environmental improvements, including a direction for ending urban sprawl.

NCT will accommodate two emerging social changes. Because of increasing family affluence, most people want to live in communities offering high levels of education, amenities, services, conveniences, recreation and leisure-time activities. But they also want the cultural entertainment and social activities of a central city. Secondly, people do not want to be slaves to their dwellings. Exterior maintenance programs are planned for NCT . . . modern technology will reduce household labors to minimum.

Compatible land uses will conserve the natural assets of each urban location. NCT has been planned to be a catalytic agent for restoring the harmony between people and their environment. Other NCT sites will be disclosed in the future.4

Housing in the planned community was to consist of townhouses and low-rise apartment buildings in residential neighborhoods, as well as high-rise apartment buildings and a hotel near the commercial-cultural town center. Residential and commercial areas were designed as compact units separated by parks and entertainment areas. The focal point of recreational activity was to be a large, centrally-located lake, with developers hinting that amenities such as a marina, a zoo and botanical garden might be incorporated into the plan.5


It was assumed from the outset that the developers of New Century Town were interested in annexation to an adjacent community rather than building in unincorporated territory. Because the site was surrounded by the villages of Libertyville, Mundelein, and Vernon Hills, each of which would have its future growth blocked by the development, it was also assumed that there would be some degree of competition among the three communities for the project.

Although Vernon Hills officials expressed interest in annexing the site from the beginning, the consensus was that the village was too small to be seriously considered by the developers, and that the contest would inevitably be between Libertyville and Mundelein. To the surprise of area residents, however, Mundelein officials greeted the announcement of the development with overt hostility. New Century Town, Mundelein's chief planner said, constituted total rejection of the orderly growth of the Libertyville-Mundelein area.

This vitriolic reaction to the news was due in part to the fact that the Mundelein Plan Commission had recently completed a master plan for the village. Land on which New Century Town was to be built had been envisioned by Mundelein planners as a greenbelt of low-density uses such as forest preserve, golf courses and estates of one to five acres. This tract had also been designated a greenbelt in the 1969 interim land use plan designed by the Lake County Department of Planning, as the Mundelein planner pointed out. He warned that sewage disposal would be a major problem for

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the development, quoting the village’s master plan: "This greenbelt pattern is reinforced by the general unsuitability of the soils for urban development coupled with the comparative difficulty of providing public services, like sanitary sewers." 7

Sewers, in fact, were very much on the minds of Mundelein officials. Although voters had recently passed a referendum to provide $1.85 million dollars for improvement and expansion of the existing sewage treatment facility, until the work was completed the system could handle no additional growth. Before plans for New Century Town were announced, Mundelein had met with John Cuneo, owner of the estate on which the development was to be built. Cuneo, whose property was adjacent to Mundelein’s own sewage plant, had agreed to "friendly condemnation" proceedings with Mundelein that would allow the village to acquire the twenty acres required to expand their facility. When it became clear that Libertyville was interested in annexing the property, Mundelein filed a formal objection, arguing:

Part of the land in the proposed annexation was already annexed to Mundelein in July, 1967 . . . a 20.5 acre tract next to Mundelein’s sewage treatment plant is the subject of a condemnation suit . . . no mention of the suit is made in the proposed annexation . . . a substantial part of this property -- located next to the treatment plant and necessary for the public purpose of sewage treatment facilities -- is part of the proposed annexation . . . the existing sewer mains in this area are a part of Mundelein’s sanitary sewer system . . . Mundelein has never been contacted by Libertyville or the petitioners for any information which might affect this petition for annexation . . . reports for the land development have assumed Mundelein water system would supply water and fire protection for the territory without any discussion as to whether or not village residents would be willing to have their monies be subsidized . . . 8

7Jan Gehrig, "New city plans rejected," The Independent Register, 6 August 1970.

Mundelein’s mayor underscored his conviction that New Century Town would be a burden and that his village had no interest in annexation.⁹

Although Libertyville officials and residents initially were more amenable to the prospect of adding the new development than those in Mundelein, the implications of such a large number of new residents and businesses generated speculation about the consequences of such a drastic change in land use. The village administrator of Libertyville mused:

The impact this will have on Libertyville will be tremendous, either inside the corporate limits or outside. It would invite tremendous growth in this area. If they moved in quickly it would overwhelm us, if they tried to annex to the Village it would be beyond our ability to service it. The Village would be very much interested in investigating the project, but at the present time we would not be in the position to accept annexation.¹⁰

Some Libertyville residents were more enthusiastic about plans for New Century Town, saying that it would mean "more people, more planning for the young people and more prosperity" and "give the people a closer place to shop with bigger stores, and will bring more people to Libertyville to do other shopping." But others worried about its impact on sewers, schools and existing businesses. There was also concern about the loss of Libertyville’s small town ambiance.¹¹ One resident had only contempt for the project:

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¹⁰Ibid.

It looks to be the same insidious production. We give you that illustrious star, SUBURBAN DEVELOPMENT; co-starring Progress and the Money Men. A saga of the Creeping Megalopolis; man's dedicated ruination of our countryside; leaving in it's wake dying cities and progressively uglier "developments . . ." They have very wisely sought after property that is out of the jurisdiction of any town, but instead ruled over by that vague bureaucratic network, The County. It would take months for the townspeople to apply pressure on the County Board, and by that time it would be too late.\textsuperscript{12}

An editorial in the local newspaper argued that development was inevitable:

We all knew something big would come sooner or later, but no one expected anything this big or this soon. Libertyville-Mundelein is simply situated too close to metropolitan Chicago not to undergo radical growth . . . . We strongly hope the developers start a comprehensive program to inform area officials and residents of their plans from now through completion. Fear generally fills the vacuum in people's minds where insufficient knowledge exists . . . it's essential developers work closely with local public officials to iron out any potentially dangerous situations.

[New Century Town] means a great many things to a great many people here. To some, it's the final coffin nail in the 'old town' as they knew it. To others it's just what was needed to put our area on the map . . . [the] new city can be a threat or it can be a catalyst. It all depends on your attitude and what you intend to do about it. If you want to live in an old fashioned small town, perhaps you should look for an area far-removed from any metropolitan area.\textsuperscript{13}

Over the next few months, as village officials weighed the potential benefits and costs of the development, public opinion began to polarize on the question of annexation of NCT to Libertyville. Discussions focused on the issues of property and sales taxes, the need for water, sanitary and storm sewers, traffic patterns and the

\textsuperscript{12}Susan Dollenmaier, letter to the editor, The Independent Register, 6 August 1970.

\textsuperscript{13}"New city challenges the status quo here," The Independent Register, 6 August 1970.
large numbers of children who would inundate local schools. As the debate among residents grew more heated, a petition calling for a referendum on the issue was circulated. One resident who signed the petition explained his reasons:

I think the people of Libertyville should have something to say about the future growth of this area. The guy who moved here from Chicago is paying a big price for keeping his family in a low density area (three hours a day to commute to Chicago). I am against NCT because it will pollute us, overcrowd us, endanger our water supply, affect our sewer system and destroy a set life style. NCT will create a climate for apartment buildings, town houses and high density living indigenous to nowhere in Lake County at this time. 14

When the petition with 2,000 signatures was presented to the Libertyville Village Board, the attorney for the landowner reminded village trustees that a referendum would have no effect on the construction of the community, since the site was in unincorporated territory beyond Libertyville’s jurisdiction. He cautioned, however, that "the very fact of holding of a referendum could drive the annexation elsewhere." 15

This proved to be no idle threat. Talks between NCT representatives and Libertyville officials were abruptly discontinued by the developers the day following the filing of the petition. This move fueled a good deal of additional public commentary from people on both sides of the issue. The mayor announced that "some satisfactory showing of strong public support for NCT" was necessary for

14 "Petitioners seek vote on New Century Town," The Independent Register, 10 December 1970.

15 Rick Lewis, "Vote wouldn’t stop NCT plan: Cuneo," The Independent Register, 10 December 1970.
NCT to give any further consideration to annexation to the village. The village board issued a statement of support for annexation of the proposed development. "We firmly believe," it read, "that NCT is going to be built on the proposed site whether annexed to Libertyville or not. Annexation of NCT provides your village government with control of every aspect of NCT as it develops."16

Strong support for annexation was marshalled in a letter to village officials from the president of a local bank, who challenged the legality of the petition for a referendum on the grounds that it failed to contain twenty-five percent of registered voters in the town (the number required for a referendum). The bank president also argued that a referendum would not be in the best interests of the village:

There are two major reasons why a referendum would seriously jeopardize our chance to annex New Century Town to Libertyville. First is that the time delay would be decidedly detrimental, economically and otherwise, to the developers of NCT. Second, the partners in NCT -- Marshall Field, Sears and Urban Investment and Development Company -- would properly be skeptical of being able to deal confidently with a Village government that was not willing to provide the vigorous leadership necessary to resolve, quickly and positively, the many problems that will occur in the development of New Century Town.

There is strong support in Libertyville for annexation of New Century Town. It is important for both the developers and the Board to properly assess that support.

The letter contained a list of prominent citizens who supported the annexation: the Chamber of Commerce, the Libertyville High School board, administration and faculty, the chief of police, the postmaster, presidents of local banks and savings and loan institutions, owners of local automobile dealerships and other businesses, the

manager of the village's largest manufacturing plant, physicians, clergy, real estate
agents and many residents. The letter concluded with an ominous warning:

New Century Town developers at this moment are seriously considering
withdrawing their petition to annex to Libertyville. If we let this happen,
Libertyville will suffer a loss of income, prestige, and opportunity for growth
which present and future generations will surely, and properly, blame on our
village leaders.¹⁷

Evidently reassured by this display of support, the developer resumed talks with
village officials and a new pre-annexation agreement was proposed in which the
developer agreed to additional requirements by the village concerning public
improvements such as water, sewers, arterial streets, donation of open space and
other amenities.

Even as talks continued, however, public support for a referendum on the issue
continued to grow. Residents worried that village trustees were allowing themselves
to be pressured by developers to approve the annexation without fully considering the
views of Libertyville citizens. "NCT needs Libertyville more than Libertyville needs
NCT," said one resident. "Thus the Village Board should take their time and make
rational decisions regarding the situation." Another agreed, saying that "We all know
NCT won't go anywhere else ...."¹⁸ A poll of those who signed the petition
calling for a referendum found that many signers actually favored the annexation, but

¹⁷"Banker challenges referendum: Petitioners endorse New Century Town
annexation," The Independent Register, 17 December 1970.

¹⁸"Village should control NCT -- trustees," The Independent Register, 17
December 1970.
believed that citizens had a right to vote on the issue.

A crowd of sixty people eager to voice their opinions on the annexation of New Century Town filled the Libertyville village hall for the regular board meeting on January 14, 1971. According to one report, the audience represented "... a cross-section of Libertyville's various social strata. Residents in beards and granny glasses stood shoulder to shoulder with the crew cut organization men." Hopes for an open forum on the development, however, were short-lived. The mayor called the meeting to order and announced that the board was willing to hear questions from visitors on any subject except New Century Town. "We've had public hearings about NCT; we've been lenient in allowing an hour and a half discussion on the matter week after week," the mayor said. "We have to get on to other village business which has been neglected because of all the time taken up in discussing NCT."19

This action provoked a swift reaction from residents, even those who seem to have been uninterested in the controversy up to this point. An ad hoc group calling itself the "Citizens Right to Vote Committee" drew 450 people to a hastily-scheduled meeting to discuss what was perceived as the trustees' flagrant disregard for the wishes of their constituents. The mayor's refusal to permit public comment on the development at the village board meeting changed the direction of public debate from specific issues to a general discussion of the rights of American citizens. Leaders of the Citizens Right to Vote Committee complained:

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One disappointment has been the attitude of some members of the board, "This is too complex a situation for the people to understand" or that "There’s too much emotionalism involved by the residents and they are not qualified to decide." . . . too many fine Americans have given too much to this country and its constitution since 1776 to have six men who were elected by the provisions of this constitution refuse to allow free speech at a public board meeting.

First our right to vote has been removed, then our right to free speech? Never, sirs!

I would like to make a concrete suggestion to the village board. Have a public meeting in a democratic fashion on NCT after you are content with the pre-annexation agreement. Allow the facts, Pro and Con, to be presented to the people. . . . have a referendum for the people of this community and be guided by it in your vote.

If you are sincerely convinced that this agreement is good for Libertyville, then share this with the people, whom I have more faith in than you appear to have, and let them agree with or deny your position.

That, Gentlemen is Democracy!20

It was necessary to move the next meeting of the village board to the gymnasium of a nearby school in order to accommodate the overflow crowd of nearly 500. There was a protracted discussion of the impact of New Century Town on Libertyville, frequently interrupted by bursts of applause or loud expressions of disagreement from the audience. Village board members continued to resist appeals for a referendum, however, arguing that developers would withdraw the request for annexation if the issue were put to a vote.

The Citizens’ Right to Vote Committee placed an advertisement in the next edition of the local newspaper urging residents to become involved in the crusade for a referendum, and warning that NCT was a threat to more than just the identity and character of Libertyville:

20Mr. and Mrs. George Stone, Communications Co-chairmen, Libertyville Citizens Right To Vote Committee, *The Independent Register*, 21 January 1971.
By attending recent village board meetings, a rapidly-growing number of concerned Libertyville residents has observed first hand the gross miscarriage of our political process that is occurring right here in our village. Under threats of reprisal from the powerful vested business interests that stand to profit from NCT, the residents of Libertyville are being denied two of the most precious rights of our political heritage - namely the right of petition, and the reasonable right of self-determination.

Why is the village board seeking every possible means to avoid giving Libertyville residents the referendum they want? The feeble answer put forth is that if we are given the right to vote, NCT will withdraw its plan!

Is it not strange that the same men who tell us we must annex NCT to "gain control of it" also tell us that we cannot vote on the question because the vested business interests behind NCT do not want us to vote?

CLEARLY, NCT INTERESTS ALREADY ARE DICTATING TO US, AND THEY HAVE NOT EVEN EXERCISED THEIR OPTION TO BUY THE LAND PROPOSED FOR THEIR PROJECT.

Right now, attention of national scope is being focused on Libertyville. Not only are we about to set a crucially important precedent with regard to extremely high population densities and 20-story highrise development for our Village and all of Lake County, but also our actions here have great implications for similar communities all across the United States.

The question is: Can democracy really work, or can powerful outside interests move into a community and through sheer financial and professionally-organized force take over that community for their own advantage? The answer to that question becomes increasingly important nationwide as extremely large and powerful developers proliferate, and as the size of NCT-type projects gets larger and larger.

Every Libertyville citizen owes it to himself, to his family, his Village, and all the other Libertyvilles in the United States to get involved. Attend the Tuesday night village board meetings and see for yourself what is happening. Then resolve to do your part to strive to preserve the things that you value. If we are not all willing to make an effort to preserve the things that we value, then we will lose them.²¹

Members of the Right to Vote Committee promised to deliver a new referendum petition to the village board. "If we present a proper petition with twenty-five percent of the registered Libertyville voters’ signatures then there’s no question as to whether...

²¹Advertisement paid for by the Citizens Right to Vote Committee, The Independent Register, 14 January 1971.
or not we can have a referendum. If not we will be in court within a week." At its next meeting, overwhelmed by the groundswell of support for a referendum, the Libertyville village board agreed to an advisory referendum on the annexation of New Century Town. True to their word, developers immediately cancelled further discussion of annexation to Libertyville.

The meeting of the village board following the withdrawal of the developers was a somber affair. Trustees who had supported the annexation criticized the actions of the Right to Vote Committee, saying that "it is shameful that you have chosen to resort to half truths and emotionalism." The village attorney predicted that "This will be the worst disaster that ever happened to Libertyville." The chairman of the board of Urban Investment and Development issued a statement of his own:

... We did not thrust ourselves upon the good people of Libertyville ... We certainly have no objections to referendums. But the time required in resolving a complex issue and increase in costs would make such delay prohibitive. Therefore we have chosen to withdraw our petition to annex to Libertyville. Other plans are proceeding.

Meanwhile, officials in Vernon Hills were pondering the implications of this new turn of events. "We haven't been officially approached by the developer," the mayor

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said, "but we would be interested in talking to them."25 Within two weeks, the developers submitted a proposed annexation agreement to the village of Vernon Hills. Village residents were notified by mail of hearings on the annexation. Although a number of persons attended the meetings, there was virtually no opposition to the annexation26 and less than three months after negotiation between the developers of New Century Town and Libertyville ended, the Vernon Hills village board annexed the development. Despite this turn of events, the Right to Vote Committee persisted in its efforts to insure citizen involvement in such decisions, and was successful in persuading the village board to enact an ordinance requiring a referendum before the annexation of any large projects to Libertyville in the future.

Over the next decade, however, Libertyville residents watched with dismay as the population of Vernon Hills increased tenfold. They saw Hawthorn Center, New Century Town's shopping center, became the center of retail activity in the area while their own downtown business district lost one business after another. They watched their property taxes rise as Vernon Hills officials boasted that their substantial retail and commercial base made residential property taxes unnecessary. And they complained about the endless procession of cars that clogged Libertyville roads on their way to Vernon Hills.


26Approximately forty persons attended a meeting in which the Vernon Hills Village Board voted unanimously to annex New Century Town, to approve the pre-annexation agreement as well as changes in portions of existing zoning ordinances (Jan Gehrig, "Vernon Hills annexes NCT," *The Independent Register*, 8 April 1971).
The loss of New Century Town to Vernon Hills had a profound effect on future political campaigns in Libertyville. Even many who had opposed the annexation began to argue that it might have been better, after all, to incorporate the project into the village in order to maintain some control over its development and reap sales taxes from the shopping mall. Where one stood on the question of Libertyville’s loss of New Century Town became a litmus test to be applied to candidates in future elections in Libertyville as polemics over growth began to dominate political debates.

Heartland

Reverberations from the creation of New Century Town were felt in villages throughout the county as community leaders and residents contemplated the extraordinary growth of Vernon Hills. In the mid-1970s, when a developer approached the village of Grayslake with a proposal to build an even larger residential, commercial and industrial planned community, all eyes turned toward Vernon Hills as residents and local leaders in Grayslake weighed the pros and cons of such a development.

The Heartland project was designed to cover more than 2,300 acres of land and to add at least 28,000 new residents, as well as substantial commercial and industrial growth, to the village. Although the rate of population growth in Grayslake was only 7 percent during the 1970s, the prospect of such a massive project propelled the issue of growth to the top of the political agenda. An editorial in the local newspaper noted that the 1975 election in Grayslake was unusual in that the campaign turned out to be issue-oriented rather than the usual popularity contest:
The Grayslake municipal election could well turn into a referendum on the Heartland project, the proposed more than 2,000 acre total living development that has just been presented to the planning and zoning commission and is coming up for a preannexation agreement. At least two candidates in the race so far have raised enough questions about the project to be considered anti-development by progressive segments in the community. All candidates undoubtedly will have to take a position on Heartland.27

Speaking before the Grayslake Development Corporation (a group of local businessmen), one candidate for the village board expressed reservations about the potential impact of such a large number of new residents on the community. "It was like being Daniel in the lion's den," she said later of the hostile reception she received from those at the meeting. Defending her right to challenge the proposal, she maintained that:

... nothing is wrong with questioning Heartland. It is not that sacrosanct that it can't be questioned. Do you want to live in a community of 30,000 people? It is not for fifteen or twenty people to say yes or no or maybe. The citizens have the right to say what our destiny would be.28

When this candidate and another critic of Heartland won the election, the results were interpreted as a victory for anti-Heartland forces.29 The apparent lack of public support for approval of the Heartland development brought a reaction from developers reminiscent of that in Libertyville when New Century Town developers had warned village leaders that they were having qualms about annexing to the village. Heartland developers presented a letter to the Grayslake village board


informing them that because the development had become a campaign issue, "Heartland . . . must reassess its position with regard to annexation of its property to the Village of Grayslake," requesting the return of $20,000 advanced to the village to offset fees and other expenses generated by the annexation petition.  

In response, the Grayslake Development Corporation placed an advertisement in the local newspaper and distributed the same messages door-to-door in the village.

The letter urged residents to consider the benefits of the development to the village:

HEARTLAND IS HERE! It's Time For Plain Talk About Our Community! Now that the recent campaign is over and the vigorous politicking is behind us, the Grayslake Development Corporation believes that it is imperative that we come to grips with the question of annexing the Heartland project. Where do we go from here?

Assuming that [the realty company] will proceed with development of property owned in the Grayslake area, Grayslake citizens have to accept the cold hard fact of reality that Heartland will be built. The fact that new faces were elected to the Grayslake village board will not chase Heartland away. That is a fact! So then the question becomes -- which unit of government will control Heartland's development? Should Grayslake bury its head in the sand and let some other village take over the responsibility of controlling Heartland? Keep in mind that the developers have several options.

Directors of Grayslake Development Corporation believe it is vital to the SURVIVAL of our village that Heartland's development be controlled by officials elected by the people of Grayslake. If another village annexes Heartland, its public officials will look after their interests and not ours . . . Here are the basic Heartland facts as we see them:

1. Grayslake sales tax revenue will be increased, reversing a current downward trend, producing monies needed for vital services
2. Lower municipal taxes
3. Annexation will give Grayslake complete planning and control of perimeter growth
4. High quality development by a professional builder with a known record
5. Increase the Grayslake tax base to bring about lower rates for operating schools and providing municipal services like overhauling and upgrading sewers and streets in old parts of town.

30*Heartland: "We want you to want us," Grayslake Times, 24 April 1975.
Yes, Heartland will have an impact on Grayslake. But the impact will be felt whether the development is part of Grayslake or a neighboring town. Unfortunate as it may be, Grayslake cannot "stay the way it is," as was expressed so often during the recent campaign. It is a fact of life that villages, like human beings, which do not expand their horizons and meet the challenges of today and tomorrow will shrivel and recede. It is our best judgment that Grayslake's community life will be adversely affected if we do not annex Heartland and reject the opportunity to control its development. If you agree with us, please write or call your village officials and let your feelings be known . . . .

The editor of the local newspaper echoed these sentiments, asserting that "Living in the vast megalopolis transforming the Chicago-Milwaukee area, it is apparent that the days of isolated rural living and the idyllic small town environment are gone or fading fast," and reminding readers that "several years ago, Libertyville residents battled bitterly on the question of 'in or out' over annexation of a regional shopping center. 'Out' won out, but the center didn't go away."

Growth as a Divisive Political Issue

Watching the turmoil in Libertyville and Grayslake over the prospect of very large numbers of new residents, the Wauconda village board reflected on their own location further out along the path of suburban sprawl. Although growth did not become a salient issue in political campaigns in Wauconda during the early 1970s, trustees were growing wary of any zoning changes that might lead to higher density development. After voting against one proposed zoning change, the mayor explained

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32 "'Open Door' Best Policy," editorial in the *Grayslake Times*, 1 May 1975.
that "Maybe we are infringing a little on people’s rights but most people moved here
for the open spaces. We don’t want to become like Palatine or Arlington Heights.
We don’t want cracker box houses on small lots and we don’t want blind trusts
coming in."

An editorial in the Wauconda newspaper underscores the growing importance of
growth related issues to county politics:

More than a few persons are concerned that pressures for growth and
development are creating undesirable population densities in Lake County. A
decade or more ago, political observers divided members of the Lake County
Board into the 'spending' bloc and the 'economy' bloc. This identification long
since has proved to be a misnomer. Now more apt labels in county government
might be the growth bloc vs. the anti-growth bloc. The issue at stake is
population density. How many people per square mile is desirable? The answer
isn’t easy. Differences over density are providing the politics of today.

Organized support for pro-growth candidates increased during the 1970s in
response to the growing antipathy to development. An effort to identify and support
pro-growth political candidates was launched in the form of the Lake County Political
Action Committee, (LAKPAC), a coalition of the Lake County Homebuilders’s
association, the Lake County Contractor’s Association and the Lake County Realtors.
LAKPAC sent questionnaires to candidates asking their views on controlled growth,
their attitude toward the forest preserve district, comprehensive planning and zoning
ordinances aimed at controlling subdivisions, attitudes toward the efforts of private

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33Roger Ruthhart, "Board split sends laws to committee," Wauconda Leader, 10
July 1975.

34Editorial in Wauconda Leader, 6 June 1974.
organizations such as chambers of commerce, to recruit industry, attitudes about real estate assessment reform, and a number of other issues related to development.

Representing 1,200 members, LAKPAC gained a reputation as a force to be reckoned with, although the head of the group insisted that "These are not inquisitions . . . We're just trying to find out what's on the candidates' minds . . . . The public is so down on government in general that I really don't know whether anybody gives a damn." 35

The growing cynicism of Americans toward government in the 1970s is sometimes viewed as a response to the revelations of the Watergate investigation. But even before Watergate, there were signs that people in small towns were not particularly pleased with the state of local affairs. In 1969 the Libertyville Jaycees polled 3,000 village residents and interviewed political and business leaders in order to assess what they perceived as growing dissatisfaction among residents. When asked whether local government was responsive to their needs, 45 percent of residents said that it was not. Sixty-five percent said that they did not feel well-informed about the power, responsibilities and limitations of local government. The report concluded that "The main improvement need pointed out is an overall change in attitudes, on the part of businessmen, government officials and the public. Businessmen must become more consumer oriented; officials must become more responsive to their

35Ron Seely, "The issue behind others in Lake County elections: growth," The Independent Register, 30 September 1976.
constituents; and the public must overcome its lethargic inferiority complex.”

The group also recommended:

With land at a premium in Libertyville, consistent long-range planning should be maintained to assure controlled development. The expedient short-range solution should not override long-range planning, nor the will of the people that make up the community. Accommodation or promotion of new development should not be at the expense or exploitation of existing residents.

This report, written months before plans to build New Century Town were announced, suggests that many Libertyville residents believed that their interests were not being represented by local political leaders, particularly when weighed against those of developers. Libertyville had experienced a 37 percent increase in population during the 1960s, and it is possible that the survey findings reflect concern about the problems associated with rapid growth. Although oldtimers report that it is difficult today to find anyone who will admit to signing the petition for a referendum on New Century Town, it is generally agreed that those who favored such a measure were longtime Libertyville residents concerned about the loss of the community’s small town status.

Events during the 1980s brought growing problems related to the provision of infrastructure to meet the demands of new development, and altering the way that small town leaders viewed the relative costs and benefits of growth. Reductions in

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federal aid to local governments during the 1980s had a significant impact on the ability of municipalities to keep up with the demands of additional population, and the prompting political officials to explore new ways of financing growth. Fast-growing communities discovered that even with the tax revenues generated by new construction, the lag between the arrival of newcomers and the receipt of property taxes by the various taxing districts made it difficult to keep up with demand. There also was growing concern that property taxes were not generating sufficient revenues to meet the costs associated with development. As the debate about the real costs of growth (particularly residential development) gathered steam, local governments watched and learned from the experiences of those in other places.

By the early 1980s, the clustering of commercial centers at major intersections on the outskirts of villages was having a significant impact on the vitality of downtown business districts. Concern about the decline of Main Street and the need to attract commercial and industrial development became a significant issue in local political campaigns. In 1984 the village of Grayslake hired a full-time director of economic development to coordinate the effort to attract new industrial and commercial growth. Despite his attempts to foster cooperation among business and civic groups, the adversarial nature of relations in the village did not change. The mayor was repeatedly characterized as "anti-business" by the president of the Chamber of Commerce, who complained:

Under his "leadership," the Village of Grayslake struggles under the burden of the third highest tax levy in the county. The sales tax generated within the village has remained the same for five years while surrounding communities have experienced sales tax growth of as much as 150 percent. Property taxes are up.
The schools are floundering. Why? Because of our mayor's no-growth stance. [The mayor] says population forecasts predict the Grayslake area will have 15,000 more residents by the year 2000. Where will they live? Where will they work? Not in the ghost town Grayslake will surely become without new residential, commercial and industrial growth, which will still be sought by enlightened Grayslake residents who are willing to endure the frustration of fighting an ignorant administration.38

By the mid-1980s, growth-related issues had become increasingly central to politics in Grayslake, and candidates for virtually every office were expected to explain their positions on questions related to development. Those who recommended larger donations from developers were labeled "anti-development," while candidates who did not were chastised by opponents for showing more concern for developers than for citizens of the village.39 The level of resident involvement in growth politics increased in the late 1980s as the number of new subdivisions grew. For example, in 1988 an advertisement appeared in the Grayslake Times: "Wanted: candidate to run for mayor of Grayslake. Must be an advocate of open space and sensitive to environmental issues." The ad had been placed by an organization called Grayslake Residents Association to Save Open Space (GRASS). The organization, formed for the purpose of preserving open space around the village, had four candidates lined up to run for village trustee and was seeking a candidate for mayor.40


Growing Demands for the Preservation of Open Space

The 1980s were a period in which the message of environmentalism became increasingly intertwined with local politics in central Lake County. Certainly, this reflected a shift in the larger society toward acceptance of the values and goals of the environmental movement, but was also due to the resonance of the message of environmentalism in an area where there was growing anxiety about the loss of the rural landscape to development.

Over the past twenty-five years, this increasing acceptance of environmentalism has dramatically changed the expectations of residents and political leaders about new development. Today, virtually every public hearing on proposed development in central Lake County includes testimony from residents who base their opposition to projects on the negative impact of development on environmental quality. This is a dramatic change from the early 1970s, when the motives of those who argued against development on the basis of its harmful impact on the environment were suspect. During the 1980s, a number of political battles converged on the issue of whether or not it was desirable to preserve land as permanent open space, and by the 1990s, the issue was no longer whether significant amounts of open space should be preserved, but how this should be accomplished.

There is no consensus on the reasons for this transformation of attitudes and practices in Lake County. Some observers see the trend toward the preservation of open space as a strategy used by suburbs to protect themselves from people and land uses they find undesirable. The use of "greenbelts" as buffers around communities
and insistence on lot sizes of one or more acres is viewed as evidence that municipalities are determined to restrict newcomers to those of equal or higher socioeconomic status than current residents. Others argue that support for the preservation of open space is rooted in awareness of the problems associated with suburban sprawl and concern about the destruction of native species and the natural landscape. This study makes no attempt to discover the motivation underlying support for the preservation of open space in the communities considered here. My assumption is that both arguments contribute to growing support for land conservation in the rural-urban fringe.

For centuries, the notion that human beings benefit from contact with nature has influenced thinking about the ideal community. The gardens were the focal point of More’s *Utopia*, and Ebenezer Howard’s *Garden Cities of Tomorrow* and Frederick Law Olmsted’s nineteenth century plans reflect a belief in the importance of incorporating natural settings into urban design. According to Olmsted, "the beauty of the park should be . . . the beauty of the fields, the meadow, the prairie, of the green pastures, and the still waters. What we want to gain is tranquillity and rest to the mind."41

The historical roots of the idea of nature as an antidote for the strain of urban life are so deep that the notion has an intuitive appeal. Cronon has observed that

The pastoral retreat in its mythic form is a story in which someone becomes

oppressed by the dehumanized ugliness of urban life and so seeks escape in a middle landscape that is halfway between the wild and the urban. Contemplating the beauty of that place, relaxing in its nurturing comfort, one experiences a simpler life closer to nature, recovering one's natural bearings and sense of self. Restored in this way, one can finally return to the urban world which, for all of its problems, is still one's home (Cronon 1991, 380).

Since the nineteenth century, suburbs have been portrayed as havens for migrants from the densely-populated city. In the 1940s, for instance, Libertyville boosters used an imaginary commuter to convince potential homebuyers to move to the country:

You've no idea how relaxing it is at the end of a busy day in Chicago to come to my home in Libertyville. The noise and bustle that surrounds me as I board the train in a crowded loop station gradually subsides as we pass through the north shore towns, and as we turn west through the broad farmland, so calm and peaceful, the tightened muscles relax, and the brain slows to an easier pace.42

Due to the seemingly inexhaustible supply of land in the United States in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, there was little interest in the regulation of open space in urban areas. Only in the 1870s, as the move to set aside land for urban parks gained momentum, did local governments' power to condemn and purchase private land for the public good become a matter of concern. The urban park crusade in large cities began in 1858 with the purchase of 840 acres for Manhattan's Central Park. After a spate of legal challenges during the 1870s, in which the use of eminent domain for the provision of open space was upheld, the right of local governments to

set aside land for public use was widely recognized. This power was expanded to encompass a broad range of public recreational land uses. One planner remarked in 1960:

The public purpose of adequate parks and recreation facilities is now so clear that, understandably, there is no issue as to the fundamental legal power to spend money for land acquisition, or to condemn land, for such programs. Public parks and playgrounds, beaches, swimming pools, zoos, golf courses -- none presents a constitutional problem.\(^43\)

Restrictions on land use that followed the zoning revolution of the 1920s established legal precedents for the use of municipal police power to set aside portions of a community for open space. The authority of suburban governments to zone land has encouraged the preservation of open space in a number of ways. Minimum-lot zoning that specifies very low density development on lots of one acre or more is often defended as a means of preserving the rural character of an area. Floodplain zoning, which precludes construction on low-lying land subject to flooding, is accepted as protection for unwary home buyers that supersedes the right of landowners to develop the land. Perhaps the greatest increase in the use of police power by municipal governments has come in the form of demands on subdivision developers to provide open space for public parks, schools, walking and biking trails and other recreational uses. Although such exactions have been resisted by developers, they have generally been upheld in the courts, as long as the size of the

Changing Attitudes Toward Environmentalism

Kirkpatrick Sale suggests that the growth of the environmental movement during the 1970s and the widespread support it sustained were virtually unprecedented. The sheer number of groups and their non-partisan nature was well beyond anything that had happened in other social movements (Sale 1993, 32). Dubbed the "doomsday decade" by Sale, the 1970s brought a deluge of books, films and articles in the popular press that shared the theme of environmental crisis. Although many accounts and predictions of environmental catastrophes were exaggerated, a series of very real events kept environmental issues in the headlines: the OPEC oil embargo in 1973 (and the realization that resources were not infinitely renewable), the release of radiation by a nuclear power station at Three Mile Island, and the contamination of homes in Love Canal, New York, with chemicals from a nearby plant were among the incidents that fed the public perception that environmental quality was being degraded to a dangerous degree. These incidents, as well as national events such as the commemoration of Earth Day in 1970, provide a backdrop for understanding changing attitudes toward the environmental consequences of development at the local level.

Stisser (1994) suggests that patterns of social change involve an early

"identification" stage, when people become anxious about an issue but do little about it. Once they learn what can be done and begin to change their behavior, he says, the concern declines. Eventually, people internalize the problem to such an extent that the behavior becomes routine. According to Stisser, public concern about the environment peaked in 1991 and has stabilized at a plateau higher than in any previous decade. Although acute concern has declined, behavior such as recycling and environmental activism at the local level continues to grow (Stisser 1994, 25-26). Although it is difficult to ascertain the extent and depth of commitment to environmentalism, the Roper organization reports that 78 percent of adults in the United States believe that the nation must make a major effort to improve the quality of our environment.45 A number of organizations have been formed in Lake County to promote environmental awareness and curb what they argue are the deleterious consequences of development on the environment.46

In 1970, however, support for environmental activism was not generally accepted by the residents of small towns. When Grayslake High School students joined a demonstration against the construction of housing on marshland in the area, for example, they were censured by the editor of the local newspaper:

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46 The Lake County Conservation Alliance, for example, is made up of twenty-one environmental groups and hundreds of individual members. In 1994, the first year of its existence, the Alliance mailed action alerts about the extension of a major road through wetlands owned by the county, the planned expansion of a landfill, organized a petition drive to oppose plans for a large golf course in a forest preserve and actively worked for political candidates sympathetic to its cause.
The hue and cry is over the suddenly well known but long unheard-of Volo Bog. The growing interest in ecology and conservation is a handy -- and potent -- device to subvert and inhibit the plans of a man to use his own property . . . . The talk is about open space, pollution and danger to natural resources, but that's a screen. When you fan away the smoke you get down to an essential fact, the opposition to the type of growth and development that threatens to make northwest Lake County an equal of the rest of the county.47

At least some of the concern about the demonstration may have been simply a reaction to the spectacle of students participating in protest activities. A few weeks after this demonstration students at the school celebrated the first observation of Earth Day by wearing surgical masks to call attention to air pollution. This concerned adults in the community, who feared that some of the social and political unrest they knew existed on university campuses and in large cities was threatening their villages. The same issue of the Grayslake newspaper in which the account of the Earth Day protest appeared, for example, carried the somber reassurance of the Chief of Police that he was fully prepared to deal with riots in the community:

[The police chief] declined to list the equipment his department keeps at the ready. "In any crowd disturbance the element of surprise is very important. If we told what they've got to come up against, they would know how to prepare for it. We have everything we need for crowd disturbances." 48

Students were meeting similar resistance to their plans for Earth Day in Libertyville, where adults stood ready to intervene to insure that radical ideas and


behavior would not infiltrate the community. The organization of an environmental teach-in planned by students at Libertyville High School, for example, which was to feature a "pollution rally, with students leading cheers for fighting pollution, skits, student panel discussions and possibly a folk-singing group," caused one school board member to worry that students might "get worked up during the teach-in and stage a placard-carrying demonstration." If students persisted in their plans for a teach-in, the board suggested that "it should be approached from a positive point of view. Rather than working over only what is wrong, and laying blame on society and industry in general, gains made by this country, both in economic progress and as a society should be stressed." In accordance with this objective, the Commonwealth Edison company provided a speaker to extol the benefits of nuclear power.

Further evidence of the gap between adults and teenagers on environmental issues may be found in the results of a poll conducted at the Lake County Fair in 1970. When asked to identify the most important issue facing the United States, 45 percent of teenage respondents named pollution (compared to only 26 percent of adults). On all other possible answers (drugs, the Vietnam War, or the Middle East crisis), adults and teenagers tended to concur, with differences of only two or three percentage points. This suggests that much of the increase in environmental concerns as a political issue over the next twenty-five years may be associated with the aging of this younger group, who would form a substantial block of voters in the next two

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49The Independent Register 26 March 1970.
decades.\textsuperscript{50}

**Approaches to the Preservation of Open Space**

The most significant factor in changing attitudes toward the public preservation of land in central Lake County was a unique program in Libertyville Township, where voters in 1985 approved a referendum for creation of the Libertyville Township Open Space District. This act granted funding and the power of eminent domain to the township for the purpose of acquiring and preserving land as permanent open space.

This concept was an innovative attempt on the part of the township supervisor, a passionate and outspoken critic of those who would change land use from agriculture to development. In the months before the referendum on open space, the township supervisor used public forums to tie the local issue of land preservation to national problems of soil erosion and farmland conversion. This message resonated with many township residents, tapping into growing anxiety about the deleterious effects of rapid growth. One woman echoed the sentiments of many others when she said:

> I have lived here my full 31 years. I can remember when we were "the country . . ." I truly believe we must stop. Stop before every acre of open land is put under cement. Stop raping our land of its natural beauty . . . It is an issue of respecting nature. Of protecting the land. An issue of giving back to the earth, and saying that we don’t have to steamroll it under. It is keeping the land in trust for future generations, and all of God’s creatures . . . the survival of all of us depends on taking part in saving what was here before men, women,

Another agreed:

We want room to live . . . We all want to preserve our dwindling natural resources and maintain the rural town atmosphere that has been synonymous with Libertyville for over 100 years. We want air to breathe, trees to climb and grass to roll in; we want room for our children to spread their wings and grow. 52

Even a sixteen-year-old waxed poetic when urging his elders to vote for the referendum, recalling the days when

I could walk through trails and climb trees . . . . As the developers moved in all I saw was wood, brick, cement and more cement . . . If you can’t decide how to vote for open space, take a ride through Palatine, Arlington Heights and Schaumburg: then take a ride through a forest preserve, and think of the future generation. 53

When the election was held, voters approved the creation of a township open space district by a margin of 18 percent. Over the next few years, the supervisor kept the issue of open space in the news as he became an outspoken critic of virtually every new development. The solution to the problems of traffic congestion, school crowding and high taxes, the supervisor constantly reminded his constituents, was aggressive implementation of the Open Space program.

The specific means by which the goals of the program were to be achieved,


52Peter DePreter, "Kracower’s plan too big," The Independent Register, 17 October 1985.

however, contained the seeds for the township supervisor’s political demise. Invoking eminent domain and initiating the process of condemnation were methods abhorrent even to many of the supervisor’s supporters. In a conservative Republican county, such strategies were widely viewed as evidence of a flagrant disregard for property rights.

References to the Soviet Union frequently were used to denounce the methods used to acquire open space. Letters to the editor of the local newspaper referred to Libertyville as "Moscow on the Des Plaines" and to the efforts of "The Commissar" to seize the property of residents. The newspaper featured stories of residents who lived in fear of the township supervisor’s power to condemn their property:

"Bob" has lived in Libertyville most of his life. He raised his family here and worked nearly at an important, but not high-paying job. He’s been looking forward to retiring and recently did so. And now he says he is terrified.

"Bob" is one of the "little people" who has strong feelings on the open space issue. His name is being kept out of the story, because he fears he will have action taken against him should he be identified. Bob’s retirement savings plan is in his land. "We have invested our lives in this land. A lot of people don’t understand what this is all about. They don’t know what it feels like to be afraid every day that you are going to be the next one, that they are going to condemn your land. We have been through many sleepless nights."  

The filing of new condemnation suits against owners who turned down the Open Space District’s offers to purchase land brought litigation and more anecdotes from those who said they felt intimidated by the power of the township supervisor. The

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owner of one forty-acre parcel expressed his anger with what he called the "un-American tactics" used to take land away from owners, saying "I have always been proud to be an American. But this is not what our country is all about. Look under the definition of fascism and you will see that is what this is." 55

Another county resident, watching from Wauconda Township, made a similar charge:

Remember in the late 1920s and 30s when Adolph Hitler pulled all this cute stuff that [the supervisor] is now pulling? Don't you remember how Hitler grabbed everything he got his hands on "for the good of the German people and the Third Reich?" Do you remember how he took the small parcels of land and then kept right on going until he had most of Europe? 56

The controversy surrounding Libertyville's Open Space District, covered extensively in local and county newspapers during the 1980s, intensified the debate over the costs and benefits of residential and commercial development. There is a good deal of support among observers of land use patterns in Lake County for the argument that early efforts by the Open Space District supervisor actually spurred growth in places that would not otherwise have been developed. According to one county planner, much of the expansion of municipal boundaries in central Lake County in the late 1980s was the result of uneasiness about aggressive acquisition of land by the Open Space and Forest Preserve districts. Landowners of large parcels, who feared that they would have to settle for far less than the market value of their

55 Kris Antens, "Open space lawsuits now add up to nine," The Independent Register 7 August 1986.

56 Everett B. Smith, letter to the editor, Wauconda Leader, 17 June 1988.
property, requested annexation to adjacent villages as a defensive measure. By targeting privately-owned land for acquisition by the Open Space District, one long-term resident contends, "They slapped a land-use designation of Open Space acquisition over stuff and panicked people. They made low-ball offers of money to people who had no intention of selling. I know of at least five thousand acres that they forced into municipalities."

Despite growing displeasure with the tactics used to purchase land for the open space district, support for land preservation did not wane. By the late 1980s, residents cited environmental damage, flooding caused by overdevelopment, and concern about the quality of life in their communities as they urged political leaders to conserve additional land. "Everybody believes this area needs to be preserved," said one long-time resident. "Lake County has been derelict about preserving property. We should pursue it energetically. People came here for the greenery, not to have it slashed up by builders." Another warned that "We’re in the middle of an environmental crisis. Rapid development is turning an awful lot of land into a swimming pool. Use of land is being determined by a business ethic, not an environmental ethic."\(^{57}\)

Although the township supervisor responsible for the creation of the Libertyville Open Space District was defeated in the 1989 election by a candidate who promised to end the open space district’s threats of condemnation proceedings to acquire land, public support for the concept of land preservation has not diminished. The day

following his election, the new township supervisor held a press conference to reassure his constituents that the purchase of land by the district would continue. By 1995, 50 percent of the nearly 1,500 acres acquired by the district had been obtained under the new administration, albeit by less draconian methods.

The Lake County Forest Preserve District, as well, has significantly expanded its inventory of open space over the past twenty-five years. In 1970, the district owned 3,300 acres (8.6 acres per 1,000 residents). By 1995, the district’s inventory of land had grown to 20,220 acres (or approximately 38 acres per 1,000 county residents). Created in 1958, the Lake County Forest Preserve District is governed under Illinois law as a special purpose unit of government controlled by county board members. This has drawn the Forest Preserve District into the heated battles between "pro-growth" and "anti-growth" factions on the county board. But even those county board members who tend to support the interests of developers over environmentalists have had to concede that there is substantial public support for the preservation of open space.

One of the most significant factors contributing to the preservation of large tracts of land has been the growing interest in re-creating natural prairie conditions that existed in pre-settlement days in the county. With the exception of a very small

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59 This is based on an estimated total population of 530,000 in 1994 (Lake County Economic Development Commission).
number of serious conservationists, few Lake County residents showed much interest in this topic in 1970, when most anti-growth sentiment focused on the preservation of farmland. By the mid-1990s, ecological modeling, in which the symbiosis of plants and animals is used as a basis for reintroducing species in order to re-create pre-settlement conditions, was gaining popular support among a wide range of county residents. In a trend reminiscent of the suburban farming craze of the late nineteenth century, even families living on quarter-acre lots within municipal boundaries began to dig up their carefully-tended lawns to plant native grasses and shrubs, hoping to lure birds, butterflies and other wildlife into their yards. There is growing disdain for the European and Asian plant species that have become a standard fixture of suburban subdivision landscaping. Environmentalists are fond of pointing out that the concept of a lawn is not American at all, but a practice that began in Germany. Lawns, they contend, are wasteful contrivances that require infinitely more maintenance than plots of native species and offer little in the way of cover or food for wildlife. The notion of creating natural habitat seems to appeal to a growing number of suburbanites.

Even the ubiquitous drainage tile that enabled farmers to grow corn on Lake County's marshy land over the past century is being broken up by new owners who hope to reestablish wetlands to provide habitat for waterfowl and myriad other species. The popularity of prairie re-creation, although still limited to a small percentage of the total population, is growing fast. Local nurseries are scrambling to meet the rising demand for environmentally-correct plants that are locally propagated and native to the area. There is also a growing appreciation for the argument, often
made by conservationists, that true prairie re-creation must involve large, contiguous tracts of land that can sustain the variety of species critical to the establishment of successful prairie ecosystems. This has led to public and private land preservation efforts focused on the acquisition of the few large tracts of land still undeveloped in the county.

Those who espouse anti-growth sentiments are no longer viewed as iconoclasts who refuse to face the inevitable encroachment of traditional suburban development. Preservation of the natural environment -- not simply for the purpose of human recreation, but for its own sake -- is now widely accepted. In a survey conducted for the Forest Preserve District in 1988, Lake County residents were asked to indicate what they believed constituted justification for the purchase of land by government agencies. Eighty-five percent of respondents said that the preservation of wildlife habitats represented a good reason to purchase land. Nearly the same number (83 percent) answered that the undisturbed preservation of natural resource areas, such as forests, prairies and wetlands, was justified.  

A 1992 survey found that among residents in the fast-growing southern central portion of Lake County, the issues of property taxes and the need to preserve open space ranked first and second in a list of priorities for the county. Twenty-four percent of residents in this part of the county were described as "Environment First"

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60 Land Acquisition Plan: Public Attitudes Towards Environment and Natural Resource Protection. March, 1989. Prepared for the Lake County Forest Preserve District. Ames, Iowa: George Butler Associates. The survey was mailed to a random sample of Lake County residents, and had a response rate of 46 percent (N=903).
citizens who report that they are willing to support environmental issues even if they must pay higher property taxes to do so.\textsuperscript{61} Newcomers are especially likely to support anti-growth candidates, according to the director of the Land Conservancy of Lake County. "A lot of new people are moving here to get more open space and escape the conditions that they are in. But in time they find that they have the same things that they were trying to leave," he said, adding that these same newcomers have little party loyalty and appear more likely to vote against longtime incumbents if they believe that the quality of life they seek is being threatened.\textsuperscript{62}

Growing support for land conservation, as well as the election of several candidates who promised to slow the pace of development, has affected the balance of forces on the Lake County Board. Although board decisions still reflect what is perceived by many as bias in favor of development, there have been increasing concessions to those who demand that larger ratios of open space to developed land be part of the final agreement to approve a project. In 1994, for example, approval by the County Board for the rezoning of 525 acres of rural land for a corporate campus and residential subdivision came only after intense opposition and litigation by residents of the area and after the corporation agreed to donate half the land to the Lake County Forest Preserve District.


The infusion of growth issues into local politics raised the contributions of developers and other real estate interests to pro-growth candidates. In Lake County, home builders and real estate agents contributed more than $60,000 to pro-growth campaigns in the twelve-month period ending in June, 1990, while anti-growth contributions for the same period amounted to less than $9,000. Anti-growth groups began to monitor campaign contributions to elected officials and to point out what they argued was an obvious connection between candidates’ voting records and their acceptance of large donations from groups such as the Committee on Home Builder Issues and the Illinois Realtors Political Action Committee. Although politicians insist that these contributions have no effect on their voting records on development issues, their opponents often charge that County Board members and village officials who accept such donations cannot be impartial in deciding whether developments should be approved.

As growth-related issues became central to elections in the county, a wide range of organizations that had not been directly involved with election campaigns began to choose sides and work for candidates they believed represented the interests of their members. The Lake County Chapter of the Sierra Club, for example, took an active role in the 1994 County Board election, with members operating phone banks to encourage residents to vote for an anti-development candidate. On the other side, the Lake County Farm Bureau entered the political fray to back a slate of pro-growth

candidates. The move came as a reaction to what were perceived as abuses by the 1990 County Board that adversely affected farmers, particularly the condemnation of farmland for the preservation of open space and attempts to prevent farmers from selling land to developers. "The attack on property rights is the foremost issue of concern to the Farm Bureau throughout the United States," said the manager of the Bureau. "This country was based on people owning a house, a farm or a business. You can't come in and take that away." 64

The perception that zoning changes reflect the large contributions of developers to the campaigns of local politicians is one that is often expressed by residents unhappy with the outcome controversies over development. In 1994, for example, the Libertyville village board voted in favor of a zoning change that would permit the area's largest developer to build on one of the last vacant tracts on the periphery of the village despite the vocal opposition of a large number of residents at public meetings. Many opponents of the project interpreted the decision as repayment for large donations to individual board members' political campaigns. One resident explained:

It's all politically driven. The developer has a very long history with the village. I think he's padded a lot of pockets and supported a lot of the village trustees financially. That's the only way I can rationalize it. The [Libertyville] Planning and Zoning Commission voted against the development. The trustees overrode that recommendation and voted unanimously to approve it, which was really a shock, because the mayor had gone on record the day before the final vote and said that she did not believe there were enough votes to approve the project. In my mind, she went public and did that to discourage people from attending the

64 "Despite vanishing farms, county Farm Bureau grows," The News-Sun, 10 March 1992.
meeting. It’s true on the national level -- mistrust for who our elected officials are representing -- and in this situation it’s very clear that they did not represent the electorate. They represented the developer . . . .

It’s very perplexing. You tend to look for the darker side -- the back room politics -- wiring the thing well in advance so that it was a slam dunk for the developer. They were just going through the motions with the public hearings. The decision had been made long before.

As the political process becomes increasingly adversarial, rhetorical skill becomes more important, with those able to frame an argument in terms of issues that go beyond the costs and benefits of a particular development and appeal to deeply-held convictions and beliefs. Suttles has described public planning as "constrained collective behavior," contending that "once adversarial politics take hold, the decision-making process becomes more nearly one where luck and rhetorical advantage are decisive" (Suttles 1990, 272). The importance of rhetorical skill has grown with the demand for more open government over the past several decades. Although land-use decisions are still determined to some extent by behind-the-scenes dealing among parties, residents and community groups are much more vigilant than those in previous decades. For example, long-term county residents recall the process by which the Lake County land use plan of 1939 was revised. After a series of public hearings in 1966, last-minute zoning changes were made in the middle of the night by politicians who altered the map to reflect their own interests. In the 1990s, there is a good deal more public scrutiny of any changes in zoning. The county board still overrides the comprehensive plan drawn up by its own planning department in order to accommodate large-scale corporate development, but such decisions are now guaranteed to inspire impassioned public denunciation of politicians and -- just as
likely -- a lawsuit challenging the action.

Although support for the values of environmentalism has grown significantly over the past twenty-five years, political support for anti-growth candidates has waxed and waned. One Lake County realtor explained:

The desire to have Lake County develop in a way that preserves some rural character . . . balances against the development forces that pay the politicians. The swings are because we’ve never been able to achieve a middle ground for very long. The opposing forces go this way for a long time, and then they go too far and wake up the sleeping giants.

Growing awareness and sympathy with the values and goals of the environmental movement over the past twenty-five years contributes a great deal to an explanation of the increasing pressure on local political leaders to preserve open space. There is, however, another plausible explanation for the increasing push for the preservation of open space. Some observers see the pressure to find ways to prohibit development on large tracts of land as a means of isolating communities from neighboring places with low-income or minority populations. For example, when the Lake County Forest Preserve District released its easement rights to a small parcel of land to the Libertyville Township Open Space District in order to provide a vital link between two nature preserves, residents of the area objected vociferously. The "greenway gateway," they argued, was an opening by which the "urban blight of Waukegan" would creep into pastoral Libertyville Township. One resident warned committee members against ignoring the will of area residents, whom she said "strongly object
to having the city of Waukegan at their doorstep. "\(^{65}\)

Whether the preservation of large tracts of land as permanent open space is motivated by the desire to provide a barrier against low-income and minority populations or simply represents an interest in conservation, the consequences are the same. The considerable amount of land preserved as open space, along with rapidly rising prices for real estate near these protected areas, further reduces the likelihood that housing accessible to low-income families will be built. This has increased the economic and social separation between residents of older, industrial communities along the lakeshore and those in the affluent, rapidly growing suburbs in the county's center.

The settlement patterns of central Lake County reflect the strategies of local governments trying to capture the type of growth that will enhance their tax base and that is not likely to meet serious resistance from voters. Low-rise, office/research campuses and luxury single-family homes have become the development of choice for municipalities, with low-density or very low density development constituting 80 percent of all residential land use in the county. \(^{66}\) In revising the comprehensive land use plan, the Lake County Department of Planning, Zoning and Environmental Quality prepared a county map depicting the individual plans drawn up by

\(^{65}\)Craig Peterson, "Open Space District gains land key to 'greenway gateway,'" \textit{The News-Sun}, 4 May 1994.

\(^{66}\)Low density is defined as between one and four units per acre; very low density residential development generally consists of single-family homes on lots of one to five acres (Lake County Department of Planning, Zoning and Environmental Quality 1992), 3-3.
municipalities. This map, which represents the cumulative vision of future
development in the county, indicates that municipalities have dedicated most
residential development to the estate category, which contains fewer than one unit per acre. Assuming that these plans will be realized, the gap between the interests of residents of these affluent, low-density enclaves and the high density older cities in the county will widen. This will be reflected county politics related to growth, and can be expected to increase tensions among elected representatives with very different constituencies who must made decisions about the county’s future.

This chapter documents the increasing salience of growth as a political issue since 1970, describing the way that the controversies over New Century Town, the proposed Heartland development, and the creation of the Libertyville Township Open Space District made growth a central issue in local politics. Following these events sheds some light on the dynamics of policy-making in these places and enhances understanding of the effects of growth controls.

In part, our understanding of the degree to which political processes affect development is clouded by the emphasis on large, quantitative studies. Focusing on the debate over growth at the local level helps elucidate the ways that political processes affect the distribution of population growth. For example, the mobilization of Libertyville residents against the annexation of New Century Town led to the loss of the project to Vernon Hills. In terms of the location of development, there was no impact, since the project was constructed on the same site and simply incorporated within the official boundaries of one village rather than another. But the effect of the
controversy was to galvanize public opinion about large developments and influence the way that residents and public officials in surrounding villages made decisions about future growth. The creation of the Libertyville Township Open Space District in the mid-1980s, for example, was directly related to the ability of the township supervisor to convince residents of the need to protect land from projects like New Century Town.

The Libertyville Township Open Space District also illustrates the way that political processes affect the distribution of growth. Although the district acquired nearly 1,500 acres in the ten years after its creation, and thus prevented development on this land, the threat of condemnation proceedings prompted some land owners to turn defensively to municipalities for annexation, or to sell to private developers in order to insure that they would receive a higher price for their property. Therefore, the land of residents who had not intended to sell became available for development. This suggests that a more systematic study of the unintended consequences of growth controls might offer insight into the real effects (and unintended consequences) of such policies.

The delineation of growth politics in central Lake County over the past twenty-five years indicates that growth controls have had little impact on the overall rate of growth. But changing attitudes toward growth and the infusion of environmentalism into local politics have led to policies that do have a very real effect on how new development is distributed within a county, and should therefore be acknowledged as one of the factors shaping the settlement patterns of the rural-urban fringe.
CHAPTER 5
GROWTH AND THE PROBLEM OF COMMUNITY

This chapter addresses the way that rapid population growth affects the social relationships among people in villages on the rural-urban fringe, investigating tension between newcomers and oldtimers, concern about the infiltration of urban problems into the community, the increasing demand for services to meet the needs of additional population, and attempts to preserve community identity in the face of rapid growth.

Concern about the loss of community has been a recurring theme in the sociological literature on the shift from rural to urban life. Classical theorists focused on the origins, evolution and possible destruction of community in the context of the modernization and urbanization that threatened the cherished notion of community as a small, cohesive society of people with close ties to one another. Tönnies's concepts of Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft, Durkheim's mechanical and organic solidarity, Redfield's distinction between folk and urban cultures and the work of sociologists in the Chicago School are part of a tradition of concern about the effects of urban life on human relationships and behavior (Simmel 1950; Park 1925; Wirth 1938).1

1Dewey (1960) compiled a list of forty elements found in definitions of urbanism found in the sociological literature, with only "heterogeneity" listed by a majority of authors. Noting that forty criteria for a conceptual continuum seemed excessive,
Traditionally, the consequences of urbanization have been viewed in terms of a rural-urban continuum in which social change leads to the loss of community as intimate patterns of human interaction are replaced by the relationships of formal association. In the United States, ideas about community have always evoked visions of small-town life. The image of the colonial New England town still retains its power to define a community as a homogeneous population of citizens who meet to make decisions through discussion and consensus (Bender 1978, 67). Whether or not this perception is accurate, it represents the ideal in the minds of many Americans.

Concern about rapid growth has long been associated with more general anxiety about the social effects of urbanization. The relationship between population size and density and the loss of social solidarity, most cogently argued in Wirth’s classic essay, continues to influence the way people think about the effects of growth:

The distinctive features of the urban mode of life have often been described sociologically as consisting of the substitution of secondary for primary contacts, the weakening of bonds of kinship, the declining social significance of the family, the disappearance of the neighborhood, and the undermining of the traditional basis of social solidarity (Wirth 1938, 21).

Oldtimers and Newcomers

In many small towns, concern about rapid growth has been linked with apprehension that new migrants will be significantly different from longtime residents in terms of income, race or ethnicity, political opinions or views on social issues.

Dewey suggested that the lack of agreement on the meanings of "urban" and "rural" resulted from a failure to distinguish the influences of density and population size from the influence of culture (Dewey 1960, 60).
The relationship between newcomers and oldtimers was explored in the early literature on the rural-urban fringe, in the community studies of the population turnaround of the 1970s and in descriptions of the evolution of suburbia. Two models have emerged from these observations: in the rural model, newcomers are portrayed as outsiders who disrupt the equilibrium of formerly tranquil communities. In the suburban model, newcomers try to maintain as low a profile as possible in an attempt to gain acceptance by their neighbors.

Sokolow (1981) argues that while the oldtimer-newcomer categories are still useful in exploring how small communities respond to population increase, the population turnaround of the 1970s, in which population gains in nonmetropolitan counties exceeded those in metropolitan areas, challenged conventional assumptions about the behavior of new arrivals, many of whom settled into their new communities with a modicum of difficulty. The literature on turnaround migration illustrates the complexity of the patterns of conflict and cooperation associated with the dispersion of population into rural communities. For example, Ploch reports that in-migrants to rural Maine were viewed by some older farmers as sharing the agrarian values that the farmers feared were no longer important to their own children, who were more interested in adopting the values and norms of urban life. Many migrants to rural areas tended to oppose attempts to bring urban services to their new communities, which created an alliance between newcomers and oldtimers on tax and service issues (Ploch 1980, 306).

In other situations, however, there has been considerable discord between in-
migrants and long-term residents. A large influx of retired persons, for example, may drastically alter the age structure of a community. This change increases the need for services such as health care and public transportation and may also have an impact on the outcome of local elections (Daily and Campbell 1980, 255). There is some evidence that older residents are more likely than younger people to oppose school bond issues (Button 1992).

Differences between long-time residents and new migrants may cause friction among people with different levels of education and income, who have different values, ethnic backgrounds or who simply are at different stages in the life cycle (Stinner and Toney 1980, 328-29). While the decision to migrate to a more rural area may reflect a desire to escape the problems associated with urban life, the move usually does not mean that migrants aspire to a "back to nature" lifestyle. Newcomers often expect the same services they received in the communities from which they came, and their demands for the expansion of law enforcement, fire protection and waste disposal services may be opposed by oldtimers who argue that such amenities are unnecessary and expensive luxuries that will raise property taxes (Dailey and Campbell 1980, 250).

Warren (1978) has shown how the increase in vertical ties to larger, external organizations has changed the nature of community life. State and federal governments, for example, make decisions that dramatically affect the resources and policies of local governments and school systems. Ploch (1980), however, suggests that while these changes may have been resented by people in rural areas, there
traditionally was little they could do to resist them. When large numbers of migrants
began to appear in small communities in Maine in the late 1960s and early 1970s,
however, "the in-migrants were a force that could be reacted to on a personal, day-to-
day basis" (Ploch 1980, 298).

Despite the argument that the autonomy of small communities is progressively
diminished by vertical ties to outside agencies and firms (Vidich and Bensman 1960;
Smith 1974; Richardson and Larson 1976), this view tends to oversimplify the
dynamics of community life. Several studies have suggested that community leader-
ship and attitudes may be more powerful in explaining variation in local autonomy as
external ties increase. For instance, Adams' (1969) study of six Midwestern towns
found that attitudes of local leaders were the most significant variables influencing
community growth or decline. Richards (1978) contends that rural villages have
always had ties to extralocal units and argues that the degree of autonomy in a rural
community is related more to the attitudes of residents and local leaders than to the
extent of vertical ties.

The villages in this study are different from rural villages in nonmetropolitan
counties in significant ways. Their location within the Chicago region means that the
number of extralocal ties is greater than would be found in more isolated rural towns.
Newcomers to villages in central Lake County are generally migrants from Chicago
or from other suburbs, and are likely to have more in common with longtime
residents of small towns than city dwellers moving to nonmetropolitan places have
with residents there.
In central Lake County, population increase and the passage of time have not always been associated with a concomitant decrease in local autonomy. Rather, the dynamic appears to be cyclical, with a village going through a stage of rapid expansion with increasing extralocal influence followed by a period of retrenchment and a shift back toward autonomy. Such fluctuations may be related to the flow of federal or state funds for infrastructure of schools, for example, or to the replacement of pro-growth leaders eager to attract outside firms with anti-growth candidates who promise greater self-determination.²

Although newcomer-oldtimer conflicts were evident in the five Lake County communities included in this study, the relationship between the incidence of controversies and the rate of growth is not a straightforward one. The evidence gathered from local newspapers and public meetings in Lake County supports Sokolow’s contention:

... the newcomer-oldtimer dichotomy may not be the central cleavage in growing rural communities that it was once thought to be. Instead of length of residence, the political divisions today seem to be based on class, education, age and how one views the world--all characteristics of politics in more urban places (Sokolow 1981, 180).

**Large-scale Developments**

A small town that has welcomed newcomers to small subdivisions for decades may suddenly be polarized by the prospect of a very large development. As suburban

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²Johansen and Fuguitt point out that seeking and obtaining government money for local projects permits village governments to increase the range and extent of activity within the community, which (somewhat paradoxically) enhances their autonomy (Johansen and Fuguitt 1984, 205).
growth moves outward from the central city, new construction in small towns begins to shift from the small-scale projects of local builders to large subdivisions by out-of-town developers who are attracted by the large tracts of vacant land on the edge of the metropolitan area.

The Planned Unit Development (PUD) and "new town" concepts embraced by some developers during the 1970s sparked the first serious debates about growth in small towns on the rural-urban fringe. In 1975, for example, planners for Grayslake were approached by developers who were seeking annexation for a 2,300-acre "total living community" of 28,000 residents to be called "Heartland." The Heartland project became the longest-running and most controversial land battle in Grayslake's history, spanning fifteen years from the initial proposal to the final settlement in which developers gave up their plan for the development. Although the original project was never built, the ongoing saga of negotiations and court battles kept the issue alive in local newspapers and stimulated an enormous amount of public discussion about the consequences of such a large influx of new residents. The sheer scale of the proposed project made Heartland a symbol of the potential impact of rampant growth.

Even during the 1970s, when many community leaders in Lake County were eager to attract new development, the proposition of such a large project raised

3Although the number of residents projected for the Heartland development fluctuated wildly (opponents tended to predict much higher population figures than proponents), developers themselves originally proposed a population of 28,000. This figure would likely have been reduced somewhat in negotiations had the project actually been approved.
serious concerns. Early in the process of negotiation with the Heartland developer, one Grayslake leader worried that other residents did not fully comprehend the potential impact of such a project, saying, "We have never discussed if we want Grayslake to move from a village of 5,000 to a city of 40,000 plus in 15 years. We must remember that Heartland is not just another subdivision, it is a turning point." 4

Another pointed out:

Heartland promoters want to annex more land than Grayslake’s present 1,300 corporate acres, a community that has been developing for 100 years. No community can handle that much growth at once. It’s too big. [Developers] always want to change the rules . . . Density is the name of the game. Density means profit. When they can cram more people into a given area, they make more money. And density also means more problems -- pollution, school, water and sewer problems. 5

Apprehension about a sizable influx of residents (particularly those from more urbanized areas) may be related to anxiety that newcomers will try to change the way things traditionally have been done in a community. One opponent of Heartland painted a grim picture of what the future might hold for oldtimers if the development were built. According to his prophecy:

... Heartland population exceeds that of the old town (formerly known as Grayslake). And, in what has been rightfully called ‘the best example of American Democracy at work,’ Heartland elects the mayor, the village board, and complete new school boards for both elementary and middle school systems. The new village board decides to move all village operating offices and headquarters to Heartland. In fact, it decides the name Grayslake is kind of


5Bill Schroeder, "Battle Over Heartland Begins to Take Shape," Grayslake Times, 6 February 1975.
old hat, so it changes the village name to Heartland, U.S.A. It also approves a multi-million dollar bond issue for certain special services for all areas [within the boundaries of the Heartland development].

The school boards meantime decide that our educational methods are outmoded and adopt a new, Montessori-type progressive approach, with no formal grade levels, no report cards, non-compulsory attendance . . . [Main Street] is shuttered, except for a few specialty shops and a store or two offering quaint articles and antiques showing "how Grayslake used to be" way back in the 40s and 50s. Now who lives on the wrong side of the tracks? We do.

To sum it up, I think most of the noise being made in favor of Heartland is emanating from those who stand to gain financially. In short -- the dollar is the operative criterion here . . .

Heartland is not just a development or a subdivision. It is a huge, sprawling growth that will swallow up Grayslake without a single gastric response. Not so much as a hiccup.

. . . much of what has been mentioned could happen -- especially when you bear firmly in mind the fact that the electorate as you now know it will no longer be in control. We will have handed over the village to the newcomers come the early 1980s.6

The view of developers as outsiders trying to take over the community was shared by many oldtimers in the 1970s. One Grayslake resident warned:

If Heartland occurs as its financial interests propose, there will no longer be a Grayslake as we now know it. I like living in Grayslake because of its neighborhoods. But the Heartland salesmen are not interested in our kind of neighborhoods. They are interested in high density, multi-family units -- complete neighborhoods under one roof . . . "Communal" living conditions do not enhance home ownership and individual responsibility, values long respected in Grayslake.

At a time when millions of sadder but wiser Americans are seeking an escape from high density living, pollution and traffic-choked streets, we in Grayslake are being told that therein lies our destiny. The fact of the matter is that right now we do control our destiny as a community. We elect and appoint officials to do what we think is best for our community. As I see it, if a few outsiders with absolutely no interest in Grayslake except that of realizing as much financial gain as possible succeed in convincing us to sign a binding 20 year contract with the smiling assurance that they know what is best for us, then

6Commentary by David C. Welling, "'Old Town' Could Be on Wrong Side of Tracks," in Grayslake Times, 29 May 1975.
we have lost control over our destiny as a village.\textsuperscript{7}

The editor of the local newspaper, however, took the position that development was inevitable:

\begin{quote}
Will our community be the same next year, three years, five years as it is today? The answer is obvious -- no! Nothing in life is static. The inevitability of change, in our opinion, negates the argument used against prospective growth and development that "we like our town the way it is. We want to keep it that way."

While the argument for the status quo has unquestionable emotional appeal, keeping "our town the way it is" is not only unrealistic, but essentially selfish as well. Few of us are home-grown products. If earlier residents had adopted a "closed door" attitude about newcomers a lot of us wouldn't be here today.

Living in the vast megalopolis transforming the Chicago-Milwaukee area, it is apparent that the days of isolated rural living and the idyllic small town environment are gone or fading fast . . . Grayslake residents are at the crossroads on the proposed Heartland development . . . Several years ago, Libertyville residents battled bitterly on the question of "in or out" over annexation of a regional shopping center. "Out" won out, but the center didn't go away . . .

The question of "to be or not to be" becomes moot in the present circumstances. The reasonable question then is control. Do you want your village to exercise control of a development or turn jurisdiction over to a neighboring community? In this context, the best policy would appear to be to open the door and negotiate.\textsuperscript{8}
\end{quote}

Years later when Wauconda, located further out on the urban fringe, faced the prospect of a large development, the response of residents was very similar to that of people in Libertyville and Grayslake in the 1970s. In 1992 a group of Wauconda residents vowed to prevent the proposed development of the Roney Farm, a 438-acre tract on the edge of the village. Residents were adamant in their opposition to the

\textsuperscript{7}William L. Utley, \textit{Grayslake Times}, 3 April 1975.

\textsuperscript{8}"Open Door' Best Policy," \textit{Grayslake Times}, 1 May 1975.
There is no reason why in an area totally surrounded by rural countryside that a dense subdivision should mushroom. We’re talking about traffic congestion . . . potential sewage and drainage problems and a total disregard for wetlands, plants and wildlife, a total disregard for land planning and zoning, an adverse impact on the city and the residents of the city, an adverse effect on the taxing of the area and no benefit except for the greed of the developer and owner.9

The Roney Farm project became a symbol of all the evils of suburban growth. More than 1,000 area residents signed a petition opposing the density of the planned development. "Who wants to live in an asphalt village?" asked one resident who said that he had moved to the village to escape the traffic, crowded stores and fast-growing crime rate of a larger suburb. "We have come to love this town and the feeling of being in a close-knit community. It’s such a wonderful feeling when you go to the store or coffee shop and even to church and you practically know everybody there."10 Another warned the village board not to violate the public trust:

The people of Wauconda have spoken on the matter of the Roney Farm project, people who have love and compassion for their community and don’t want such a high density of dwellings. Roney means 30 percent more people, cars and traffic congestion, air pollution, more load on the police, fire and sewer department not to target taxes, as more schools will be needed. When [the developers] leave with the profit, the board might have to raise the taxes for Wauconda citizens. . . . the American Dream has become the American Nightmare.11


11Peder M. Larsen, letter to the editor of the Wauconda Leader, 8 November 1991.
But not everyone was against the development of Roney Farm. Local business, banking and real estate interests staunchly defended the project. One realtor argued:

... Wauconda does need quality development. I think business in Wauconda needs stimulating ... Everyone's talking "no growth, no growth." They were talking no growth when I came here 35 years ago. Growth is inevitable. Everyone is looking to the east at the Roney project [but meanwhile] from the west is coming this huge shopping center ...  

When the village board voted to reject the project, an observer mused:

There will be weeks and months of debate whether rejection of a development to turn a historic Gilmer Road farm settled by Irish immigrants before the Civil War into 804 homes and a golf course was the right thing to do. But for better or worse, that was the result of nearly two years of study and public input before the Wauconda village council ... The 4-3 vote was of precedent setting proportions. In the growth-happy atmosphere that has engulfed Lake County for more than a decade, real estate developments aren't turned down very often. Trustees split on Roney under tremendous pressure from pro-growth, pro-business groups and relentless input from tax-conscious and environmentally sensitive citizens who maintained that the high-density plan would be ruinous to the community.

... What happened in Wauconda is a realization that there are two sides to the growth and development equation and that the down side isn't pretty. In fact, the down side can get mighty ugly with crowded schools, gridlocked highways, abused public services and overtaxed citizens.  

Over the next several years, Wauconda was approached by a number of developers. Many residents of the village, as well as those in unincorporated areas surrounding the village, continued to protest the approval of new subdivisions, arguing that such construction would cause flooding problems as well as the


destruction of the rural ambience of their community. Despite this opposition, a
number of new subdivisions were approved by the village board.

In 1994 a group of about twenty residents conducted a survey and reported that
79 percent of respondents felt that residential growth was occurring too rapidly.
Although half of respondents said that the pace of retail, commercial and light
industrial development was "about right," 52 percent indicated that they would not
support village policies to promote this type of growth. The leader of the citizens'
group explained that residents were worried about the effects rapid growth would
have on the small-town character of the village, saying "This is like our little hamlet
where we're safe and cozy and nothing can happen to us."

The intrusion of the outside world was an issue that had particular significance to
Wauconda residents. In 1988 the village was threatened with a lawsuit by the Illinois
director of the American Atheist Association, who demanded the removal of the two
crosses on village water towers that had been a Christmas tradition in the village for
forty-seven years. Although the village complied with the demand, many residents
were outraged, contending that an outsider should not have the power to control what
happened in their community.

In response to the removal of the crosses, many Wauconda residents erected

14The survey was conducted by Concerned Citizens of the Village of Wauconda,
Wauconda and Fremont Townships, and was distributed to 1,500 village residents and
500 township residents. Twenty-two percent of village surveys were returned, while
33 percent of those sent to township residents were sent back.

15Chris Heidenrich, "Small-town proponents fear Wauconda growing too fast,"
Daily Herald, 6 October 1994.
crosses of their own in front yards, on rooftops, and on places of business. The symbols have remained permanent fixtures in the village that some people now call the "city of crosses." One woman, who displays one of the original village crosses on the roof of her restaurant on Main Street explains, "It’s real symbolic in our town of unity and peace and real camaraderie of the whole community . . . We’ve got a very tight-knit community. Even though we’re growing, we still remain small." Many Wauconda residents share a strong resolve to see that the sense of community in the village is not lost and that current residents retain the power to decide the fate of their village.

Racial and Socioeconomic Status of Newcomers

Sometimes, opposition to new development in small towns is rooted in anxiety that racial or ethnic differences between newcomers and long-term residents might cause problems. The 1970s and early 1980s were a period of optimism for those who saw the increasing migration of black city residents to suburban communities around Chicago as a sign that genuine racial integration could be achieved in the suburban ring. There was even hope that legal action could eliminate much of the discriminatory behavior that had kept suburbs largely white and middle class. But


17For example, the Gautreaux decision by the Supreme Court in 1969 against the Chicago Housing Authority brought an attempt to locate scattered-site public housing throughout the metropolitan area. Charges that the suburb of Arlington Heights’ refusal to rezone a tract to permit multi-family housing was discriminatory was followed by the construction of apartments and town houses. In addition, the lower
for residents of small towns in the path of suburban growth, the events of the late
1960s and early 1970s shattered the taken-for-granted assumption that new residents
would be similar in race, socioeconomic status and religion to the traditional
population of the community.

Small town citizens were finding themselves divided on new issues that were
coming before village boards as a few residents pushed for formal policies that would
make their communities more accessible to a wider field of home seekers. Oldtimers’
concern about just what kind of people might be moving into the housing being built
in their communities is evident at least as far back as the housing boom of the 1920s,
when long-term residents worried that speculators and out-of-town developers would
construct poor quality housing that would attract newcomers who did not share the
values of current residents. The assumption that new residents would be white,
however, was implicit in most proposals for new subdivisions until the late 1960s.
Only on very rare occasions did the issue of race surface as a topic of public
discussion. Even then, there is no evidence of dissension among oldtimers, who
appear to have been united in their opposition to the prospect of integration. For
example, when a farmer announced plans in 1956 to sell 150 acres of farmland on the
fringe of Libertyville for a subdivision planned for black families, the reaction was

court ruling in HOPE, Inc. v. DuPage County that found the county guilty of
discriminatory intent in zoning practices received a good deal of attention in the press
and put the issues of racial and economic discrimination on the agendas of
municipalities in many suburban municipalities.
swift and unanimous, killing the project in short order.\textsuperscript{18}

By the 1970s, however, attitudes had changed somewhat. The 1960s brought fundamental changes in legislation aimed at extending civil rights, and the events of the decade had undermined the confidence of many in small towns that they could remain isolated from the unsettling ideas and activities that were sweeping the nation’s college campuses and urban communities. Although the consensus of residents and village officials may have been that maintaining homogeneity was desirable, the possibility of racial and economic diversity was at least acknowledged. The announcement of plans for New Century Town in 1970, for example, prompted a flurry of speculation about the consequences of such a large influx of new residents. One candidate for the Libertyville village board at the time stressed the need for a Human Relations Commission, predicting that New Century Town would "bring integration to this area within five years."\textsuperscript{19}

By the mid-1970s, open housing laws and legal challenges to discrimination by suburbs were causing small-town officials and residents to ask whether their towns would be targeted by proponents of economically and racially integrated communities.

\textsuperscript{18}"Negro Subdivision Rumor Confirmed," \textit{The Independent Register}, 15 November 1956; "Oak Grove Home Owners Draw Zoning Battle Lines: Organize for Fight Against Subdivision," \textit{The Independent Register}, 6 December 1956; "Zoning Fight Opens Today," \textit{The Independent Register}, 27 December 1956; "Calzavara Rezoning Plea Seems Doomed," \textit{The Independent Register}, 3 January 1957. There is some question as to whether there was any real intent to build this project at all, or whether this incident represents a tactic used as leverage by the landowner. What is of interest here is the reaction of people in the community to the announcement.

\textsuperscript{19}Len Boscarine, "Candidates air ideas on facing NCT challenge," 15 April 1971.
An editorial in the Libertyville newspaper painted a picture of the long arm of big government reaching down to meddle in the affairs of small towns:

Don’t be surprised if you go to a village board meeting in 10 years and watch this scene:

Developer: "I want to build ten $100,000 homes in your town."

Mayor: "We’re not interested in those kind of homes."

Developer: "Not interested? $100,000 homes are not good enough for you? I think I see your point and am willing to add a fourth garage to the homes and put a $110,000 price tag on them.

Mayor: Still not interested.

Developer: "What do you mean still not interested? What community turns its nose up to $110,000 homes? These homes will improve your town, make your village a better place to live."

Mayor: "That’s exactly right, and that’s why we’re not interested. The federal government is starting to put the heat on us. In 1976 they released a list of towns that do not have enough low and moderate-priced homes for the number of jobs in the community. They told us we might not get federal aid unless we studied OUR PROBLEM. 20"

Even subsidized housing for senior citizens was often fiercely opposed. Despite a survey indicating that a large number of older Libertyville residents would be interested in moving to subsidized housing if it were built in the community, there was significant opposition to the prospect. 21 Sixty residents turned out to protest a project to be subsidized by the Department of Housing and Urban Development, for

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21 "Survey finds need for elderly housing," The Independent Register, 8 July 1976.
example, pressing planning commissioners to admit the possibility that black residents might be among the new tenants. After a show of hands indicated that the project was overwhelmingly opposed by those in the audience, commissioners unanimously voted against the proposal. Commenting on "the specter of public housing" and the question of whether the community wanted "outsiders living on federal subsidies" moving into town, the local newspaper pointed out that "Very likely, those 'outsiders' could be black, or Spanish-speaking. Most certainly, they will be poor, or at the very least, bordering on poverty, with fixed incomes constantly eroded by spiraling inflation."  

Antipathy toward the possibility of non-white newcomers was not universal, however. Several Libertyville residents worked to establish a Human Relations Commission for the purpose of combating discrimination in the rental or sale of housing in the village. Although the village fought the formation of the Human Relations Commission in court for three years, the commission prevailed, holding its first meeting in December, 1971. Any hopes for an effective organization were dashed, however, when the first meeting deteriorated into angry arguments among charter members ended with an invitation to "step outside and settle our differences."  


23"Public or private housing? Local response is in the works," *The Independent Register*, 16 December 1976.  

Housing

Home ownership is closely associated with issues that are critical in suburban politics. Like other commodities, housing in the United States has social meaning. Ownership of a particular type of house in a specific neighborhood within a certain community not only conveys information to others about the social standing of the people who live there but also influences the owners' evaluation of themselves (Agnew 1981; Gayk 1991). The association of home ownership with stability may lead small town residents to oppose attempts to build rental apartments in the community on the grounds that they will attract people who are of lower socioeconomic status than current residents. A survey of Libertyville residents conducted in 1969, for example, found that 85 percent were opposed to apartment buildings in the same neighborhood as single family residences or even in business districts.25 A good deal of concern about the construction of New Century Town in the early 1970s was related to worry about the impact of renters on the community. According to one long-term resident, "To bring from 17,000 to 20,000 apartment dwellers and try to meld them into a community of 11,000 home-owning people will be an impossible task. This situation would change the entire climate of Libertyville regarding politics, interest in local affairs and all everyday workings of a village like Libertyville.26

25"Libertyville can be reawakened, conclude Jaycees," The Independent Register, 21 May 1970.

26Leonard Boscarine, "Village officials speak out on NCT," The Independent Register, 7 January 1971.
Rapid growth often fosters spatial patterns that reflect class and status differences. Rapidly-growing rural areas tend to attract large-scale developers because of the availability of relatively large parcels of land. When these subdivisions consist of units that are distinct in some way from existing housing, such as the construction of condominiums or apartments in an area of single-family homes, or when there is a conspicuous disparity between the property value of new and existing units, concerns about the impact of growth may converge on the differences between old and new residents. This friction does not only occur when newcomers are of lower socioeconomic status than oldtimers. Although an influx of affluent newcomers may be welcomed for the increase in status and property taxes that it brings, for example, long-time residents sometimes fear that their opinions will no longer be heard or valued.

The increasing tendency for subdivisions to offer housing within a fairly narrow price range aimed at a particular segment of the housing market has increased the sensitivity of homeowners to the construction of new housing priced lower than existing homes. Residents tend to be vigilant and vocal about housing that they believe will lower their own property values. For example, when word got out that houses expected to sell for $37,000 were being constructed adjacent to an area of $60,000 homes in Vernon Hills, residents met with local officials to complain that

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27 In a survey of mayors of small villages, Johansen and Fuguitt (1984) found that although the reported incidence of serious concerns about new residents was low, those cases in which newcomers were not accepted involved differences in social and ethnic characteristics (Johansen and Fuguitt 1984, 187-88).
$37,000 homes would jeopardize their investment. "We worked for five years, sacrificed to buy a house in a nice area, and nothing is going to interfere with our mode of living and property values," said one resident. "Why are they coming into our subdivision?" asked another. "It's not that we don't want $37,000 homes. We just don't want them in our area. We don't want cheap houses to hurt our houses, resale-wise."28 In response, the Vernon Hills village board restricted construction of homes in the subdivision to a minimum of $43,000.29

The rapid appreciation of real estate in central Lake County during the 1970s and 1980s contributed toward a climate in which concern about the exchange value of real estate was paramount. One realtor remembers:

Through the end of the 1980s, people were buying homes in Lake County with the anticipation of an increase in investment value -- almost everyone across the board, whether it was a transferee coming in or a move-up from within -- was seeing the potential for a gold mine of increase in their net worth. They would buy and sell houses more on that than on how they lived in those houses. . . . We'd had 18 to 22 percent a year appreciation in the late 1970s in Libertyville. We had similar, but not as great, appreciation in many years after that.

During the 1980s, protection against the devaluation of real estate was becoming an integral part of the process of development. Restrictive covenants that control behavior and land use in new subdivisions have become increasingly common. The effect of these restrictions, agreed to by buyers and enforced by homeowners'

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28 "Friendly neighbors -- where did they go?," The Independent Register, 14 October 1976.

29 "Vernon Hills sets Deerpath minimum," The Independent Register, 7 October 1976.
associations, has been to impose an additional layer of private government on residents (McKenzie 1994). The document informing potential home buyers of restrictions in one subdivision in a rural area of Libertyville explains:

... The development is being built to create exclusive rural homesites. The project will provide an opportunity for ownership within a controlled environment which is sensitive to natural terrain and unique resources. Design concepts have been developed calling for maintaining consistency with the contiguous areas in quality, aesthetics, and prestige.

In order to insure that homes are consistent with the developer's design philosophy, the declaration delineates specific requirements. For example:

- One-story dwellings must have no less than 2,800 square feet of living area. For dwellings of more than one story, not less than 1,500 square feet on the first floor, and the total living area in the dwelling not to be less than 3,000 square feet.

- All roofs shall be cedar shake, slate, tile, or other comparable material. No asphalt shingles shall be allowed.

- Tennis courts should be located in rear yards only so that they will not infringe upon view corridors.  

Such specific restrictions on land use tend to foster a sense of protectionism at the neighborhood level and to restrict entry to those who can afford to build housing that meets minimum requirements. Retirement communities, apartment complexes that exclude children, and subdivisions with high fences, gates and private security forces represent some of the forms that the trend toward parochialism and societal fragmentation has taken. These communities are sometimes viewed as the physical

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expression of a desire for isolation and protection from invasion from people who are perceived as different and threatening.

Suttles (1972) has suggested that attempts of suburbs to "ward off the invasion and protect what is regarded as an identity" replicate the conflict and competition which students of the Chicago School of sociology saw among community areas of the central city. Some suburban developments share many of the attributes Suttles ascribes to the "artificial" neighborhoods in the city that he sees as forms of the "defended neighborhood." Boundaries are distinctly defined and reinforced by a common architectural design and single source of ownership. Subdivisions are named and marketed to project a particular image and are usually characterized by cultural uniformity (Suttles 1972, 41-43) and defined by "enacted community boundaries."

When residents of these suburbs perceive a threat of invasion, according to Suttles, the paucity of local leaders and institutions may cause them to appeal to outsiders for protection. This defense is likely "to become a shifting balance between grass roots vigilantism and organizationally sponsored protectionism" (1972, 243).

Hunter describes "the persistence, the transformation, and the variability of local orientations and community solidarity in a modern urban setting (1974, 190). In his analysis of the ecological, the social structural and the cultural symbolic dimensions of community, he identifies economic status as the most significant basis of ecological segregation as well as residents' perceptions of their local areas. Hunter emphasizes the need to understand the symbolic culture of a local community that is composed of its traditions, customs, symbols and sentiments. The local community, he argues, is
the social product of symbolic interaction. This process of community definition and identification may involve the manipulation or even creation of desirable symbols of community (1974, 195-96).

In suburbs, this process of community definition is actively carried out by local governments, chambers of commerce, local newspapers, real estate firms and voluntary associations that try to promote the town in terms of a common definition of the community's character. Neighborhood attachment and identification sometimes become the basis for conflict when an area is undergoing change of any kind. These sentiments have the potential to mobilize residents when they sense that their community is threatened. This may serve to strengthen ties among residents but also may be used for the exclusion of groups that do not share the economic, racial or ethnic characteristics of the population.

Sometimes the enmity between oldtimers and newcomers becomes overtly hostile. Battle lines were drawn between long-term and new residents of one Mundelein subdivision in the mid-1970s when new families formed a neighborhood watch group. Concerned about teenagers congregating in the area, new residents began to keep records of activities they regarded as menacing. Oldtimers, resentful of newcomers conspicuously jotting down details of street life in the neighborhood were outraged and the situation quickly escalated to fistfights and rock-throwing. A reporter who covered the troubled neighborhood found himself besieged by people

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31 Rich Cahan, "Brawling neighborhood should be arrested," The Independent Register, 16 September 1976.
eager to tell tales of their neighbors' vandalism, drug use, and to pass along rumors they had heard. "By the way," one caller reported, "the woman down the block sees a different man every evening." Another called the reporter back after an interview to add: "I forgot to tell you, the person we just spoke about has a past criminal record." 32

**Concern about crime**

A large influx of newcomers to a rural area may trigger anxiety about crime and worry about personal safety. The opening of the Hawthorn Center shopping mall in Vernon Hills in the 1970s, for example, drew shoppers from a wide trade area into the village. Since its construction, false rumors of violent crimes at the mall periodically have surfaced and travelled with remarkable velocity through surrounding communities. During one week in 1978, for example, the Vernon Hills Police Department had inquiries from residents demanding information about stories they had heard about crime at the shopping center, such as the murder of a man and woman, the abduction and murder of several young boys, a man who followed and raped a woman in the mall's parking lot and the discovery of the body of a young girl with a note indicating that 23 murders were planned for the near future. According to the Vernon Hills police chief, the rumors were "totally fake, incorrect and had no basis in

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Although the origins of these rumors are unknown, the common theme of unprovoked violence visited upon innocent victims suggests that apprehension about personal safety was of concern to residents. It is plausible that the tremendous growth of Vernon Hills, from little more than 1,000 people in 1970 to nearly 10,000 in 1980 has contributed to anxiety about the large numbers of strangers coming into the area.

The notable increase in the percentage of minority residents in some communities over the past two decades has changed the way that residents of neighboring communities view these places. Mundelein's Hispanic population, for example, has increased from 2 percent of the total in 1970 to nearly 14 percent in 1990, while percentages for the other four case study communities considered here have remained below 4 percent. The concentration of Hispanic families, particularly in one large apartment complex in Mundelein, has fostered speculation among residents of surrounding communities about gang activity in Mundelein. The notable increase in the percentage of black and Hispanic residents in communities in the northeastern portion of Lake County, as well, has caused concern among citizens of more affluent central Lake County communities, where police officers have been trained to look for signs of gang activity.

In Wauconda, as well, concern that children will be drawn into gangs has

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33"Rumors of murders are false, police say," *The Independent Register*, 26 January 1978.
increased in recent years. Some residents have called for the park and school districts to offer more supervised programs for children as a means of deterring them from joining gangs. The presence of a growing Hispanic population within the village and in the surrounding unincorporated areas has prompted some residents to suggest that the village should adopt an ordinance limiting the number of unrelated individuals that may occupy a residence. Signs in Spanish have been posted in some recreation areas warning that only residents are permitted to use facilities.

It is difficult to assess whether some of these signs, such as graffiti sprayed on buildings, are manifestations of gang activity or are being misinterpreted. There is a growing perception, however, that the growing concentrations of minorities in certain parts of the county is becoming a problem. The response to this perceived threat varies from place to place. In Wauconda, signs warning those from outside the community that beaches are for village residents have been restated in Spanish. Intramural sports activities bring students from schools all over the county together, sometimes prompting overzealous school officials to take extreme measures to insure the safety of their own students. When a local high school with a virtually all-white student body hosted a game against a school with a large number of minority students, visitors were required to pass through a metal detector in order to enter the gymnasium, from which home students were exempt. This sparked a good deal of controversy among those who chastised school officials for their treatment of visiting students, and others who viewed the effort as a reasonable precaution.

Uncertainty about the potential danger of places with growing minority
populations has increased apprehension among parents in terms of the safety of their children. One resident of Libertyville expressed the feelings of many others when she talked about changes in surrounding communities:

I'm sure there are Hispanic gangs in the Mundelein area -- you read about that in the paper and you see them standing on the street there. I'm sure there are black gangs in North Chicago. I don't think it's too far down the road that you'll see a white reaction, unfortunately, even if it's spurred by nothing else than someone becomes a victim because of being in the wrong place at the wrong time . . . . I've been at meetings where that's been discussed. I'm thinking in terms of my son, who goes places where that's been discussed. I'm thinking in terms of my son, who goes places where he might inadvertently come in contact with people who have hatreds and prejudices that he himself is not aware of. I'm fearful for him sometimes, although I see no signs of real overt danger.

Although such fears may be vague and unsubstantiated, fear of crime can have real effects in terms of the choice of neighborhood or school district a family chooses. This may exacerbate growing differentiation of neighborhoods and municipalities according to ethnicity, race or social class.

Demands for services

As villages annex land for development, demands for services may strain the ability of local government to satisfy oldtimers and newcomers alike. In some cases, residents of new subdivisions feel slighted in favor of older, more established sections. Residents of one new subdivision in Grayslake, for example, complained that the village ignored their need for snow plowing and police services and treated them "like stepchildren." Another alleged that "A lot of people feel [the subdivision]
is not part of Grayslake. It is like we are Cabrini Green." 34 In this case, since streets in the development had been dedicated as private roads, the village had no maintenance obligations. Confusion about the responsibilities of local government in private developments is sometimes a cause of friction between residents of older sections of town and those in newer ones. 35

On the other hand, residents of older neighborhoods may feel that local government is more responsive to residents of newer areas. In many places on the rural-urban fringe, developments at the edge of town contain luxury homes on large lots of one acre or more. Residents of these subdivisions are often of significantly higher socioeconomic class than those living in smaller, older housing near the center of town. Some longtime residents complain that these subdivisions receive special attention from village governments because of the higher status of those who live there, while older sections of town are expected to accept land uses that would never be proposed in peripheral areas. For example, when residents of Libertyville’s downtown residential neighborhoods learned that a new zoning ordinance provided for group homes for adults with "functional limitations" in their section of town, they challenged the proposal at a meeting of the zoning commission. Angry that the

34 "Quail Creek residents blast status," *Grayslake Times*, 20 April 1990.

35 It is, of course, incorrect to assume that all residents of new subdivisions are newcomers to a village. In some cases, long-term residents move from older sections of town to new developments, just as newcomers move into older housing in the center of town. But in rapidly-growing places, new sections do tend to contain a larger proportion of new residents and in public discussions there is at least the assumption that outlying developments are populated by newcomers.
provision relegated assisted housing only to higher density areas near the business
district, residents argued that downtown neighborhoods had more than their share of
half-way houses for homeless people and those with drug and alcohol problems. "If
we have to have it, why not have it in [areas zoned for single-family residential use]
where [the mayor] lives. Another downtown resident agreed, saying, "It does feel
like we’re the dumping ground. We’re not the new neighborhoods; we don’t have
$400,000 houses. But it’s our neighborhood and we’re trying to keep it up."

Newcomers often have high expectations about the responsibility of special
districts to offer programs similar to those they enjoyed in the communities from
which they moved. In the late 1980s, when the flood of new residents to Grayslake
began, the Park District had few employees and offered little in the way of activities
for children. By 1994 the district had expanded its programs to keep up with the
demands of new residents. The director of the district remembers:

[In 1988] I think youth basketball had 26 kids and a handful of
coaches. Today it is up to 42 teams, 60 volunteer coaches, and more than 400
kids.

Just in the last three years, the increases have really started. When
people move in here and see that we don’t have a community center and we
don’t have a pool, they are surprised. They are moving from areas that have
established services, and feel that every park district has these services.36

It is not only longtime residents who are adamant in their opposition to new
development. Newcomers to rural communities are sometimes among the most vocal
opponents of new development, expressing concern about the loss of the rural charm

36Meta L. Levin, "Keeping up with the growth puts new demands on parks," in
"Our Town" supplement to The News Sun, 25 July 1994.
that drew them to the area. Oldtimers, listening to newcomers object to the
deleterious effects of growth, rarely lose an opportunity to point out the irony of this
phenomenon. The desire of newcomers to limit growth after they have moved into a
community has been documented by rural sociologists and demographers, particularly
in the literature of the population turnaround of the 1970s. Quality-of-life
considerations appear to be influencing many of the decisions by migrants to move to
small towns on the rural-urban fringe. Newcomers from more urbanized areas often
do not hesitate to get involved in controversies over growth, warning of the perils of
rapid development that they witnessed firsthand in the communities they left behind.
One report on the impact of newcomers to rural areas found:

    Each new resident hopes he will be the last one. Called the "gangplank" or
"last-one-in" syndrome, these early arrivals want to pull in the gangplank and
shut the door on further growth and development, realizing that if others follow,
the amenities which they sought may be endangered (American Society of
Planning Officials 1976, 88).

    The distinction between oldtimers and newcomers in places with very rapid
growth can sometimes be measured in months rather than generations. Some of the
 loudest objections to new development in Vernon Hills, for example, comes from
people who are relatively new to the community. When residents of a new
subdivision objected to the construction of a new high school in their area, arguing
that development of the site might endanger wildlife, they were challenged by a long-
term resident who castigated them, saying "If you were really concerned with the
welfare of animals and plants, shouldn’t you have purchased an existing home in an
established neighborhood rather than displacing animals and plants with the
construction of your new home?" The desire of newcomers to close the gate after they have settled in a community is common, particularly in areas of the rural-urban fringe where growth is associated with the destruction of natural amenities.

Age differences between newcomers and oldtimers may also be a source of tension. Large-scale developments of single-family homes bring an influx of families with young children. The need to increase the number of classrooms and teachers in the local school districts often leads to public discussions in which older residents spar with younger ones on the issue of school funding. Invariably, some older residents resist the idea of a referendum to raise taxes while those with children in school support additional funds for education. Older residents on fixed incomes, whose children are no longer in school, and who tend to be vocal opponents of attempts to increase taxes, are often blamed when school referenda fail. Although there is some evidence to support the view that older residents are likely to oppose tax increases (Piele and Hall 1973; Hamilton and Cohen 1974; Inman 1978; Button 1992), other factors may be more significant in the outcome of such elections. Income and education, in particular, appear to influence voter behavior on school issues (Rubinfeld 1977; Button and Rosenbaum 1989) with older residents of higher socioeconomic status more likely to support such referenda.

Although conventional wisdom posits a direct link between age and willingness to spend more on services, the literature does not bear this out. Efforts to explain the widespread tax revolts of recent decades have proven difficult, complicated by a multitude of issues related to fiscal strain, demands for services and distrust of
government at all levels. Baldassare contends that tax revolts are not related to spending preferences or quality of services. What connects the impossible contradictory combination of demands for decreasing taxes and increasing services, he says, is the ideology that government is inefficient and wasteful (1986, 128).

Newcomers' involvement in local voluntary associations can be an additional source of conflict. As large corporate campuses relocate to places on the outer edge of metropolitan regions, small towns experience an influx of their employees. Often, as a community gains a reputation among corporate managers as a desirable place to live, it is recommended to employees. Libertyville, for example, attracts employees of large pharmaceutical companies in the area. These families, who often have been transferred frequently in their corporate careers, tend to be proficient at becoming acclimated and involved in local affairs. Not long after moving to town, for example, their children are enrolled in sports and social activities while parents join the local chapter of organizations to which they already belong, such as the League of Women Voters or the Rotary Club. When significant numbers of such families move into a community, friction between newcomers and oldtimers in voluntary organizations may increase. While new migrants often are eager to contribute ideas about how to improve organizational processes, post-meeting vestibule discussions among oldtimers sometimes betray their resentment toward newcomers ("I don't care how they did it in New Jersey").

**Community Identity and Planning**

The small towns in this study have undergone a shift from relatively informal
agreements about land use to rule-based controls in the decades since the Second World War. Some of this occurred in the increasing application of zoning laws and also in the adoption of "master plans" implemented in an attempt to control the type and location of future growth. In the 1950s and 1960s, the response of a village to rapid growth was likely to be decided by a few village trustees, who tend to be local business persons with little expertise in the more technical aspects of public administration. As village populations increased, however, professional village administrators were hired to deal with the day-to-day operations of local government and, in particular, to deal with developers. These professional managers, who were outsiders initially unfamiliar with the village, brought a new (and often very different) type of bureaucracy to local governments.

For Weber, bureaucracy functions not only as a technical instrument but ". . . is also a force with interests and values of its own . . . As a power group it has the capacity to influence the goals of the political system: as a status stratum it has a more unconscious effect upon the values of society at large" (Beetham 1974, 67). Rational authority, with its emphasis on impersonal rules, procedures and legitimacy based on technical knowledge and training form the basis of bureaucratic power. The decision to hire a professional village administrator has implications in terms of the degree of bureaucratization in a community. Unlike a politician, who must be concerned with pleasing constituents and bearing personal responsibility for policy making and implementation, bureaucrats are expected to make decisions based on what is most rational and efficient. Hiring a professional manager suggests a move
toward a more sophisticated system of government in which personal ties and obligations become less important and equal consideration of all individuals and groups should be the rule.

In issues of rapid growth, many of the negotiations over land use involve developers and village administrators. In theory, the administrator acts in the best interests of the entire community, weighing the costs and benefits of each proposed development in terms of what is best for the village. Thus administrators may find themselves at odds with elected officials or others who are in favor of growth. Those who consistently argue for more concessions from developers, such as higher impact fees, may find themselves unemployed. One administrator hired by a small village to negotiate an annexation agreement with developers of a large planned unit development was fired for raising too many questions about the potential negative impact on taxing districts and the responsibility of the developers to do more to relieve this burden. When asked why developers had chosen such a small rural place, he suggested that developers find it easier to control the village boards of small towns:

They could have built in [a larger community], but there is a more sophisticated system of bureaucracy and it would have made it harder to deal with the local government . . . . Village officials here don’t realize how desirable this location is. If they did, they would have held out for more in impact fees. When [developers] said they had to have a decision right away, village officials should have realized they could get more.

Rapid Growth and Community Identity

Interest in preserving local history and architecture increased as small town
residents watched the rise of new towns in the 1970s and 1980s. Preserving the community as an authentic place with a unique identity became a popular subject for editorials and letters to the local newspaper as new construction rose on the periphery of villages and commercial strips began to dominate major intersections on the edges of town. Attempts by new suburbs to create centers, or focal points, in the midst of residential and commercial growth were favorite targets of small town newspapers.

An editorial in the *Grayslake Times*, for example, scoffed:

> Schaumburg, a place a great many Lake County residents love to hate, is a village in search of a past it doesn’t have. The ultimate of modern suburbia, Schaumburg is in the process of creating a "downtown" . . . officials have found it necessary to provide "local history" so residents can anchor to a past that never existed.

> Frankly, we don’t envy the folks trying to invent a past where there is none. What will they define as history? Tattered blueprints for the first high rise? . . . With the exception of Vernon Hills, every community in Lake County has its own history, a beautiful, gold plated, certified, genuine, embossed past that residents can turn to and exclaim, "This is the way it used to be."37

As professional planning practices gained acceptance among municipalities and counties as a means of directing growth, communities began to devote serious attention to the revision of their formal plans for future growth. A comprehensive plan embodies a vision of what the community should look like in the future, and its adoption requires that residents and public officials to articulate their preferences in terms of community identity.

In 1980, the Grayslake Planning Commission met to discuss the goals and

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objectives of the village with the director of the Lake County Department of Planning, Zoning and Environmental Quality. The planner presented two scenarios for future growth. The first option was to promote Grayslake as a hub of urban activity in the county. The second was designed to carefully restrict development in order to maintain the small-town character of the community. Nearly all of the commissioners expressed a preference for the second strategy.

These decisions were being made at a time when very little development was actually taking place in the village. The Heartland proposal, however, had raised the specter of problems associated with rapid growth, and the high growth rates of neighboring villages suggested that Grayslake was on the brink of assault by developers. Tension between the desire for growth and trepidation about its impact is evident in the comments of planning commission members. "I don't want to see Grayslake as another Schaumburg, Elk Grove Village, or Vernon Hills," one commissioner said. "But we do need limited industry, particularly for an underlying tax base for the village." "We need industry and a central park," said another. "I would like to see us grow, yet maintain the present atmosphere. I don't want us to be so large that you don't know the townspeople." A third added, "I would like to see Grayslake developed so that there isn't a need to go outside of the village to get what you want . . . . I would like to see a good old farming town, not influenced by the metropolitan area. A town where you can take care of your own." 38

Public discussion of development in the 1980s was frequently characterized by a sense of urgency about the need to curb growth before it was too late. Even in communities where growth was relatively slow, residents often beseeched village officials in the 1980s to limit new development. The open space controversy in the latter part of the decade, in particular, brought back memories of what communities had been like in decades long past, and prompted residents to express their opinion of rapid development. One Libertyville resident reflected:

I was saddened to see milkweed and mustard plants give way to concrete and tarmac, even while being reminded that this was the unfortunate truth about progress, which could not be impeded. I was reminded further of that fact some fifteen years ago when there was a valiant effort afoot to "Save Libertyville - Stop New Century Town." Libertyville, hoping to preserve its "small town" atmosphere, did not annex the property. But a little tract-house subdivision did, and now we live with the "Schaumburgesque" monstrosity and all the traffic anyway, while Vernon Hills continues to grow larger and more profitable, if not uglier than our beloved "small town . . ."39

Faith in the efficacy of planning during the 1980s is evident in the enthusiasm of small town residents and officials determined to avoid the negative ramifications of growth in that have plagued many of the inner suburbs. As families flooded into Grayslake’s new subdivisions toward the end of the decade, the village revised its comprehensive plan. Despite a growth rate of 40 percent for the decade, planning commission members remained optimistic that Grayslake would retain the "visual character of a village rather than a suburb," and maintain its image as a place with a

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unique identity.\textsuperscript{40}

Control over undeveloped land was key to Grayslake’s desire to foster low-density growth. From 1988 through 1990, the village annexed over 2,000 acres, with much of the land zoned for low density development.\textsuperscript{41} The Grayslake village manager explained:

\begin{quote}
The village is anxious to annex as much property as possible within the village’s planning area for the purpose of controlling any possible development of those parcels . . . a substantial portion of these annexations are in extremely low density classifications. This is in keeping with the village’s long-range plan to maintain Grayslake’s identity as a village by establishing a belt of low density residential and open space on the perimeter of Grayslake. This planning, along with the quality residential developments in other parts of the community, will insure that the village has a full range of housing types, substantial open space, large amounts of low density residentially zoned property and sufficient rooftops to continue economic expansion in the village.\textsuperscript{42}
\end{quote}

By 1990 it was clear that holding on to Grayslake’s small-town image presented a formidable challenge. The decennial census placed the town’s population at 7,388 (indicating a 41 percent change in population for the 1980s). Thirteen subdivisions with more than 3,200 housing units were in various stages of construction. Approximately 650 newly created industrial jobs had been added to Grayslake’s economy in the late 1980s along with 25 non-industrial businesses.\textsuperscript{43} In fact,

\textsuperscript{40}“New comprehensive plan tells Grayslake’s future,” \textit{Grayslake Times}, 8 July 1988.

\textsuperscript{41}Pat Christensen, “Grayslake grapples with growth,” \textit{Grayslake Times}, 5 October 1990.

\textsuperscript{42}“Heartland property joins village,” \textit{Grayslake Times}, 9 February 1990.

\textsuperscript{43}Pat Christensen, “Can Grayslake support a business boom?” \textit{Grayslake Times}, 12 October 1990.
Grayslake had become one of the fastest-growing communities in the Chicago metropolitan area and the provision of a mix of housing types and prices was no longer a goal of local leaders. According to the village administrator:

We are not meeting the demand for affordable housing, and we admit it. That’s a reflection of the type of housing we want to have. Also, the large impact fees we impose will affect the price. Our public improvement standards are tough, and that adds cost. Lumber and bricks only cost so much, but what really costs is local standards, and our standards are high.

The new housing will be of substantially more value than existing housing today. The assessed valuation in Grayslake has doubled in the last five years, so at least from a village perspective, we have reduced the tax rate by 68 percent.\(^4\)

Community Conflict

As concern about the effects of rapid growth grows, the likelihood that a proposed development will spark public controversy increases as well. The conflict that ensues may have a profound effect on relationships in a community, sometimes influencing the course of development for years to come.

Coleman (1957) identifies three fundamental changes that occur as a controversy develops in a community. First, there is a movement from the specific issues that sparked the conflict to more general concerns. This shift in the nature of the issues is followed by a second stage in which new and different issues emerge. These issues often expand to involve general ideological or political principles. Coleman sees two separate sources for the tendency toward the diversification of issues. The first is a consequence of the disruption of community equilibrium, which opens the door to the

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expression of concerns that have been suppressed. This is analogous to an argument between individuals in which long-repressed grievances are aired (e.g., "I wasn't going to mention this, but since you brought it up I may as well tell you what I think"). Once community equilibrium is upset, according to Coleman, it is more likely that new issues will be introduced. This diversification of issues may also be a strategy to gain support from potential allies. This is particularly evident in political disputes in which each side introduces as many diverse issues as possible in an attempt to win support from community members who are as yet uncommitted.

The third stage in the development of a controversy is the shift from disagreement to antagonism. A dispute which began as a dispassionate difference of opinion escalates to one involving rumor, slander, personal hostility and public attacks.

The public conflict over rapid growth observed in the five Lake County communities is generally consistent with Coleman's model. Initially ignited by a developer's proposal to build a large subdivision, the controversies began with residents speaking out at public meetings in opposition to the idea of a large increase in population. These situations tended to escalate to broader confrontations, eventually degenerating to personal charges (usually involving allegations of graft and corruption of local public officials).

It is difficult, based on the study of only five communities, to identify the variables that are important in explaining why residents were able to prevent development in some cases and unable to do so in others. However, my observation
of these communities suggests that attempts to prevent a particular project from being built may be more likely to succeed when the population of a village is relatively small. Even when confronted by developers with considerable resources and well-organized pro-growth groups of local business and civic leaders, residents were able to thwart large projects in Grayslake, Libertyville and Wauconda. As the accounts of specific controversies reveal, residents can bring considerable pressure to bear on village officials in small places where daily face-to-face interaction is frequent. The theme of small-town citizens standing up to the local "growth machine" and large, out-of-town developers seems to have resonated with those who opposed the large projects in Libertyville and Grayslake in the 1970s as well as Wauconda in the 1990s. It is clear that when large numbers of citizens turn out to oppose specific projects at public meetings, they can have a very real impact on the decision-making process.

But other factors must be considered as well. The location of a proposed development between two municipalities permits a developer to play one town against another in order to force an annexation agreement with one of them. Even when there is opposition from both villages, annexation is made more likely by the argument of pro-growth forces who argue that it is always better to annex a parcel in order to maintain control over its development than to risk having one's neighbor incorporate the territory and permit land uses that are undesirable. The threat of de-annexation of property from a municipality, as well, is sometimes sufficient to convince a village board to agree to the demands of developers in order to maintain some control over development.
The socioeconomic status of those who oppose a project can affect its chances of being approved by a county or village board, or the extent of concessions made to appease them. A development proposed in an area of affluent residents who oppose the project may be less likely to gain approval simply because of the socioeconomic status of those in opposition, who can afford to hire legal counsel and fight a more sophisticated battle against developers than residents with fewer resources. For example, in 1976, after two years of negotiation between Mundelein and developers seeking annexation of 700 acres in an area of relatively expensive homes for a new subdivision, the plan was quashed when the Lake County Forest Preserve District voted to purchase most of the property. The debate over the project was waged in fifteen three-hour public hearings in which residents and local leaders debated whether Mundelein would "retain its semi-rural character or become a suburb of Chicago."45

It is difficult to evaluate the importance of various factors in determining the ultimate demise of this proposed development. A large portion of the property slated for annexation, for example, was covered by deed restrictions imposed in 1928 which imposed a two-acre minimum on lot sizes. The threat of lawsuits by property owners in the area, as well as lack of sufficient sewer capacity, certainly played a role in the reluctance of some village board members to vote in favor of annexation.

Two problems confound anyone investigating social and political processes in small communities. The first is the pattern of public harmony and private dissension

45Rich Calan, "CJV development defeat was major event during 1976," The Independent Register, 28 December 1976.
that often characterizes such places. Public amiability is a value that is generally accepted by people in small towns, where face-to-face interaction is likely to occur in everyday life. Board members may disagree on an issue, for example, but compromise in order to avoid a split vote in a public meeting. Serious conflict may take the form of gossip and private recrimination rather than a direct public confrontation that might have a negative affect on other relationships (Hatch 1979).

Second, a good deal of the negotiation between developers and village board members or county officials takes place in private, so that it is difficult (or impossible) for a researcher to know exactly how decisions are made.

What is clear, however, is that some issues have greater resonance than others, and that these issues change over time. Village boards do pay attention when large numbers of citizens turn out to oppose new development. Even if a project is ultimately approved, when a local government board is confronted by a large number of angry constituents, there are likely to be some changes made in an attempt to appease them. My survey of twenty-five years of local newspapers and public meetings indicates that when there was substantial, organized opposition to a project, the ratio of final density to the density proposed in the original plan was significantly lower than in cases where there was little public resistance.

The likelihood of success in any effort to mobilize support appears to be greatly enhanced by organizers’ ability to draw on values that are deeply held by potential supporters and that are relevant to their life experience. As the debate over growth has evolved over the past twenty-five years, both pro-growth and anti-growth groups
have become more sophisticated in their attempts to present logical, coherent, persuasive arguments that can win support for their views. Those who are able to recast the rather mundane business of rezoning in terms of the loftier issues of conservation or the quality of rural life are likely to prevail. As the strong forces favoring development are balanced by residents and leaders demanding greater constraints on new construction, the patterns of growth in those areas of the county as yet undeveloped are likely to be significantly different from the densely-settled patterns of earlier decades.

CHAPTER 6
GROWTH AND THE LOCAL ECONOMY

This chapter considers the effects of rapid growth on the local economies of villages in the rural-urban fringe as they have undergone the transition from rural small towns to suburbs with increasing ties to the regional, national and global marketplace. In particular, this investigation focuses on the decline of the downtown business districts that was widespread during the 1970s, and on strategies that some towns have devised in attempts to revitalize the traditional heart of their communities.

Rural villages have traditionally functioned as centers for the marketing and storage of agricultural products from surrounding farms, as well as retail and service centers for farm families (Brunner 1927). Manufacturing activity in rural communities is often related to primary production, such as the processing of milk or canning of vegetables, and changes in farm production, farm prices, technology and the scale of farm and processing operations have brought constant adjustments in village economies in this century.

The size and distribution of population, the number and location of competing trade centers, and the availability of transportation facilities are closely associated with the level of business activity in a place (Christaller 1966). The increased mobility made possible by the automobile has long been viewed as a threat to the business districts of small towns (Vogt 1917; Hawthorn 1926). For villages on the
rural-urban fringe, where communities are relatively close to one another, the introduction of the inter-urban railway system and the automobile had a profound effect on the degree of competition among places for retail and service trade.

In Lake County, residents of villages had traditionally travelled to Chicago and Waukegan (the county seat) for major purchases, depending on local businesses for convenience goods such as groceries. In the years following World War II, however, this pattern began to change as village economies adjusted to rapid population growth and the increased mobility of residents. During the 1950s, for example, Libertyville became the principal trade center for much of Lake County, second only to Waukegan in retail and service sales. Between 1948 and 1960, Libertyville experienced a rise in retail sales of 144.6 percent (while the population gain was 57.8 percent for the 1950s). The remarkable growth of Libertyville’s business district concerned merchants in nearby villages, who began publicly to criticize Libertyville for what they considered unfair practices, such as the bus service that offered free transportation to and from Libertyville’s business district to residents of the trade area.

The differentiation of villages according to function has varied along with technological change. Richards (1978) contends that the popular notion that the small town is becoming extinct has been perpetuated by the failure of some observers to

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2Editorial in The Independent Register, 18 April 1957.
distinguish between crossroads hamlets whose existence has always been tenuous and larger towns that have enjoyed a more secure place in the ecological system:

In general, the crossroads hamlets were the last to be developed and are the weakest, and it is their demise that gives apparent statistical support to the generalization that all small towns are threatened. In the Midwest, the last stage of town development occurred just before the mass appearance of the automobile (Hart, 1972). The resulting pattern was a fine mesh of towns, including new crossroads hamlets, doomed to extinction. The impact of the automobile and technological advances in agriculture diminished the need for such closely spaced market towns (Richards 1978, 555).³

Before 1970, post-war patterns of growth in metropolitan areas generally conformed to the gradient principle of urban expansion which predicts that the density of places will diminish as one moves outward from the urban core (Duncan and Reiss 1956; Duncan 1961). The shift toward nonmetropolitan areas that became evident in the 1970s, however, suggests that growth has become much more diffuse and does not necessarily conform to the gradient patterns noted previously (Beale 1975).

The impact of population change on small town retail and service structures is complicated by a number of variables, such as increased mobility and affluence of residents and the penetration of large chain and discount stores into rural areas (Johnson 1985, 10-15). For towns on the edge of large metropolitan areas, the impact of population growth or decline on local business is difficult to assess because of the proximity of towns to one another as well as to the central city. Proximity to

³There is also the obvious but sometimes overlooked fact that towns with populations under 2,500 disappear from the small town category as they grow beyond this size and no longer meet the criterion for inclusion.
cities makes villages attractive as residential communities, and population growth has been associated with an increase in the number of retail establishments. But accessibility to larger places also means that small town merchants must compete with businesses in cities that can offer lower prices and greater variety (Johansen and Fuguit 1984).

The survival of small towns has been linked to their ability to attract commerce and industry and to specialize in order to secure a place in the hierarchy of places. But public discussion of strategies for attracting such growth often generates conflict among individuals and groups with very different ideas about the type of growth they want to see in the village.

A good deal of interest in the role of business owners, bankers, politicians, realtors, developers and others who benefit from development followed Molotch's (1976) argument that whatever differences such citizens might have, they are united in the belief that growth is good:

For those who count, the city is a growth machine, one that can increase aggregate rents and trap related wealth for those in the right position to benefit. The desire for growth creates consensus among a wide range of elite groups, no matter how split they might be on other issues.\(^4\)

Conflict might arise, however, between this "growth machine" of elites, who are interested in the exchange value of land in a community, and residents trying to

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protect the use value of real estate (Logan and Molotch 1987, 1-2). This distinction is particularly applicable to the analysis of political controversies related to growth in Lake County since 1970, where the increase in the price of real estate has been matched by the increase in the determination of many residents to protect the use value of the environment. There may also be conflict between the various factions of the growth machine with vested interests in different types of residential and commercial growth.

Balancing economic development and rapid population growth with the desire to hold on to their small-town atmosphere has presented a formidable challenge for villages on the rural-urban fringe. Some local business owners view population increase as a panacea for declining revenues, while others worry about the competition that new growth inevitably attracts. Major changes in retailing in the 1960s and 1970s, such as the dispersion of supermarkets and other chain stores into Lake County and the proliferation of shopping plazas on the outskirts of small towns had a significant impact on the downtown business districts of small towns on the rural-urban fringe. Figures 20 and 21 illustrate changes in the number of retail establishments and the volume of retail sales for the five villages in this study between

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5One example of conflict over the use and exchange values of land involves a cemetery in the Chicago suburb of Lombard. Periodic battles over the use of this parcel (adjacent to a shopping center and one of the last large tracts in the area) have erupted in recent years with proposals from developers that the cemetery’s current occupants be exhumed and relocated in order to accommodate retail development. Although the village board has not granted approval for such plans, many Lombard residents believe that development of the parcel is inevitable, and have begun to have their loved ones reinterred in other cemeteries.
Fig. 20. Number of Retail Establishments in Villages, 1972-1992. (Data not available for Vernon Hills in 1972).
Fig. 21. Retail Sales in Villages, 1972-1992. (Data not available for Vernon Hills in 1972).

The opening of two regional malls within a fifteen-minute drive from Grayslake in the early 1970s generated a good deal of anxiety about the vitality of Grayslake's downtown business district as residents witnessed the loss of a number of small businesses and the general decline of the main shopping district. In 1972, for example, the owner of a variety store on the main street of Grayslake led the formation of the Grayslake Development Corporation. Stock shares valued at $100 each were sold to business persons and residents for the purpose of providing seed money for a project to upgrade the Grayslake's central business district. Enthusiastically launched with the theme "Let's Get Going," the groups laid out a plan for downtown renovation plan for the replacements of existing facades with new ones intended to resemble the half-timbered architecture of the Old English style.

Despite the efforts of the Grayslake Development Corporation and the Chamber of Commerce, the main street of the village continued to lose ground during the 1970s. A study conducted in the early 1980s on the feasibility of downtown revitalization for the village concluded:

Within the subregional market area where Grayslake is competing for business, most other communities have grown substantially faster than Grayslake in both housing units (93 percent versus 29 percent) and in population (60 percent versus 7 percent).

Memories which go back to 1960 suggest that the downtown was in much better shape than it is now, despite the fact that in the intervening period efforts have been made to preserve and strengthen it . . . . These efforts have reflected limited commitment to the future and a lack of communication or consensus among key leaders. Typical of small towns, personality differences played a major role in communications breakdowns.

Major factors in Grayslake's declining share of the regional market are slow population growth, lack of variety and selection, shabby appearance of the
business district, inadequate parking, failure to replace departed businesses and business leadership and uncommitted absentee landlords and proprietors.

Grayslake's outside image of decline is compounded by an inner self-image of fragmentation, frustration, factionalism and apathy which hamper its capacity to organize effectively for a response to the outside challenge.

Despite the weaknesses, Grayslake retains major strengths: its central location, major intersection, general desirable image of the community, proximity to the College of Lake County, development potential of surrounding open land and personal service not available at malls. 

Efforts to rejuvenate downtown Grayslake, spearheaded by the Jaycees, faced the difficult task of overcoming the pessimism long associated with declining business districts (Taves 1961; Rust 1975). As one Grayslake observer noted:

Each day the project continues to wallow, trying to keep its head above water, and the situation gets worse. More and more business is leaving town to shop elsewhere and we're losing the sales tax. We're replacing business we're losing with services which fills the storefronts and takes care of the rents, but it doesn't help us replace those lost tax dollars.

Libertyville, as well, was experiencing a precipitous decline in the number of businesses in the central business district. The pace of growth in Libertyville's retail sector had dropped sharply after 1958 to an annual gain of 2.5 percent by 1961. By the mid-1970s, businesses were abandoning the downtown business district at an alarming rate. In the summer of 1976, for example, the downtown lost two shoe stores, an office supply store, a bank, a variety store and a grocery store. After pleas

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from downtown merchants and recommendations from its Urban Problems Commission, the village board eliminated parking meters and formulated a downtown appearance ordinance aimed at improving the business district.\textsuperscript{9} Despite the growing downtown vacancy rate, the local newspaper rejected the notion that Libertyville’s downtown was doomed, suggesting that it was the failure of merchants to adapt to changing conditions that was at the heart of the business district’s decline:

The suggestion has been raised that downtown Libertyville is on the skids. Frankly, the idea seems a little silly to us. Thousands of towns and cities in the United States have seen their downtown business districts deteriorate. The case: an eroding tax base, triggered by middle class families’ flight to the suburbs. Where did those families go? Towns such as Libertyville, Mundelein, Vernon Hills . . . and they’re still arriving daily. The deep and broad social and economic problems of Chicago are not Libertyville’s -- at least, not yet. What is causing the talk? An \textit{Independent Register} reporter came across several explanations in recent interviews with downtown merchants: adverse newspaper publicity, ineffective local government, outdated retailing methods, absentee landlords. Perhaps there’s a little truth in each of those suggestions. But despite some bumps in the road, the retail business climate apparently remains good for good businessmen.

Larger businesses and businesses which can support higher overhead or need more room for expansion will continue to find newer shopping centers more attractive. The First National Bank . . . is not leaving because it is failing -- it is leaving because it is successful and needs room to grow. Other businesses may come and go. Downtown Libertyville will remain and with work, planning, and confidence, it will prosper.\textsuperscript{10}

Despite its upbeat tone, the piece failed to address the basic problem of the downtown business district, which was the growing number of vacancies. It was true


that in many cases, growth itself was the problem. The bank, office supply store and
the grocery store moved to new, larger facilities on the edge of the village that could
accommodate their expanding businesses. To the village board, and to organizations
such as the Chamber of Commerce, these moves were positive indicators of
community vitality and meant higher sales and property tax revenues. But to
independent downtown merchants, who could not survive on the narrow profit
margins of chain stores, the suggestion that their declining fortunes were due to poor
business practices was an insult. Thus, the events of the 1970s contributed to the gap
between the interests of downtown merchants and others interested in growth, such as
politicians, realtors, and bankers.

The Grayslake Development Corporation, for instance, which was outspoken in
its support for the Heartland development, was severely criticized by some oldtimers
who were opposed to the project and who depicted members of the GDC (many of
whom did not live in the village) as carpetbaggers. At a meeting described as "a
contest of who could shout the loudest," oldtimers complained that they did not
appreciate "outsiders coming in and telling us for $100 [the cost of a share in the
GDC] how to run our village."\(^{11}\)

Grayslake’s mayor somewhat wearily suggested that the loss of Heartland would
be a major setback for the village:

For 25 years our town has gone backward. Our streets need work, we need new
fire hydrants, we had to eliminate clean-up day this year because there just
weren’t funds available. We have had to cut back on our maintenance crew. Our

\(^{11}\)"Effect of GDC Letter," *Grayslake Times*, 8 May 1875.
town needs revenue and I believe Heartland will bring some of this . . .12

Anxiety about the demise of a community’s downtown area can take a variety of forms. In the mid-1970s, as Wauconda’s downtown business district declined, for example, residents began to receive letters (sometimes unsigned) that addressed the issue of the deteriorating downtown and criticized local business persons. One letter charged:

Our business community is solely interested in itself and profits, as evidenced by the shoddy and dirty appearance of Main Street, the abandoning of Main Street by the bank and the constant reluctance of business owners to cooperate with village officials in upgrading the community.13

As Wauconda’s economy continued to weaken in the early 1980s, an editorial in the local newspaper laid the blame at the feet of those who had spoken out against new development:

Not too many years ago, when environmental concerns predominated and no-growth advocates were having a heyday, progress was a suspect strategy, if not out and out opposed. Here and there, anti-growth candidates captured the fancy of voters and won places in local government. "enough is enough," was a frequently heard battle cry. "We want our town to stay the way it is," was another often heard phrase. Considering present business woes, no one will ever know the effect of no-growth policies, but it’s a cinch they played a part in economic depression.

No doubt, the sight of "For Rent" signs in our business district helped rekindle interest in progress. There is no doubt that even candidates for grassroots offices like our village board are sensitive to local unemployment. It’s been a long time since we’ve heard candidates advocating more local industry, but the opinion is coming through loud and clear this year.14


13Wauconda Leader, 12 February 1976.

In the mid-1980s, Wauconda merchants and civic organizations launched several programs (such as the use of "Waubucks" and a "Shop Wauconda First" campaign) aimed at luring residents away from the shopping malls outside of the village limits. The Chamber of Commerce organized a community-wide program to clean up the downtown area and local banks pledged their support and set aside loans for local business. As downtown businesses struggled for survival, however, a number of businesses were filling the new shopping centers that had risen on the edge of the village.

By the early 1990s, Wauconda's fortunes had changed significantly. When the village treasurer reported an all-time high in sales taxes returned to the village from the state, the good news was explained in terms of the thriving local economy, which offered the essentials:

 Basically, people shop locally for gas, car repairs, food -- the things you're collecting sales tax off of. If we had a major mall where people quit buying --- some place like Vernon Hills or Schaumburg --- where they have big malls --- [such places] feel the recession with the loss of sales tax more quickly.
Our major sources of revenue are from the oil industry, food and restaurants -- people still eat out and they still drive their cars.  

Despite some indications of improvement in the overall local economies of Grayslake and Wauconda, however, local leaders remained puzzled by the problems of the downtown business district. In 1991, the Grayslake Area Chamber of

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16 "Recession no obsession in these parts," Wauconda Leader, 26 April 1991.
Commerce, the Grayslake Development Commission and the Economic Development Corporation sponsored a talk by a community economic development consultant whom they hoped would provide strategies the village could use to increase local business. The consultant told them to forget the old adage that people should shop in their own villages, saying "Your competition is as close as the gas pedal on my car. If 'Grayslake people should shop in Grayslake' was taken to its logical conclusion, then no one from Antioch or Gurnee should shop here because they should be shopping there.'" Rather, the consultant went on, the emphasis should be on products at reasonable prices, good service and a pleasing environment (unlike Grayslake's downtown, which he described as "prison-like").

Vernon Hills

Hawthorn Center, the retail anchor of New Century Town, has served many of the functions of a traditional downtown for the village, with a post office, retail and specialty stores, and a variety of services and restaurants. The lack of an identifiable town center, however, has been one feature of the community often mentioned by critics of the town's aggressive growth policies, who argue that the absence of a traditional downtown contributes to the impression that Vernon Hills is not a genuine community but simply an agglomeration of commercial and corporate buildings. In 1994 Vernon Hills officials urged residents to support an effort to create a downtown for the village, saying

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there is one thing Vernon Hills conspicuously lacks. A town center with unique sense of place.

In an attempt to create a vibrant, contemporary interpretation of the town centers which once defined American communities, the Village has submitted a grant application to the state. If awarded, the grant would fund construction of a pedestrian oriented boulevard north of Hawthorn Center on the Cuneo property which would anchor as a town center.

The Town Center Boulevard . . . would offer a mix of residential, commercial and public land uses common to more traditional towns (Libertyville, Lake Forest, etc.) thus defining "downtown" Vernon Hills.18

This proposal was greeted with disdain by residents of neighboring towns who scoffed that real downtowns were the products of decades of evolution and could not be replicated by a developer. Critics pointed to an effort in the late 1980s to create a downtown for the village of Buffalo Grove, a rapidly-growing community south of Vernon Hills. With an occupancy rate of only 60 percent by 1994, the Buffalo Grove Town Center, built with $8.5 million dollars raised by referendum, had not attracted the shoppers and restaurant diners village officials had hoped would establish a vibrant nucleus for the community. Marketing studies indicated that nearly three-fourths of the homes within five miles of the Town Center were occupied by people under fifty years old -- families in their peak shopping years. Rather than flocking to the new center, however, residents continued to spend their money and leisure time at a less attractive (but fully leased) strip mall just across the highway. The failure of the Town Center left village officials and residents baffled. "This has been very

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disappointing," said one longtime resident. "We wanted a center for our town, but we got a glorified shopping center instead. I don’t know what went wrong."\textsuperscript{19} The experience in Buffalo Grove reinforced the skepticism of many that Vernon Hills could establish anything comparable to a traditional downtown.

There was some evidence, however, that declining downtown districts in older communities could be revitalized. By the early 1980s many of the stores in downtown Libertyville stood empty. Some residents saw the decline of the business district as the inevitable consequence of a new age of retailing in which customers simply preferred the convenience and variety of the shopping malls. With the mushrooming malls of Vernon Hills within a few miles of downtown Libertyville, the future seemed destined to bring only more empty storefronts and deserted streets.

Village officials considered a number of strategies aimed at drawing people back downtown. In 1974, for example, the Libertyville Downtown Urban Planning Committee discussed the creation of a "superblock." In this plan, one section of the downtown district would be the focus of intense redevelopment efforts, including the demolition of existing buildings and erection of new ones in their place. The plan was immediately challenged by downtown merchants. "Why do you take the best block in town and knock it down?" asked one store owner. "To tear down this store, and others, with the rest of the block, just seems silly -- like throwing the baby out

\textsuperscript{19}Julie Bennett, "Blurred Vision: Buffalo Grove attraction falters,"\textit{ Chicago Tribune}, 15 May 1994, Sec. 18, p.3.
with the bath water. The 'superblock' concept was quickly abandoned, leaving the Urban Planning Committee to explore other approaches to the problem.

The decision not to demolish the old stores turned out to be a wise one. By the 1980s attitudes toward small-town revitalization had shifted away from replacement of deteriorating buildings to renovation that capitalized on their unusual architectural features. In 1986 a Tax Increment Financing District was established in Libertyville to generate funds for improvements such as additional parking areas, rehabilitation and resale of buildings and street improvements aimed at attracting more shoppers.

By the early 1990s downtown Libertyville had regained much of its earlier vitality, with 130 retail stores, 15 restaurants and bars, five banks, a number of professional offices, a micro-brewery and a downtown vacancy rate that had fallen to about ten percent. A good deal of the credit for the revival has been given to civic leaders who solicited help from the National Main Street Program, operated by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. One of the organizers of the project explained:

I felt there were two key issues we had to have if we were to revitalize downtown Libertyville. I knew that to have a strong, vital downtown that people could be proud of we had to create an independent, non-profit organization with

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20Paul Neville, "Libertyville 'superblock' idea draws fire,' The Independent Register, 28 March 1974.

21The establishment of the TIF District froze sales and property funds going to taxing bodies at 1986 levels, and permitted the village to collect any increase in assessed valuation and sale taxes for the TIF District. The primary opponents to the establishment of the district were the elementary and high school districts, which could expect to lose substantial tax dollars for the duration of the district’s existence (a maximum of twenty-three years).
a paid staff focusing strictly on downtown.\textsuperscript{22}

The Main Street program helped local leaders to organize a loan pool offering low-interest loans for restoration projects aimed at reversing decades of deterioration. A number of events have been successful in drawing people to the business district during the summer months -- band concerts, a weekly farmer's market and "Out to Lunch," a program that features food and music in a downtown park. According to one estimate, Main Street-sponsored promotions brought 30,000 people to the downtown district in 1992.\textsuperscript{23}

Some of Libertyville's successful revitalization is undoubtedly due to structural factors. The business district is located on a state highway heavily traveled by residents as well as people who live outside the village. Many downtown buildings have architecturally interesting features and are fundamentally sound. The village also grew around a central square, reminiscent of the New England village green, that provides a natural focal point for community life. Libertyville's status as an old (and relatively affluent) community makes it a destination for shoppers interested in the small antique and crafts shops that have moved into downtown buildings.

Attempts by other suburbs to revitalize their downtowns became common in the 1970s and 1980s, as communities adopted redevelopment plans emphasizing neighborhood convenience shopping, multi-family housing and a central meeting place


\textsuperscript{23}"What's up downtown?" \textit{Libertyville Review}, 15 July 1993.
where residents could socialize. In the 1990s, Mundelein Pride, a non-profit revitalization group, was organized for the purpose of restoring and preserving the original downtown. At about the same time, Wauconda began exploring the feasibility of remodeling some of its downtown buildings. A plan in Grayslake called for $2.5 million dollars in village funds to be spent on downtown revitalization. These schemes changed the emphasis from attempts to attract large-scale development or as plans began to reflect many of the same the assumptions made by nineteenth-century planners who incorporated park-like settings and physical spaces specifically designed to encourage social interaction. Villages were urged to use whatever traditional buildings they had, such as railway stations, as anchors for shopping districts. "The key is center," one planner said. "If [town officials] know what they’re doing, they know they can’t compete on retail, so they create niches: antiques, services, neighborhood convenience. In redoing, you need to be unique."24

But "center" is difficult to maintain as a town’s population booms. Public structures such as village halls, post offices and libraries, that have drawn residents to a town’s center for decades, become inadequate as the population doubles or triples. Space for expansion of these facilities is often not available in compact, traditional downtowns, prompting decision-makers to search for new sites on the edge of town where vacant land is abundant and available.

The decision to relocate public buildings away from the town’s center not only

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violates the principles for successful downtown revitalization, but often brings sharp criticism from residents. In the early 1990s, for example, the Libertyville post office, village hall, library and fire station all faced serious overcrowding with no room for expansion in their downtown locations. Although the fire station was renovated to accommodate village offices, both the post office and fire station were relocated to sites far from the center of town. Residents bemoaned the loss of "center" that these institutions had provided, concerned that the change might reverse the promising revival of Libertyville’s downtown.

Changing attitudes toward commercial development

Even as local business owners retrenched during the 1980s, village boards continued to welcome the strip malls and large shopping centers that sprung up along highways and at major intersections. Large retailers were coveted for their contribution to the property and sales tax base. By the early 1990s, however, even attitudes about non-residential growth in the suburban counties around Chicago were changing. Residents of small towns faced the daily frustration of the traffic congestion that worsened with each crossroads commercial development. The incursion of national and regional retail chains into the peripheral areas of small towns during the 1980s altered the landscape and raised questions about the benefits and costs of new development.

Decisions about the viability of these large chain stores were often made by people far removed from the local setting. In some cases, large retail outlets were built, opened and then abandoned in a relatively short period, leaving vacancies even
as new stores rose on adjacent tracts of land. The impact of rapid commercial growth on neighboring towns was often very apparent, as national chains closed a store in one town only to build a duplicate in the next, attracted by incentives from local officials or more desirable demographic characteristics. These decisions sometimes heightened the perception that a village was declining in relation to its neighbors. For example, when the Michigan-based K-Mart corporation abandoned its Mundelein store for a new 180,000 square foot Super K-Mart in neighboring Vernon Hills, the corporation continued to lease the vacant building it had left behind. According to Mundelein’s village administrator, the decision was an attempt by K-Mart to protect the new Vernon Hills store (which was floundering) from competitors who might have their eyes on the Mundelein property. "We hear that they believe that continuing to pay the rent is better than the money they would lose from a competing operation," the administrator said, noting that the same situation had occurred when a large grocery chain closed its store in downtown Mundelein to open a new store south of the main business district. According to the administrator, both moves were "a way to stifle competition, without any regard at all for the community where they have earned their tremendous profits over the years."25

By 1990 local officials in rapidly-growing suburbs throughout the region were taking a much closer look at the costs of commercial development. Although conventional wisdom held that nonresidential growth was a rational approach to

strengthening a community's tax base and relieving the burden on residents, property taxes continued to rise in spite of significant commercial development. In 1991, a report suggesting that nonresidential development was associated with higher property taxes generated widespread debate among planners, academics, municipal officials, developers, realtors and taxpayer groups in the Chicago metropolitan area. The study, carried out by staff members of the DuPage County Regional Planning Commission, contended that both residential and nonresidential development had contributed significantly to tax increases, and that tax increases were greater in places with rapid growth. The largest increases in property tax levies, the report concluded, were occurring in places with significant nonresidential growth.26

DuPage County experienced a 19 percent increase in population during the 1980s and had a 92 percent increase in employment from 1979 to 1989. The apparent association between the rapid nonresidential growth and property tax increases came as a surprise to planners, who began to explore the possible indirect effects of nonresidential growth. Along with increases in transportation costs associated with road maintenance by local governments, they concluded, there were at least four areas in which nonresidential growth had implications for the provision of educational services (the largest portion of local tax bills):

1) New employers will demand good schools for their children and their employees. To bring a highly trained work force into the county requires good schools with a variety of programs for their families as well as themselves.

2) The rapidly expanding employment base in the county will create demand for housing, as people seek to live close to their work place. Thus, increasing enrollments can be indirectly linked to job growth.

3) ... nonresidential development has the effect of driving up residential property values, which in turn will increase the cost of living in the county. Wages paid by school districts, which make up a significant part of the school budget, will increase to keep pace with rising costs.

4) As the job growth in the county creates a more urban environment, schools will be required to provide services to deal with urban needs and problems.27

The release of the Property Tax Report brought immediate assault from a number of critics. The DuPage Development Council, the DuPage Association of Realtors, the DuPage Mayors and Managers Conference all challenged the validity of the methods used in the study. Battle lines were drawn and the issue of development and property taxes erupted into academic street fighting as experts were marshalled by both sides. By the time the furor had diminished, the issues had been obscured and the significance of the results undermined by numerous attacks on the model used. Despite the problems with the DuPage Property Tax Report, however, its effect was to sow the seeds of doubt about the accuracy of the traditional view that nonresidential growth paid its own way.

Even in Vernon Hills, where developers had encountered little opposition from village officials or residents for twenty years, people were beginning to ask whether it might not be time to limit new growth. In 1994, when the largest elementary school district in Vernon Hills appeared on the state’s list of financially troubled districts,

residents were stunned. How could a town bursting with upscale commercial and residential development, they asked, find itself in the same condition as schools in the most economically disadvantaged communities in Illinois? The answer, they were told, lay in the phenomenal pace of development: the district had grown from about 700 students in the 1970s to nearly 3,200 in 1994.\textsuperscript{28} A tax cap imposed on the suburban counties around Chicago in 1991 magnified the problem by preventing the district from raising revenues more than 5 percent (or the percent increase in the national Consumer Price Index).

A few weeks after the announcement of the school district's financial problems, nearly two hundred people turned out for the public unveiling of plans for the large planned unit development to be built on the balance of the Cuneo estate adjacent to New Century Town. Village officials, who had expressed confidence that the Cuneo plan would please residents, were surprised by the hostility of those speaking against the development.\textsuperscript{29} This public hearing marked one of the few instances of serious opposition to a development in the history of the village. Residents demanded to know how the projected population of 5,000 could be accommodated. The impact on already crowded and financially troubled school districts was of primary concern.

Residents of neighboring communities, as well, appealed to citizens of Vernon Hills to do something about the rapid growth in their village. One Mundelein resident


commented:

I had never attended a Vernon Hills board meeting until last week, and after watching that inept, deceitful mayor and his gang of untrustees ignore the wishes of a roomful of people objecting to the Cuneo development, I can see how Vernon Hills has earned its glorious reputation as Asphalt City.

What are the people in Vernon Hills doing while all this is going on? Why are the blatant conflicts of interest among their trustees never made an issue? Or has taking campaign money from developers become a requirement, rather than a liability, for being a trustee in Vernon Hills?30

The overflow crowd and unexpected opposition to the 1,100 acre Cuneo development motivated Vernon Hills' officials to change the location of planning and zoning meetings on the development from the village hall to a place large enough to accommodate at least 300 people. "The last thing we want to do is turn away anyone from the public input process," an assistant to the village manager said. "We want to make sure everyone who's interested can put in their two cents."

In the months after the first rumblings of discontent, Vernon Hills village trustees surprised nearly everyone by turning down two proposals for additional shopping centers. Village trustees began openly to wonder whether they should impose serious restrictions on growth. "I think we're ready to slow down," one trustee said. "And I think people in town are ready to see us slow down."31 Another board member explained that "We have to make sure we do not hit that point


31Christi Parsons, "Vernon Hills hits mall brakes," Chicago Tribune, 7 July 1994, Sec. 2, p.1. Five months later, however, the board reversed its 6-0 decision to reject a strip shopping center when the village attorney advised the board that failure to grant approval would bring a lawsuit that the village would almost surely lose (Karen Binder, Daily Herald, 8 December 1994).
when the retail sector starts to cannibalize itself."

With 2.8 million square feet of retail space generating more than $400 million dollars in annual sales, Vernon Hills had secured its place as one of the retail capitals of the Chicago suburbs. But negotiations between public officials and retail developers were becoming increasingly strained, with officials aware of growing public scrutiny and cynicism about the benefits of growth. The rapid turnover of business in new buildings had left vacancies that were becoming more difficult to fill. "Most municipalities today want to ensure that retail projects getting built will still be viable and desirable 30 years from now," said a real estate consultant. "Developers with financing in hand, on the other hand, are looking for short-term returns. There is a resulting dynamic tension that isn't easy to resolve."

It is impossible to determine the extent to which the Vernon Hills board's rejection of proposals for new commercial development were influenced by citizen opposition. In 1993, a retail market study done for the village concluded that the village should build no more strip shopping centers, particularly those selling convenience goods such as groceries. Rather, the village should focus on "big box" destinations, free-standing stores selling home furnishings, appliances and home improvement goods. The report also indicated that the village could easily sustain an


additional 63,000 square feet of eating and drinking establishments. Vernon Hills' location as a retail and employment hub drawing shoppers as well as approximately 25,000 employees from within a four-mile radius of the main intersection of the village each day, according to the report, made it suitable for a wider selection of restaurants than were currently in place.\(^{35}\) In 1994 the village announced that it was launching a campaign aimed at making Vernon Hills a center of entertainment that would rival Chicago. With plans for an eight-acre outdoor theater and restaurant complex, local leaders enthusiastically promoted this new growth strategy, saying that "Vernon Hills is typical of the upscale edge cities across the country." Although Vernon Hills does not meet the criteria for an Edge City as defined by the inventor of the term, it certainly is well on its way to becoming something very much like one:

> Edge City is any place that . . . has five million square feet or more of leasable office space . . . has 600,000 square feet or more of leasable retail space . . . has more jobs than bedrooms . . . Is perceived by the population as one place. It is a regional end destination for mixed use -- not a starting point -- that "has it all," from jobs, to shopping, to entertainment . . . was nothing like "city" as recently as thirty years ago. Then, it was just cow pastures . . . \(^{36}\)

By the 1990s Vernon Hills had outgrown its rambunctious early years, when its expansion seemed limitless and virtually everything was new. Having annexed virtually every bit of available land on its edges, most new development will be limited to the territory now within its boundaries. In a "Strategic Plan," village


officials identified the issues facing Vernon Hills in the 1990s: "increasing competition from other communities, reaching accommodation with our neighbors, infrastructure and housing stock deterioration in certain areas . . . focus on the regional impacts of our decisions." Challenged by other villages that have followed its example by aggressively pursuing commercial growth, an aging Vernon Hills is finding that it must now deal with many of the same issues that faced its neighbors during the 1970s and 1980s. As it matures, village officials contemplate the strengths and weaknesses of their "edge city," and try to plan for the future.

\[37\text{Vernon Hills Strategic Plan: 1994.}\]
CHAPTER 7
RAPID GROWTH AND CHANGING RELATIONSHIPS AMONG COMMUNITIES

This chapter examines the effects of rapid growth on the relationships among communities in the rural-urban fringe. These relationships are affected by decisions about the type of growth a particular municipality seeks, as well as by external constraints and incentives, such as the erratic flow of federal and state funds to local governments and the tax structure of the state in which municipalities operate. In the communities included in this study, a number of factors have contributed to conflict among places over the past twenty-five years.

Competition among towns for commercial and residential growth, as Chapter 2 illustrates, is not new. Local business and community leaders have always vied for the type of growth that would put their town on the map and improve public facilities and services. As extralocal government funding has declined in the past two decades, however, the search for non-residential development has intensified. This has led to an increase in competition for the type of growth that is believed to enhance the tax base without the expensive services associated with residential growth.

The ability of a community to attract new residents and commercial growth with characteristics considered desirable is associated with the "business climate" of a town, which is highly dependent on local wealth and the tax/service ratio. Competi-
tion among suburban governments within a metropolitan region creates "a marketplace for public goods and services local governments provide" (Schneider 1989, 4). As rational consumers, individuals and businesses try to locate in a community where they can purchase the amenities they want at the lowest cost, and local governments assemble the packages of goods and services they believe will attract the residents they prefer. There is a long tradition of research investigating this local market, influenced to a great extent by the work of Tiebout (1956), who viewed the metropolitan region as a market driven by the decisions of citizens who could simply relocate when another place seemed to offer a better mix of services and taxes. Schneider expands on the work of previous theorists to develop a more comprehensive theory of the market for public goods, describing how local governments implement policies they believe will increase their benefit/cost ratio, such as fiscal zoning or inducements to firms to locate within their boundaries (Schneider 1989, 21).

Ultimately, Schneider argues, efforts converge on the maximization of the tax base in a community, since this improves the benefit/cost ratio between services and taxes.

In the Lake County communities investigated in this study, local leaders became particularly attentive to the problem of attracting growth that would enhance the tax base of their communities during the 1970s. The rise of New Century Town and the aggressive pursuit of commercial and corporate growth by Vernon Hills was markedly different from the traditional strategies of communities in the area. Vernon Hills officials had boasted in the early 1970s that the annexation agreement with the developers of New Century Town had been negotiated so that utilities, for example,
would cost taxpayers of Vernon Hills nothing. In addition, it was anticipated that surplus revenue would make it possible to enhance village facilities and thus benefit everyone.

The growth of Vernon Hills coincided with the stagnation or decline of the main business districts of surrounding communities, and the desire to attract growth that would enhance the tax base became a critical issue for villages in the 1980s. The strategies discussed in Chapter 6, for example, such as the use of tax increment financing as an inducement for business, illustrate the ways local officials attempted to lure new development. Competition for the most affluent residents grew as well during the 1980s. The strong housing market intensified the competition among places for the most affluent residents, whose expensive taste in real estate would contribute to the assessed valuation of municipalities.

Schneider concludes that given the rewards for attracting the affluent and thereby expanding the wealth of a suburb, local growth policies such as exclusionary zoning and the construction of luxury housing are rational. But while local governments may enact specific fiscal and budgetary policies in their pursuit of wealth, Schneider argues that the impact of these strategies is marginal. The constraints on efforts by local municipalities to increase local wealth are formidable, Schneider contends, with more than 75% of the variance in community income in 1980 explained by median income for 1970 (Schneider 1989, 134-35).

Logan and Molotch (1987, 196) contend that the autonomy of suburban governments facilitates the concentration of power in the hands of the suburban elite,
who further their own interests through the "political ecology" of the suburbs. As towns with large and diverse tax bases attract corporate investment and jobs, and as reliance on property taxes enhances educational and recreational facilities in affluent suburbs, poor and working-class residents have become increasingly concentrated and isolated in older industrial communities and in smaller areas in the periphery of the metropolis. This type of economic and social disparity has profound implications in terms of the effect of location on the life chances and choices available to people in communities. The fate of a child born in a working-class suburb that has lost its industrial base, for example, is inextricably bound up with the limited capacity of the school district to provide a comprehensive education.

Evaluating the costs of growth

There is a growing body of literature which suggests that the methods traditionally used to measure the effects of development on a community may have omitted some important factors related to the fiscal impact of growth. Some studies, for example, suggest that a causal relationship exists between new development (particularly non-residential development) and increases in local property taxes. Although the impact of various types of development on property taxes has not been clearly delineated, there is a growing conviction among local public officials and residents that the long-term consequences of growth need to be considered more carefully than they have been in the past. In rapidly-growing places, the conventional wisdom that growth pays for itself is no longer accepted without question. Conflict over the impact of new development on schools, fire and police protection and
property taxes has become a routine part of the decision-making process in many suburban communities.

There is wide disparity in the level of satisfaction with local public services from one suburban community to the next. Perceived differences in the quality of educational facilities and programs, in particular, tend to affect the level of satisfaction of residents. In response to a poll of Lake County residents conducted in 1993, for example, the greatest dissatisfaction was expressed by residents of cities in the northeast (including Zion, Waukegan and North Chicago). When asked about the most serious problems in local schools, 75 percent of respondents cited lack of parental interest, insufficient financial support for schools (74%), low standards and expectations of students (71%), gang activity (68%), overcrowded classrooms (58%) and incompetent teachers and counselors (49%). Overall, 28 percent of respondents said that they were dissatisfied with the quality of education in their communities.

In contrast, only 6 percent of residents of the southeastern portion of the county, which includes the affluent north shore suburbs of Lake Bluff and Lake Forest, reported dissatisfaction with public education. When asked about problems in their local schools, dissatisfaction was related to concerns about the competence of teachers and counselors (29%), insufficient financial support for schools (24%), lack of parental interest (21%), low standards and expectations (17%), gang activity (15%) and overcrowded classrooms (13%). Forty-four percent of respondents mentioned no
problems.\footnote{These responses are from a poll conducted during the week of April 3-13, 1993 by Market Shares Corporation for the \textit{Chicago Tribune}.}

The implications of these perceptions in terms of the ability of communities to maintain or improve their fiscal status are far-reaching. Central cities tend to have redistributive educational policies in which children of the same age are provided with the same benefits, regardless of family income, social position, or tax payments. Suburbs, on the other hand, are more likely to employ developmental policies. Families who are willing and able to pay more to live in a suburb with a reputation for superior schools exchange higher mortgage payments for what they believe to be educational advantage. This benefits both parties and increases the net utility of the community (Peterson 1981, 94-95).

The distinction between suburban and central city schools has been the focus of a good deal of attention. As Peterson points out, however, there is considerable variation among suburban schools. There is evidence of a positive association between property values and the performance of school children on tests of verbal ability, even when family income is held constant. When educational benefits are measured by level of expenditure rather than test scores, educational services still have a positive effect on property values even when median family income, tax rates and type of housing stock have been controlled. This, says Peterson, demonstrates the perception of consumers that there is a relationship between money spent on schools and the quality of education received. Therefore, he says, suburban school
districts play an important role in promoting local economies (1981, 96-97). In central Lake County, realtors report that awareness of overcrowded classrooms and fiscal problems in rapidly-growing communities such as Vernon Hills is a primary concern of many home buyers with young children, who sometimes refuse to consider homes in districts where such problems related to growth are generally known.

Conflict among villages

Conflict among incorporated places has also been fostered by the fact that municipalities have planning jurisdiction over an area one and one-half miles from their borders. As villages expand through annexation, these areas often fall within the planning domain of more than one village, which increases the likelihood that conflict will occur. For example, when the village of Round Lake Park revised its comprehensive plan in the early 1990s, Grayslake's mayor denounced the document:

I have a problem understanding where one municipality gets off planning something within another municipality's boundaries. If they would have submitted their plan and said, "this is our plan up to your municipal boundaries, would you please show us what you have planned in your municipality," I would be much more comfortable with that. They have things planned in our municipality boundary already. It perturbs me that someone has enough nerve to do something like that.²

While this type of hostility between villages in the county was rarely expressed by public officials during the 1950s and 1960s, large-scale annexations during the 1970s brought a rise in the level of suspicion and animosity between neighboring

communities. Negotiations between developers and village officials over New
Century Town and the Heartland project increased the level of competition among
places for growth as well as concern about the impact of planning decisions by one
community on the lives of residents in another. Charges that developers sometimes
played one town against another in attempts to gain concessions for themselves
increased as well, prompting a few efforts to prevent such situations. In 1975, for
example, mayors in the county were convened for the purpose of increasing
cooperation among communities and ending what was referred to as the "grab and
grow" policy of municipal growth.3

Despite attempts at cooperation, however, competition for development and
distrust among local officials increased. In some cases, suspicion was fueled by tales
of the Machiavellian schemes of developers. One paper published the contents of a
confidential memo obtained from Heartland developers' files indicating that an
annexation agreement with an adjacent community was nothing more than a ploy to
convince Grayslake to agree to their demands:

Annexing to Round Lake Park is the first step in a strategy to force the issue. We will have the right to terminate the annexation if we cannot get water and sewer through Round Lake . . . . Therefore, eventually we may indeed annex to Grayslake -- where we'd rather be anyway -- but not unless we know it is under conditions that will allow development. In other words, we need to hold a lot of cards in our next game with Grayslake, and believe that our activity with Round Lake Park is the trump.

In order to make the strategy work, the memo continued, three things needed to be

accomplished:

1) It was necessary to present an annexation agreement that was so far below prevailing local standards that it would create alarm among officials in Grayslake.

2) It was necessary to find a village that would accept such a sub-standard agreement.

3) It was necessary for developers to be able to back out of the agreement quickly if they were able to come to terms with Grayslake.4

The 1980s also brought an increase in suspicion and conflict between Vernon Hills and its neighbors, fostered by the perception that Vernon Hills interested in acquiring virtually all developable land within its grasp. When a developer dropped his request for annexation of 170 acres to Mundelein and decided to annex to Vernon Hills instead, Mundelein’s mayor fumed that "We have reason to believe [the developers] have been talking with Vernon Hills while still talking with Mundelein. In my view, that is totally unethical . . . . My confidence in the village of Vernon Hills government is zero." The mayor of Vernon Hills shrugged off the accusation, saying that the developer had approached him the previous year and then decided to talk to Mundelein. "A year ago, when they decided to go to Mundelein, I didn’t go out screaming like a banshee. That’s their mentality up there to pick on us, but not

4 Charles Johnston, "Memo States Heartland Deal A Sham," Grayslake Times, 18 July 1985. A similar situation occurred in 1991, when the same publisher reprinted a letter indicating that a developer was playing an adjacent village against Wauconda to his advantage (Fred Bigham, "Wauconda Developers covering all bets," Wauconda Leader, 19 July 1991).
ours to pick on them."\(^5\)

But Mundelein’s mayor persisted. In a letter published in the local newspaper, he summarized the consequences of the affair:

The real winners in this fiasco -- the developer. The real losers -- intergovernmental cooperation in the area, and the taxpayers who will subsidize whatever has been sold by an entity so hungry for growth that it would deceive its neighbor . . . . The loss of this development itself isn’t the significance of the issue. You have been caught with your hand in the cookie jar, and still deny it. That is significant! We will not forget this lesson in neighborliness. Our area will be the worse for the seeds of mistrust you have sown!\(^6\)

Vernon Hills itself was busy fending off Buffalo Grove, a suburb to its south with a reputation for equally aggressive annexation activity. When developers began to explore the possibility of annexing a 358-acre parcel to Buffalo Grove, a Vernon Hills village trustee called on its southern neighbor to stop behaving like "a big amoeba that just gobbles up land. "I know they want [that piece of property]," he said. "... Buffalo Grove will take anything it can get, but it’s ours if [the developer] wishes to annex to us. Too bad for Buffalo Grove."\(^7\)

Tensions between rapidly growing communities and their neighbors increased during the late 1980s. The nineteenth century annexation statutes passed by Illinois lawmakers to facilitate Chicago’s expansion have remained on the books, periodically dusted off and used by rapidly-growing villages seeking to control and to benefit from


\(^7\)Bob Susnara, "Developer talks to VH," *The Independent Register*, 24 April 1986.
new development on their outer fringes. Unlike many other states, in which annexation decisions are determined by the courts or by a regional commission, Illinois communities may forcibly annex unincorporated territory even when residents of the area object. Although forced annexations are rare, they are most likely to occur as rapid development shrinks the buffer zone between communities, contributing to strained relationships among neighboring towns. In 1988, the village of Long Grove, south of Vernon Hills, forcibly annexed a 50-acre tract without the knowledge or consent of the affected property owners. Rather than notifying landowners of their intention to annex, Long Grove officials published the requisite newspaper notice on New Year's Eve (timing which critics charged was craftily chosen to insure the lowest possible readership). The clandestine manner in which the annexation took place became the subject of considerable public discussion. Mundelein, which had been involved in annexation negotiations with affected property owners, promptly challenged the forced annexation in court and, after a four-year battle, won the right to annex the territory. Although the annexation by Long Grove technically met the legal requirements for annexation, the incident raised public awareness of the issues surrounding hostile annexation and sparked a good deal of concern about the intensity of the competition for land.

A similar situation occurred in 1993 when Vernon Hills annexed the tiny unincorporated community of Half Day, located at a major intersection on its southern

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8The "surround annexation law" permits a municipality to annex a tract of 60 acres or less if it is already surrounded by any combination of municipality, forest preserve or creek.
border. Officials of Lincolnshire, who had also set their sights on Half Day as part of a downtown revitalization plan, were enraged. One trustee described Vernon Hills as "going under cover of darkness to make a sneaky raid." Lincolnshire promptly retaliated by annexing the same tract of land and court battles ensued. Residents in the contested area watched in astonishment as they were absorbed into two villages simultaneously.

The tug-of-war over Half Day and other skirmishes over land disturbed residents in other unincorporated areas, who saw themselves as "in the path of an oncoming train," with little control over their own destiny. "All these people come up here from the city because they think the country would be so nice," said the owner of a service station in Half Day. "Then they get on these boards and want to make it like Schaumburg here." About 40 residents of an unincorporated area near Half Day joined a group called RAPP (Residents Against Poor Planning and Development), formed to encourage municipal officials to plan more carefully for future development. "We're not opposed to development," one RAPP organizer said, "but it has to be planned for in a reasonable and responsible way. We don't see that with Vernon Hills or Buffalo Grove."

Although residents in unincorporated areas often prefer to remain outside municipal boundaries, they may seek annexation to one village in order to avoid being


appropriated by another. The battle for Half day caused a number of residents to add their names to a petition requesting that their neighborhoods be annexed by Lincolnshire, saying that "We're being squeezed little by little by Buffalo Grove and Vernon Hills and would prefer not to become part of these municipalities."

In some cases, municipalities have adopted border agreements in which unincorporated land adjacent to more than one municipality is divided and future zoning and land use is agreed on. Border agreements generally are intended to prevent developers from playing one municipality against another to their advantage, and have served to ease tensions among a few neighboring communities. According to a local planner:

Negotiated borders help prevent situations where towns chasing after tax-producing property allow developments that are too big along their borders. If communities plan together what can be developed at the border, both towns get something they can live with. And fiscal zoning that gives one town all the negatives and the other town all the positives can be avoided.\(^\text{11}\)

Despite the increasing use of these land-use pacts, however, such agreements have not had a great success rate, tending to fall apart as land values rise and pressure from developers intensifies.

Sometimes communities form boundary pacts as a defensive measure against what they perceive as a common threat from a rapidly-expanding municipality.

The penchant for retail and commercial development in Vernon Hills, for example, drew contempt from many residents of surrounding communities who saw its

\(^{11}\) Linda Mae Carlstone, "Land Wars: Annexation a hot topic," *Chicago Tribune*, 29 May 1994, Sec. 18, p. 3.
expansion as endangering the rural landscape. The high proportion of multi-family housing units, in particular, brought disparaging remarks from people living outside the village. One Libertyville Township board member, for example, commented that the purchase of land for open space by the township would serve as a buffer for "Vernon Hills trash." The village board's propensity for growth caused the residents of neighboring communities to bestow a number of colorful sobriquets on the town ("Vermin Hills" was one of the more popular) as Vernon Hills became a symbol of all the problems associated with suburban sprawl.

In the early 1990s officials from several communities near Vernon Hills met to draw up land-use guidelines for the unincorporated land surrounding their communities. When a leader from an affluent rural community was quoted as saying that his village was trying to avoid becoming "like Vernon Hills," the mayor of Vernon Hills (who was not included in the meeting) suggested that the situation represented "a tiff between a community which provides regional services and another which merely consumes." Chiding the official for his "hysterical rantings," the mayor went on to say that a situation in which "a municipality with nary a store nor employment center to support the acquisitive lifestyle of its residents complains about traffic is amusing, if not disingenuous." When an organization called CASS (Citizens Against Suburban Sprawl) was formed in an attempt to protect residents


13 "Grainger is not just a tiff between villages," Libertyville Review, 16 September 1993.
from the eastern expansion of Vernon Hills, a Vernon Hills resident castigated the group, labeling participants "... the NIMBY members of CASS as well as ... the residents of the BANANA republics of Lake Forest, Lincolnshire and Mettawa." He went on to explain that "NIMBY and BANANA are, for those not knowledgeable with the idiosyncrasies of rural land use planning, acronyms for 'Not In My Backyard' and 'Build Absolutely Nothing Anywhere Near Anyone.'"

The 1990s also brought a rise in attempts to disconnect land from municipalities or special districts. This innovation was sometimes prompted by parents who petitioned to have school district boundaries altered so that children would attend schools in adjacent districts that were perceived as being of higher quality. In recent years, most petitions in Lake County have come from residents of upscale subdivisions on the fringe of less affluent communities. Although parents insist that the change is necessary to maintain the consistency of educational and social experiences (by permitting their children to go to school with friends they already know), they have found little sympathy in the districts involved in the dispute. In many cases, petitions originate with newcomers as they become aware of the social and economic differences among students of adjacent districts. One regional Superintendent of Schools described the phenomenon as "a snob thing," saying that parents simply wanted their children to associate with students of higher

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socioeconomic status than those in their current district.  

As the incidence of lawsuits demanding boundary changes have increased, school districts have been united in their determination to maintain their boundaries. Even districts that would have gained luxury developments if boundaries were changed have remained adamant about the need to resist such changes. "People have gone from being upset to actually being angry that we have to be victims to somebody wanting to do something like this," said one elementary school principal. "This is not a heavy-handed scare tactic, but we are trying to protect what is a very limited revenue base, and having to spend that revenue on [litigation] is really unfair to the children."  

Developers unable to obtain zoning changes that would permit changes in population density or land use began to appeal to the courts in the early 1990s for permission to "de-annex" or split off from one municipality in order to annex to a village more amenable to the type of development they offered. This trend was viewed by some local officials as jeopardizing their ability to make long-term plans for future development of their communities as well as contributing to the already strained relations among villages. "It makes indefinite where village boundaries would be," said one suburban mayor. "You don't know which pieces are going to stay in and which are going to stay out."

There are some areas, such as stormwater management and waste disposal, in

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which cooperation among Lake County governments has grown over the past twenty-five years. Although some planners and realtors see a trend toward cooperation among municipalities in the county, there is little evidence that intergovernmental agreements will arrest the fierce competition among villages. One longterm member of the regional planning commission traces current problems associated with the lack of cooperation to the 1950s, when Illinois became one of only a few states to allow local governments to administer independent sales taxes:

What has shifted the balance of development in this county is the competition for ratables. So forget the planning, forget the politics -- all that is ancillary to these two things: one is that you have no requirement [that municipalities get approval from neighboring villages to approve development] and the second is that when you put communities in competition with one another for sales tax you destroy planning in this area and in the state.

Despite appeals from planners urging greater cooperation among villages, the present tax structure and the absence of any county or regional agency with the authority to intervene in the development affairs of municipalities makes it unlikely that the intense competition among places will subside in the foreseeable future.
CHAPTER 8
PAYING FOR GROWTH

This chapter explores changes in attitudes and policies related to the impact of growth on infrastructure and services, such as the need to expand school and park facilities to meet the needs of new residents. Over the past twenty-five years, taxing districts have faced increasing expectations on the part of residents (as well as federal and state mandates) in terms of the number and type of programs offered. At the same time, the rise in anti-tax sentiment among many suburban residents and the withdrawal of state and federal funds has challenged growing districts to provide facilities and services to many more persons with insufficient resources to do so. This has led residents and local officials to evaluate the costs of new development more carefully, and to explore new ways to finance growth, such as impact fees paid by developers to cover some of the costs associated with additional population.

The Impact of Population Change on the Schools

The most dramatic effects of population change in a community are felt in its schools. Districts rarely have the personnel or resources to prepare for inevitable shifts in the proportion of children in various age groups and often operate in a constant state of crisis, confronted by overcrowding in one decade and declining enrollment in the next. Figures 22 through 26 indicate school enrollment since 1970...
Fig. 22. Grayslake School Enrollment in Elementary District 46 and High School District 127.
Fig. 23. Libertyville School Enrollment in Elementary District 70 and High School District 128.
Fig. 24. Mundelein School Enrollment in Elementary Districts 75 and 79 and High School District 120.
Fig. 25. Vernon Hills School Enrollment in Elementary District 73. (The majority of Vernon Hills students attend Libertyville High School).
Fig. 26. Wauconda School Enrollment in Unit District 118.
for schools in the villages included in this study. Because new subdivisions tend to attract families with young children, elementary districts generally experience problems associated with growth in a village before high school districts begin to see the effects of large-scale development.

The perception that growth in Grayslake was a significant problem in the early 1970s (when the overall rate of growth was actually very low) was enhanced by the overcrowded conditions facing the Grayslake Community High School as children born during the housing boom of the late 1950s reached high school age. With projections indicating that space problems at the school would become more severe over the next few years, the need for increased funding and additional space became a routine feature of public discussions about new development.

Even as the high school struggled to accommodate the large cohorts of baby boomers, however, Grayslake grade schools were experiencing the declining enrollment associated with smaller numbers of children born in the 1970s. The large influx of families with children into Grayslake during the 1980s increased the need for additional space at both the grade school and high school level. Voters approved $2 million in bonds for the grade school in 1992, although the district once again was forced to eliminate positions and cut programs when a referendum bid was defeated in 1994. As overcrowding at the high school worsened, school board members weighed the options of adding to the existing building, constructing a second campus, and

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1Although school districts overlap municipal boundaries, the districts included here are those which send the greatest proportion of students to the schools of a particular village.
the use of mobile classrooms. In both districts, rapid development was seen as the primary cause of the problems facing the schools.²

Declining enrollment, however, may generate as much concern as burgeoning class rolls. Despite awareness that rapid growth can be a serious problem for school districts struggling with limited budgets, decreasing enrollment may be interpreted as a signal that community vitality is waning. Dropping enrollment is also associated with the dismissal of teachers and other staff, the elimination of programs, and the closing of school buildings, all of which are disturbing to a community.

As some elementary districts experienced enrollment declines in the mid-to-late 1970s, task force and citizen advisory boards were created to study the problem and offer solutions. When enrollment in the Mundelein grade school district dropped 21.5 per cent between 1972 and 1976 (figure 24), parents and school district personnel were baffled. "We just don’t know why our enrollment is dropping so fast," said one principal. "We assumed it was the decline of the birth rate and the increase of home values in the area. But that doesn’t explain why we are having more of a problem than other Lake County areas."³ Enrollment continued to decline, with a fifty percent decline over sixteen years.⁴


⁴Diana Carney, "Cambridge would add students," The Independent Register, 14 August 1986.
Adjustments to declining enrollment vary from one community to another. Freeman (1979) contends that decisions are not necessarily rational in terms of the most efficient ways to adapt to the needs of fewer students. Instead, he suggests, programs for which there is little demand may be kept because they are federally mandated, or because influential interest groups are able to convince federal program officers that programs should be maintained. Actual cuts in local school districts, according to Freeman, often reflect external pressures rather than the wishes of local school officials (Freeman 1979).

School board members in districts in which enrollment is decreasing often find that they are the targets of fierce anti-tax sentiment as must explain why more money is required to serve fewer students. An advertisement placed in the local newspaper in the early 1980s by a Grayslake tax watch group, for example, read:

Grayslake Taxpayers - wake up! [The elementary district] receives the largest amount of tax dollars. Enrollment has declined from 800 students in 1975 to 546 in 1981 and an additional estimated drop to 506 in 1983. Deficit spending for 1981-82 was approximately $50,000 and next year will be approximately $100,000. Attend the next school board meeting! 5

Anger and confusion about the causes of declining enrollment, increasing expenditures and rising taxes often brings charges of mismanagement by school board members and district personnel, who are denounced as spendthrifts intent on wasting taxpayers' money.

In rapidly growing central Lake County in the 1980s and 1990s, school districts

often came under intense criticism from tax watch groups. The most aggressive, called IRATE (Individuals for Responsible and Accountable Tax Equity), was persistent in its attempt to defeat school referenda, and is credited by many with some success. Led by a Libertyville businessman, the group published a newsletter and sent numerous mailings to registered voters. Addressing the problems of the overcrowded and financially distressed elementary school district in Vernon Hills in 1994, IRATE’s leader urged voters to defeat the referendum:

[Hawthorn elementary school district] is organizing to pass two tax referendums in November that will raise your grade school tax bill 27%. The promoters of the tax raise, mostly parents and teachers, say it is needed. I say it is not. Hawthorn has the largest commercial tax base of any grade school district in the county, with more commercial tax base revenue being added from developments being built in the next three years. Hawthorn has a five million dollar deficit in its education fund, not because they have not received enough tax dollars but because they have simply spent more money than they should have for the teachers’ union demands . . . 6

A good deal of confusion about the relative contribution of various types of taxes to school districts added to the public relations problems of district personnel in Vernon Hills. Many people assumed that the sales taxes which poured into the village (eliminating the need for a village property tax) were also being distributed to public schools serving the area. Despite repeated attempts to explain that school funding came from taxes on property, rather than sales, and that residential property taxes were not generating sufficient revenue to accommodate the large numbers of

6Letter sent to residents of Lake County School District 73 by Jack L. Martin in October 1994.
new students in the district, many continued to view school problems as largely a function of overpaid teachers and improvident management.

**Developer Donations and Impact Fees**

As fiscal strain associated with new development has mounted over the past several decades, local governments have begun to ask that developers pay part of the costs related to serving the additional population. Impact fees, for example, may be imposed on housing units in order to contribute to roads, schools, water and sewers, and police and fire protection facilities. In the twenty-five years covered in this study, exactions from developers have become a routine part of negotiations in many rapidly-growing communities. The method by which these fees are determined, however, and the relative contribution of developers toward the provision of such amenities, varies from one community to the next. Impact fees for schools and parks are generally based on the estimated population and land value of a development, with a developer setting aside sites (or cash) for new school buildings and parks to accommodate new residents. There have been significant changes in policies requiring developers to bear some of the costs of growth (table 6).

The housing construction boom of the 1950s prompted Grayslake officials to draft a subdivision control ordinance to deal with some of the problems associated with new construction. The flurry of large-scale subdivision construction subsided somewhat in the 1960s, but the ordinance was updated in 1970 in an attempt to curb what officials referred to as "abuses by developers," such as substandard building practices and insufficient provision for stormwater management. Regulations aimed at
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grayslake</th>
<th>1979</th>
<th>Subdivision ordinance requires dedication of park sites or cash. Cash in lieu of land based on $20,000 per acre or 7 acres of land per 1,000 population added</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>Cash in lieu of land raised to $30,000 per acre or 15 acres of land per 1,000 population added</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libertyville</td>
<td>1973</td>
<td>Subdivision ordinance adopted specifying amount of land or cash in lieu of land to be donated by developers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1977</td>
<td>Subdivision ordinance requires dedication of park sites of 7 acres per 1,000 population added or cash in lieu of land based on $20,000 per acre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1986</td>
<td>Cash in lieu of land based on $35,000 per acre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Cash in lieu of land based on $45,000 per acre or 15 acres of land per 1,000 population added</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Cash in lieu of land based on $90,000 per acre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Cash in lieu of land based on $120,000 per acre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mundelein</td>
<td>1974</td>
<td>Future annexations to include per-annexation agreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mundelein has never adopted an ordinance specifying developer donations for parks. The park district negotiates with each developer to determine the amount of cash or land to be donated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Village requires that developers have a signed agreement with the park district which becomes part of annexation agreement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6--Continued.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>10 acres per 1,000 population added</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>Cash in lieu of land based on $40,000 per acre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>Cash in lieu of land based on $45,000 per acre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>10 acres per 1,000 population added</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Cash in lieu of land based on $75,000 per acre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Cash in lieu of land based on $90,000 per acre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Subdivision ordinance is changed so that village collects developer donations as &quot;public benefit funds&quot; and determines how these should be distributed among taxing districts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>Subdivision ordinance allows the village to require land dedication in subdivisions of six acres or more. Amount of land to be dedicated is left to the discretion of the village but may not be more than 5% of subdivision acreage. Dedication is not mandatory. The amount of land to be dedicated is not specified and no option for cash payment is provided.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Village adopts formula for determining the amount of land or cash to be donated by developer (based on number of bedrooms in housing unit).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Up to this point, regulations aimed at developers (who were generally small-scale local builders) were intended to prevent only the most egregious violations of building standards.

As large-scale developments multiplied on the fringe of Libertyville during the 1950s and overcrowding in its schools increased, the village board decided to encourage cash donations to school districts from developers operating outside the village limits but still within the board’s sphere of influence. In one of the first negotiations with a developer, for instance, the Libertyville Plan Commission asked that six lots in a 102-unit subdivision be dedicated as parks. The developer offered instead to donate cash ($200 per house). Village trustees agreed to the offer but decided that the funds should go to schools rather than parks, since this was where they felt the need was most critical. This approach, in which the village negotiated with each developer on an ad hoc basis, and was then responsible for disbursing funds to taxing districts, was common among small villages until the 1970s, when formulae for estimating the impact of new housing on infrastructure and services gained popularity among municipalities.

A turning point in community development legislation came in 1972 when the city council of Naperville, Illinois passed an ordinance requiring developers to donate land (or cash to be used to purchase land) in order to provide school and park sites to accommodate additional population. The ordinance was promptly challenged by the

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Chicago Homebuilders Association, and public officials in other suburbs followed the case closely as it worked its way to the U.S. Supreme Court, where it was upheld.

Use of the "Naperville Ordinance," or similar formulae for mitigating the impact of new development on school and park districts, became widespread in the 1970s and 1980s. For local government officials, the appeal this approach lay in its potential to reduce the amount of time spent negotiating for park and school sites with developers. As federal funds for local infrastructure and services decreased during the 1980s, the fiscal impact of additional population became an increasingly critical issue for municipal governments. As local officials explored options for increasing revenue, they were met with the very vocal tax revolts that pressured local governments to find alternatives to property taxes as a means of funding the capital costs of new development. Impact fees gained popularity among taxing districts as a way of financing water and sewer systems, roads, schools, and fire and police facilities needed to service additional population.

In 1971, the Grayslake village board and its attorney discussed the adoption of an ordinance similar to that used in Naperville. Although school officials had met in the past with developers of large parcels to negotiate the donation of sites for schools, no formal policy existed to guide the process. The village board saw the new ordinance as a way of dealing with the unusually rapid growth they expected:

In the past, increased Grayslake population has been gradual, and the need for increased teachers and school facilities were predictable. Now with huge developments mushrooming all around, the need for money to provide new schools and educators might be upon school administrators suddenly with no money available for 18 months [when the district begins to collect taxes on new
An editorial in the *Grayslake Times* in the mid-1970s summed up changing attitudes toward growth:

There was a time when real estate developers, especially those with plans to construct a manufacturing plant, received the red carpet treatment. Apartment construction, since the impact on schools was considered minimal, was coveted. Attitudes have changed with the times and now almost any kind of real estate development, large or small, is likely to be met with question. The red carpets vanished with five per cent interest rates. Developers themselves contributed to changing attitudes in that most of them in this locality have graduated from smaller projects, usually along residential lines that could be integrated into existing zoning and land use concepts, to large projects where massive zoning and annexation are required to provide the legal basis for developing "total living" projects or planned unit developments.

Pressed with environmental considerations, a growing segment of our population no longer views growth as progress. A healthy number of our neighbors see growth and development as undesirable and an infringement on their privacy. It's not surprising that practically every development proposed anywhere in this locality has run into some kind of a problem. In various degrees, every project faces opposition.

From the mid-1970s on, Grayslake taxing districts began routinely to insist on donations from developers to cover the impact of new residents. A host of questions were raised about the extent to which developers should be expected to contribute to the impact of additional population. If a developer provided private recreational facilities, for example, should this be considered a donation to the park district? How should the differential impact of various types of housing (such as single-family detached homes, townhouses and apartment complexes) be estimated in terms of the

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8*"Study Possible Law to Assist Schools,"* *Grayslake Times*, 16 December 1971.

9*"Development queries burn for your answer,"* *Grayslake Times*, 13 March 1975.
Developers, as might be expected, were resistant to the growing demands for donations or impact fees. Libertyville’s most prolific builder called the fees "unconscionable," complaining in the 1970s that the demand for fees added "one more government-mandated hindrance to [developers’] ability to survive in a fiercely competitive market." 

Developers and local leaders warned that too many demands on developers might cost a village new growth. Libertyville’s ordinance requiring contributions toward the capital costs of existing facilities as well as additional contributions to the schools motivated a former village attorney to caution that "Libertyville has a reputation among developers of being tough. As a result, some developers reportedly have steered clear of Libertyville."

By the 1990s developer donations had become a conventional feature of virtually every new development, although the actual amount of land and cash to be donated continued to be determined by a good deal of give and take on the part of taxing bodies and developers. Illinois law requires that any exactions from developers must

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10 Timothy Kellogg, "What exactly are developer donations?" The Independent Register, 29 July 1976.

11 Willis A. Overholser, "Anti-development plan outrageous," letter to the editor of The Independent Register, 5 September 1985. Mr. Overholser moved to Libertyville in 1925 when he was hired as a legal representative for the Libertyville and Mundelein banks owned by public utilities magnate Samuel Insull. He served as Libertyville’s village attorney for 44 years and as village attorney for Mundelein from 1928 to 1965, and was the attorney for the village of Grayslake when the Heartland project was proposed. The role of such influential persons, particularly in the role of legal advisor, can be critical in decisions about the direction a board chooses to take on growth-related issues.
be "uniquely and specifically related" to the project under consideration. Because municipalities can demand more from developers who are petitioning for annexation to the community, officials use pre-annexation agreements (and their right to refuse to annex) as a means of gaining concessions from a developer.

In some villages, park district personnel work directly with developers, negotiating for land and money to provide parks to accommodate the additional population. "The first one or two [subdivisions] were a learning process," the director of the Grayslake Park District remembers. "After the second development, we started looking to combine land and cash . . . . There is no normal [ratio of land to cash]. Basically, it is working with each individual developer and the art of negotiation."  

In other cases, municipal officials have continued to negotiate directly with developers, and to distribute funds to taxing districts. This has led to some friction between village officials and members of school and park boards, for example, when there is disagreement on the fairness of the distribution. "There is no way a school district can sue a village for not giving a donation," one superintendent said in the 1970s. "We can only convince them it is their duty and responsibility."  

Members of the Vernon Hills Park Board, left out of meetings held to discuss land donations, were reminded by the village president that there was no need for the park board to get involved. "We're the ones acting as negotiators with the

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developer," the president said. "We’re not going to abdicate this role . . . Believe me, [the park district] will get whatever they have coming."\textsuperscript{14} But park district board members continued to complain that the village was not negotiating in the best interests of the park district, and tension between the two groups rose. "Do you know of any other village that ignores its park district?" asked the Park Commissioner, who accused village board members of meeting with the developer in closed session to discuss donations of land for parks.\textsuperscript{15} When Vernon Hills trustees voted to establish a municipal recreation department to oversee various recreational activities and management of a golf course donated to the village as part of the agreement on a large development, park board members were furious. "Why do they feel they need a recreation department?" demanded one member. "We are afraid that [money from developers] will go into the [village’s] general fund or their recreation department."\textsuperscript{16}

The president of the Vernon Hills village board explained that changes in the ordinance covering developer donations were aimed at helping the district’s financially-troubled elementary schools. "The thing that bothers us the most is the fact that we have a school district in the red and the park districts are benefitting more," he said. "I really don’t think there’s much that [park board members] can say


\textsuperscript{15}Maurice Weaver, "Vernon Hills board and park district continue their feud," \textit{Vernon Hills Review}, 29 September 1994.

or do to change what we want to do." The resistance of village officials to the idea of direct talks between park board members and developers contributed to the growing tensions between the two groups.

On the other hand, school district personnel are sometimes reluctant to criticize decisions by village officials to approve large developments that would add a sizeable number of students to already overcrowded districts. In Vernon Hills, even as the largest elementary district was projecting a $9.4 million shortfall in 1995, district personnel deflected suggestions that the approval of a 2,200-unit development would place an unbearable burden on the district, refusing to permit the issue of growth to become a topic of debate at public meetings.

Residents of Vernon Hills, however, were becoming more likely to point out what they viewed as a causal relationship between the phenomenal growth of the village and the severe problems of the district. Commenting on a newspaper article on one large proposed development, one resident said:

I was concerned with the omission of where the public school system will fit into the grandiose plans for the [development]. With the plans for 2,300 homes and 6,000 new residents, how many children are anticipated -- 1,000 or more by my conservative estimate. Where do village leaders expect them to go? Upscale homes will not sell at premium prices when families discover that the school system has lost its top-ranked recognition due to overcrowding and lack of financial support.18

Village board members are also sensitive to charges that they are more


responsive to developers than to their own constituents, particularly when residents contend that the large contributions of developers to local political is what motivates village board members to approve large projects. Residents frequently complain that the largest developer in central Lake County gives so much money to local politicians that it is useless to oppose his subdivisions. "He's got the village board in his back pocket," said one resident of Libertyville. "Why should board members pay any attention to us?"

Charges that development decisions are the result of backroom deals and payoffs often have a good deal of support from audiences at public meetings. When the presentation of a large project in an unsewered portion of Vernon Hills omitted any discussion of how sewage would be handled, one speaker drew loud applause when he hinted that a behind-the-scenes deal had been made with the chairman of the county board. When negotiations on the same project suddenly stalled after an election the same year, the impasse was interpreted by some as retaliation by county board members who disapproved of some Vernon Hills trustees' support of a candidate for county office. Whether allegations are true or false, the perception exists that many development decisions are influenced by political factors.

There has been growing skepticism among some village leaders and residents in terms of whether donations go far enough in contributing to the impact of new development. The anti-tax sentiment expressed at virtually every public hearing on development is sometimes laced with scornful comments from residents who maintain that development never pays for itself. At one meeting, residents threatened to vote
down any future referendum for the high school if board members agreed to the impact fees being discussed for the schools, saying "There's not a development in this county that pays its own way and this one won't either." One county planner estimated that in 1994 a typical single family home required at least $15,000 in infrastructure and services of taxing districts such as schools, parks and police and fire protection, suggesting that developer donations did not come close to covering the costs of residential development.

In Mundelein, which has no formula for developer donations, school districts negotiate directly with developers, and districts sometimes appeal to the village to exert whatever influence it can in exacting impact fees. One school serving children from both the Mundelein and Grayslake areas, for example, was beset with problems directly related to new development in the late 1980s, provoking concern about deteriorating conditions at the school:

Things are bad at Fremont Consolidated School . . . and they're getting worse. There is bitterness spilling all over the once rural district that is sinking under the problems imposed by the unplanned and unprepared-for urban growth and development.

Just about everything imaginable that could beset a school has engulfed Fremont. A once dwindling enrollment has turned around with new students coming from rapidly growing subdivisions. Deficits are piling up . . . a tax increase referendum designed to ease financial pressures was defeated at the recent primary election . . . .

In the early 1990s, after months of dissension over the potential burden of a large residential development on the district, Mundelein village officials met with the

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school board to discuss the new subdivision. Board members outlined what they described as the "real adverse impact" of the development, saying that "The village, really, has given us very little consideration with this. Until [a builder] comes in with an agreement that says how they will school their children, it shouldn’t be signed."

But Mundelein village officials defended their position, saying, "Our policy and our practice has always been not to negotiate for the school." 20

Despite requests from school district officials that the village adopt a policy similar to the Naperville ordinance, the Mundelein village board has always refused, saying that such an ordinance would not bring more money to districts than they would receive by negotiating independently with developers. 21 One village trustee explained this position by saying that "[adopting an impact fee ordinance] would be setting ourselves up for litigation, and I would not vote for anything that would require us to spend taxpayers' money to 'make law.' And that's, in effect, what we would be doing." 22

But village officials have become more receptive to appeals from the elementary district as the problems associated with growth became more acute. In 1995, enrollment projections for the district increased dramatically, indicating that enrollment would increase by more than 1,000 students over the next ten years. With


21 "Town won't join impact fee dispute," Chicago Tribune, 19 August 1994, Sec.2:3.

80 percent of available land in the district still undeveloped, the new projections had a sobering effect on village officials, school administrators and residents. The decision to update the village’s 1990 Comprehensive Plan sent planners to the school district to solicit their views on future growth. "We told them two things," said the district superintendent. "Number one, we’ve got all the growth we can handle . . . and number two, we said 'Please add more industrial and commercial growth to our tax base.'" 23 A survey of Mundelein residents echoed the preferences of school district personnel, with 61 percent of respondents saying that they opposed development in unincorporated land west of the village. Besieged by developers asking for approval of annexation of land for residential use, Mundelein officials appeared ready to eschew more housing developments and encourage developers to present plans for business parks. 24

In the wake of closer public scrutiny of the costs of growth, some developers have found that they must be creative in finding ways to mollify those who object to the costs of residential development, particularly in areas with overcrowded and underfunded schools. For example, developers of a project in Vernon Hills expected to add 1,100 students to local schools offered to double the required donation and donate a large proportion of funds before final approval had been granted by the village board. Although the school donation was not expected to cover all the costs


of additional students on local schools, the unprecedented offer to voluntarily increase the amount was hailed as evidence of a new trend in negotiations between municipalities and developers.²⁵

There is a fair amount of variation from one community to the next in terms of the perceived linkage between rapid growth and problems in school districts such as overcrowded classrooms and the need for additional school funding. In Mundelein, for example, rapid growth has nearly always been viewed as the cause of problems in the Fremont School district. In Grayslake, as well, residents have been concerned with the effect of rapid growth on the public schools. In Vernon Hills, on the other hand, even when faced with the need for major cutbacks because of the elementary district’s growing deficit, public debate rarely focused on residential development as the source of the problem. Instead, administrators stressed the burden of unfunded federal mandates, the need to construct new buildings, and the state-imposed cap on taxes. Parents tended to blame the school board and administration for wasting funds unnecessarily, particularly on what they perceived as overly generous salaries and perquisites for teachers and other personnel.

With a deficit of more than nine million dollars projected for the coming year, a special school board meeting was held in order to discuss a list of program cutbacks for the district. Fifty teachers dressed in black, wearing buttons emblazoned with the word "respect," stood silently along the walls of an auditorium filled with 250 angry

parents. Conflicts ensued among parents who blamed teachers and school board
members for the district's financial woes and bickered with one another about which
programs should be cut.

The reasons underlying the reluctance of Vernon Hills village officials and school
district personnel to publicly connect the issues of rapid growth and financial strain on
school districts are not clear. It is plausible, however, that the reasons are related to
the large ratio of commercial and corporate growth to residential development.
Unlike surrounding communities, Vernon Hills did not grow slowly as a residential
village serving as a trade center for area farm families. The construction of New
Century Town in the early 1970s gave the community its identity as a hub of retail
and corporate activity. This seems to have created a consensus for growth that was
broader than that in neighboring towns. Residents also may represent a self-selected
group of persons with a more positive view of growth than those in more traditional
communities, and may be less likely to see rapid population increase as problematic.

Developers in the 1990s continued to go beyond the required donations specified
in village ordinances, sometimes in an attempt to show good faith. In 1991, for
example, one developer donated $36,000 toward the purchase of an aquatic weed-
harvester and trailer conveyer for the management of Gray's Lake, while another
donated $58,000 to transfer many of the trees from a development site to various park
sites. Others donated unbuildable portions of tracts to the park district "to ensure the
role wetlands play in maintaining a sound environment." Although some cynics suggested that donating what was essentially "swamp" to the village might be less than magnanimous, these examples suggest a new trend in negotiations between developers and village leaders.

The fact that the boundaries of separate taxing districts are rarely coterminous complicates the task of compensating districts for the impact of new residents. New subdivisions often are located within multiple library or school districts, for example, and donations of land for new facilities are almost certain to be met with objections from someone. Despite such problems, the use of formulae for developer donations became an integral part of the development process in the late 1970s in many communities, with districts demanding more from developers as time went on. In 1975 in Grayslake, for example, developers were expected to contribute five acres for each 1,000 persons added to the park district. By 1979 the amount had increased to seven acres of park land per 1,000 population. In 1993, the park district insisted on fifteen acres per 1,000 residents, and developers were expected to contribute to the village's greenway corridor and the bicycle path as well.

Increasing concern about the impact of new development on taxing districts

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29 Pat Christensen, "Grayslake growth is also green," *Grayslake Times*, 19 October 1990.
(particularly school districts) has consequences in terms of the housing patterns in a county. As one realtor explained:

By having the schools supported by the property tax, you have a community like Grayslake whose attitude would still be amenable to affordable housing -- just because that's the kind of people they are -- saying 'No more,' just because their schools can't take it . . . and that's one of the things that has shaped development more than anything else.

This chapter has traced the adoption of growth management policies aimed at mitigating the burden of additional population on local taxing districts. Policies such as the exaction of impact fees from developers have added to the price of housing in rapidly-growing places, contributing to the widening gulf between communities that are in a position to demand more land and higher fees from developers and those that are not. The most profound effects of this disparity are found in local schools. In the long run, the social costs of the growing disparity among places may prove to be too high, inspiring legislators to find a more equitable method of paying for public education. But for the time being, there is little indication that local governments are willing to give up any of their sovereignty, or that the strategies for paying for development will change.
CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSION

This investigation has identified the issues that generate concern in the transition from rural to urban land use, and explored changes in attitudes toward rapid growth over time. In addition, I have considered the social, economic and political consequences of population growth in small towns on the edge of the Chicago metropolitan area.

The primary contribution of this study comes from its focus on the changing response to growth at the local level. This approach reveals the dynamics of the development process that are obscured in macro-level studies, such as the way that decisions about future development in one community affect the course of events in another, or the mechanisms by which ideas, such as environmentalism, move through society over time and influence local policy decisions. This research confirms the assumptions of human ecology about the fundamental significance of factors such as transport and communication technologies in determining the forms of human settlement space. It also illuminates the role of citizens' groups, political leaders, and other actors and institutions in the process of growth, and documents the importance of geopolitical units in shaping the distribution of the population within a county.
Changes in Attitudes Toward Growth

As the preceding chapters illustrate, there have been significant changes over the past several decades in the way that residents and public officials in communities in the rural-urban fringe view rapid population growth. In the expanding economy of the 1950s and 1960s, as small towns were inundated with families from the city, residential growth was widely regarded as a positive phenomenon -- a source of vitality for communities that welcomed newcomers and took pride in their growing numbers. Problems associated with rapid growth during this period were commonly viewed as temporary conditions that were expected to ease as infrastructure and services caught up with demand. During the decades that followed, however, attitudes toward rapid growth became considerably less sanguine. By the 1970s, many of the metaphors used to describe development were negative, depicting growth as an unrelenting and pernicious force moving across the landscape and destroying everything in its path.

By tracing the evolution of suburbs on the periphery of the Chicago region from the earliest days of settlement, this study reveals those themes that have consistently emerged in periods of rapid growth and identifies other responses that represent a notable departure from the past. The dichotomy of city and country, for example, is a leitmotif woven throughout the long narrative of the development of the suburbs. Since the mid-nineteenth century, communities that lay beyond the city limits have been promoted as havens for Chicago residents weary of life in the densely-populated city. The mythic ideal of a small, cohesive community set in a rural landscape is
deeply embedded in the collective psyche of Americans, and is still used effectively by those with an interest in luring urban migrants to the small towns beyond the leading edge of suburban growth. As this study documents, however, the same image can be used to mobilize fierce opposition to growth, and has proven to be a powerful weapon in the arsenal of anti-development forces for more than a century.

The tension between those who promote growth and those who resist it has been a familiar feature of life in small towns as well. But as this inquiry indicates, variation in the extent to which this tension exists is associated with the particular history of a community. In Grayslake, Libertyville, Mundelein and Wauconda, where the transition from rural trade center to suburb was a relatively slow process that spanned a number of decades, the approval of large developments has been impeded by the opposition of longterm residents who feared that newcomers would seize political power and destroy the familiar patterns of life in their communities. In Vernon Hills, however, which elbowed its way onto the map in the 1970s with the explosive growth of New Century Town, there has never been a comparable attempt to obstruct population growth. With few oldtimers in Vernon Hills who can trace their roots in the village back even to the 1950s, it is plausible that the decision to move into the village represents tacit acceptance of a pro-growth philosophy, which makes serious opposition less likely.¹

¹There are some signs that residents and community leaders in Vernon Hills are becoming more willing to publicly oppose growth. With little unincorporated territory on its periphery, however, the possibility of the mobilization of large numbers of residents against village approval of a planned unit development (such as those that stirred citizens of nearby villages to action) seems remote.
This study reinforces the findings of scholars who suggest that the interaction between newcomers and oldtimers is influenced by factors other than tenure in the community. For example, newcomers who move to fringe communities to escape the problems associated with suburban development are often the most vociferous opponents of growth. This makes them the natural allies of oldtimers trying to preserve the small town character of their community. In other cases, however, oldtimers eager to subdivide the family farm deeply resent newcomers' opposition to what they view as their right to profit from the development of their property. Thus, length of residence in itself does not appear to be the critical variable in explaining where one stands on development issues. Rather, attitudes toward growth seem to be associated with other characteristics, such as class, age, education and "world view" (Ploch 1980; Sokolow 1981; Johansen and Fuguitt 1984; Baldassare 1986). One longterm resident of Wauconda sees an inherent irony in the rapid growth of the village in the early 1990s, where newcomers have been attracted by the rural character of the area:

The people who are coming here have more education than the oldtimers. They’ve lived in suburbs closer to the city, and they want to make sure that Wauconda doesn’t become like those places. They say to the oldtimers, "Why do you put up with growth you don’t want? The politicians are supposed to represent you." So they get involved in the political process, and in the end, the newcomers who were attracted by the pro-growth politicians are the people most likely to vote them out of office.

**Competition and Conflict Among Villages**

Although competition among places for growth has been a perennial feature of the development of suburbs, the nature of this competition has changed somewhat since
earlier periods, when success was often measured by population size alone. Today, most municipal land use decisions represent attempts to enhance the local tax base. All of the villages in this study have adopted strategies aimed at increasing the ratio of non-residential to residential land use in their communities.

As municipalities annex land at their borders in order to capture and control the development that occurs there, the buffer of unincorporated land between them is reduced. This makes it more likely that communities will be affected by development in neighboring places, and increases the potential for conflict over growth-related issues. The reduced distances between places also means that a developer seeking annexation for a project may have more than one municipality to choose from, and this has increased the likelihood that developers will try to manipulate local governments to their advantage. On the other hand, the rising number of inter-governmental agreements suggests that municipal officials are becoming more willing to cooperate in order to prevent this from happening, or to collaborate in other ways that make the provision of services or utilities more efficient.

The nature of competition among places has been influenced by changes in the economic structure of Lake County, which reflect the fundamental restructuring of the regional economy over the past twenty-five years. In 1970, for example, 34 percent of Lake County workers were employed in manufacturing. By 1992, this had dropped to 23 percent. The growth of non-manufacturing jobs was striking, contributing to a 35 percent increase in the total number of jobs in the county during the 1980s (Lake County Economic Development Commission 1993). Increasing ties
to the global marketplace have brought new opportunities for trade as well as greater vulnerability to external factors beyond the control of local decision makers. Government officials have become more aware of the need to attract a diverse mix of non-residential development that will permit them to better withstand a loss in any particular sector of the economy.

The Implementation and Consequences of Growth Management Policies

One of the thorny issues this research was designed to address was the balance of forces behind the adoption of formal growth management policies. The outcome of attempts in Lake County to prevent growth altogether, to reduce the density of housing in proposed developments, or to preserve public open space indicate that political processes can partially account for settlement patterns in the rural-urban fringe. This study provides ample support for Molotch’s thesis that local "growth machines" play an important role in shaping development. But the accounts of growth controversies in the five communities considered here suggest that the coalitions that form around growth-related issues are sometimes at odds with one another and may work at cross-purposes. In the 1970s in Grayslake and Libertyville, for example, there was dissension between groups of downtown business owners concerned about the decline of the main business district and others that represented the larger community, such as the Chamber of Commerce and the Grayslake Development Corporation. Although the members of all of these groups agreed that growth was good, the issue of precisely where growth should occur was problematic in terms of collective action.
This review of twenty-five years of growth also underscores the cyclical nature of political trends, with the momentum of pro-growth and anti-growth forces shifting considerably in Lake County over this period of time. The experience of anti-growth forces suggests that those interested in curtailing development must be proactive rather than reactive, seizing opportunities as they arise and negotiating agreements not likely to be reversed. My observation of the five villages considered in this study suggests that growth management policies do not have a significant effect on the overall growth rate of a region. Most residential construction is the work of local builders and developers, and those stymied by resistance to growth in one place are likely to move on to another suburb further out on the fringe. Growth management policies can, however, have a significant impact on the way that new population growth is distributed within a county.

The controversial Libertyville Township Open Space District provides an example of the impact of political processes on population distribution. Although it is unlikely that the district will add significantly to its inventory of land in the future, the ability of the district's creator to use the rising tide of anti-development sentiment to establish a taxing district with the power to take private property for public use did result in the preservation of some large tracts of open space acquiring 1,490 acres of land (at a cost of $23,760,036) in the first ten years of its existence.² However, this

²By the mid-1990s, nearly one quarter of the land in Libertyville Township had been dedicated as open space. This is land permanently designated or owned by a public agency for public recreation or conservation and does not include private open space such as golf courses.
unique experiment in growth control presents a paradox, for in some ways the open space district accelerated the process of development. By targeting large parcels of private property for acquisition in the late 1980s, the Libertyville Township Open Space District prompted a number of land owners to turn defensively to municipalities for annexation, or to sell to developers in order to avoid condemnation proceedings that would have brought considerably less than the market value of their land. Thus, the property of people who had previously not intended to sell became available for development. This suggests that a larger, systematic study of the unintended consequences of growth controls might offer valuable insight into the efficacy and implications of such policies.

A number of innovative methods of land conservation have been employed in Lake County as property owners and public officials have sought to preserve open space without resorting to the condemnation procedures that proved costly and unpopular in Libertyville Township. One arrangement, for example, involved the creation of an open space reserve of 2,500 acres, made possible by the cooperation of the Libertyville Township Open Space District, the Lake County Forest Preserve, and a group of private land owners. Conservation easements have gained popularity as a means of preserving open space as well, offering a tax deduction to landowners who continue to live on and own the property but give up their rights to develop it.

This study indicates that an important variable in explaining the outcome of

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3Jim Newton, "2,500-acre space reserve: Township, forest, landowner pact eyed," The News-Sun, 14-15 October 1989.
decisions about development is related to the skill with which community leaders and residents are able to draw on deeply-held beliefs and values to mobilize support for their cause. Even when those opposed to large developments were unsuccessful in their attempts to prevent projects from being built, village boards who found themselves confronted by large groups of angry constituents were more likely to insist on lower density or larger proportions of open space than those boards who encountered little resistance.

The story of growth in Lake County illustrates the pivotal role of elites in shaping the settlement patterns of central Lake County, where the large proportion of undeveloped land controlled by a small number of families meant that decisions made by relatively few property owners have had a profound effect on the development of the county. But the story of these communities also suggests that the social status of a landowner is not a reliable predictor of his attitudes toward development. Samuel Insull, for example, set the course of development in Mundelein and Libertyville when he brought the interurban railroad and rural electrification to the area where he controlled thousands of acres of land. Decisions by the Cuneo family, who subsequently purchased the Insull estate, radically altered the character of the area with the development of New Century Town and promoted the subsequent commercial and residential growth of Vernon Hills. In contrast, the owners of other large tracts have been critical to the success of the movement to preserve open space. The Ryerson, Donnelley and Ranney families, for example, have led the effort to insure that thousands of acres in central Lake County will remain undeveloped and accessible
Changing Migration Patterns and the Future of Small Towns in the Rural-Urban Fringe

The deconcentration of population in the Chicago region is consistent with migration patterns in other large metropolitan regions of the United States. Over the past twenty-five years, population distribution trends have changed considerably from those typical of earlier periods. The population turnaround of the 1970s, in which population gains in nonmetropolitan counties were greater than those in metropolitan counties, represents a significant deviation from the historic pattern of slow population gain and protracted outmigration (Beale 1975; Long and DeAre 1982; Johnson 1989). Although this pattern was reversed in the early 1980s as most nonmetropolitan counties lost population (Johnson 1993), continuing metropolitanization has been associated with increased dispersion of people and jobs (Fuguitt, Heaton and Lichter 1988; Fuguitt, Brown and Beale 1989).

Despite indications in the 1980s that population redistribution trends had reverted to the familiar pattern of slow population growth in nonmetropolitan counties, it is not at all clear that the population turnaround of the 1970s was a unique occurrence. Population estimates for nonmetropolitan counties in the early 1990s indicate that nearly two-thirds gained population during this period, compared to only 45 percent.

To the public.4

4The role of influential people in conservation efforts in Lake County parallels that in other parts of the region, such as the movement to establish a forest preserve district in Cook County. See, for example, William P. Hayes, "Development of the Forest Preserve District of Cook County, Illinois" (M.A. thesis, DePaul University, 1949).
for the 1980s. Nonmetropolitan counties adjacent to metropolitan counties experienced even greater increases, with 75 percent gaining population during the first two years of the 1990s, compared to 56 percent in the previous decade. In fact, adjacent nonmetropolitan counties were even more likely than metro counties to experience net inmigration in the early 1990s (Johnson and Beale 1994). Although Johnson and Beale caution that it is premature to interpret this as a return to the patterns of the 1970s, their findings indicate that the dispersion of the population in the United States into smaller, more rural places has increased in recent years.

Complex relationships among the factors associated with population deconcentration make prediction of even short-term trends difficult. There is growing evidence, however, to support the view that the convergence of employment opportunities and income levels, as well as changes in transportation and communication, have diminished the distinctions between rural and urban areas (Hawley 1975; Beale 1978; Zuiches and Brown 1978; Wardwell 1980). The preference of many Americans for rural and small town life (particularly for a place within 30 miles of a large city) has become more important in explaining migration as the movement of employment opportunities to the outer suburbs makes it feasible for people to act on this preference (Fuguitt and Zuiches 1975; Zelinsky 1977).

Evidence that the deconcentration of population in the United States may be accelerating in the 1990s has implications for planners and others interested in the future of small towns at the edge of metropolitan areas and beyond. Decisions by large corporations to locate in rural places, for example, are contributing to the
expansion of the suburban ring in ways that are different from those in earlier
periods. For example, the Motorola Corporation’s decision in 1994 to build a $100
million cellular phone facility employing 3,000 workers in the town of Harvard,
Illinois (population 6,000) surprised many observers. The site chosen by Motorola is
seventy miles from Chicago’s Loop and nineteen miles from the nearest interstate
highway. In the past, corporate decisions to locate near limited access highways have
created the industrial corridors fanning outward from the city. Motorola’s decision --
encouraged by the commitment of $30 million in state-funded road and infrastructure
improvements -- led to speculation by planners that a new industrial corridor would
form between Chicago and Harvard.

Robert Galvin, former chairman and chief executive officer of Motorola,
explained the decision to build in Harvard:

Companies like Motorola go into the country because that is where their top
employees want to live . . . I don’t know if you remember what things looked
like in Schaumburg [where Motorola’s headquarters are located]. People said,
"Boy, you sure move to rural places, don’t you?" Now Woodfield Shopping
Center is just bustling across the street. We need large amounts of land. We
can’t go someplace that has a nice 10-acre site . . . So, there’s a lure when you
can get a 300-acre parcel.5

Motorola’s senior vice-president added:

We viewed a lot of property . . . The industrial corridors lost out because the
quality of life there keeps getting worse. You’re sitting in a traffic jam for half
an hour in what used to be a 5-minute commute. [Harvard] offers options. You
can live in the country. Or on Lake Geneva, which is only eight miles away.
Or board a train from the city.

5Jon Anderson, "Harvard on the move: Here’s what life is like in a little town
But we don't want to bring the suburbs with us. I want to keep Harvard Harvard.⁶

Despite such assurances, the rural village that calls itself the "dairy capital of the world" (and supports this claim with a monumental fiberglass Holstein in the middle of town) is not likely to remain unchanged for long. Developers of residential and commercial real estate have rushed to Harvard in the months since the announcement, and the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission has revised its prediction that Harvard would experience slow, steady growth over the next fifteen years. Now, according to planners, Harvard will have 5,000 jobs by 1996.⁷

Corporations and residential developers still receive a warm welcome from elected officials in small, exurban communities. What has changed over the past twenty-five years, however, is the level of knowledge and sophistication among community leaders and residents about the possible adverse effects of development. Having watched the metamorphosis of other small towns into suburbs plagued by rising taxes, traffic congestion and overcrowded schools, people in villages on the rural-urban fringe are much more likely than their predecessors to make stringent demands on developers to mitigate the impact of new growth. Harvard's public officials have looked closely at Motorola's Libertyville facility 45 miles away, for example, to determine what the corporation's impact on their community is likely to

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⁶Ibid., 14.

be. They are aware of the problems associated with rapid growth and of the concessions that other places have gotten in exchange for the approval of such large projects. Thus, the timing of growth is an important variable in accounting for the growth management policies that are likely to be adopted by a community, since places that are going through rapid growth in the 1990s, for example, adopt formal policies at an earlier stage in their development than suburbs that grew in earlier decades.

Despite growing antipathy toward development in the rural-urban fringe, the competition among communities for growth has not diminished. But residential development, with its significant impact on school districts and municipal infrastructure, is increasingly regarded as less desirable than the commercial growth that contributes sales as well as property taxes. Municipalities on the rural-urban fringe now compete fiercely for the large, sylvan campuses favored by many large companies. Communities in central Lake County have discovered to their dismay in recent years, however, that they are being passed over by corporations who choose to locate in small towns even further out on the edge of the metropolitan region that are as yet unspoiled by the problems associated with suburban sprawl.

Other factors have contributed to changing settlement patterns as well. Increasing demands for the preservation of open space have had a dramatic effect on the site plans for large subdivisions since World War II. In the ring of suburbs that

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8 This competition has been exacerbated by the tax cap imposed on the suburban counties around Chicago in 1991, which significantly limits revenues to school districts and other taxing bodies affected by residential development.
expanded around Chicago in the 1950s and 1960s, for example, parks in subdivisions tended to be relatively small -- often created on a few vacant lots originally intended for housing but grudgingly forfeited by developers to appease village board members. Each case was approached individually, and the disposition of the matter often depended on the nature of personal relationships between the builder and village officials. This contributed to a pattern of relatively uniform high-density development in suburbs that were built out in the first two decades after the war.

The widespread adoption in the 1970s of formulae specifying the number of acres to be set aside for parks brought rising ratios of park land to population in many municipalities. By 1990, suburbs in the rural-urban fringe were demanding that a large portion (sometimes more than 40 percent) of the land in planned unit developments be set aside as permanent open space. Thus, suburbs further from the city that experienced rapid growth after the mid-1980s tend to have more land dedicated for recreational use than places that grew during earlier decades.

As the ideas and values of the environmental movement have filtered through society and have been adopted by residents and political leaders in small towns, a new vision of development has evolved. Increasingly, conflict over new development involves the manipulation of symbols and meaning in struggles between competing visions of the landscape (Greider and Garkovich 1994). Low-lying land, for example, has traditionally been viewed as a liability -- too wet to farm, too low to build, and a breeding ground for mosquitoes. By the 1990s, "swamps" had been elevated to the status of "wetlands" -- protected by the federal government and worthy of
preservation as the habitat of endangered species, critical in the management of stormwater runoff, and even promoted as amenities by some developers.

Changing expectations about population density are reflected in projects that have been approved by villages in the 1990s. Although the annexation agreement for an 1,100-acre site in Vernon Hills allowed for the construction of 3,200 housing units, the final density was reduced to 2,200 units -- or two-thirds of the legally permissible number -- with 43 percent of the site left as open space. This planned community exemplifies the concessions that developers have had to make in recent years, even in a village like Vernon Hills that has traditionally welcomed growth, in order to overcome increasing resistance to their plans.

The desire to prevent dense development has inspired some innovative approaches to land use in the rural-urban fringe. In 1987, after a decade of controversy over the fate of the 2,300 acre Heartland property in Grayslake, a compromise was reached in which the land owner agreed not to develop the property and to cease all litigation. A group of local property owners, led by conservationist Gaylord Donnelley, offered to purchase one 667-acre parcel of the Heartland property for the construction of a community that they hoped would become a model for a new type of development designed to safeguard open spaces. Twenty percent of the site

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9This marked the resolution of a lengthy legal battle in which the developer had charged the county with violation of federal antitrust and civil rights laws for denying sewer service to the property.
was to be developed for residential use\textsuperscript{10} with an additional 11 percent for commercial and industrial properties. The balance (nearly 70 percent of the development) was to be preserved as open space, with a working farm, a community-supported organic garden and family vegetable plots. Open space was also maintained as wetland, prairie, lakes and trails for hiking, horseback riding and biking on the site, which was adjacent to a 2,000-acre nature preserve.

The announcement of plans for the development, to be called Prairie Crossing, generated a good deal of enthusiasm. A Mundelein planner remarked that "the time for that kind of development is really ripe all over the six-county area. Whenever you go to a zoning hearing, everybody is screaming about the environment."\textsuperscript{11} The groundbreaking ceremony drew praise from the president of the Nature Conservancy, who served as keynote speaker, who said, "For years, conservation has been about excluding people from natural areas. The challenge for the future is to develop a new partnership between people and the natural world, one that meets human aspirations without degrading our environment."\textsuperscript{12}

Prairie Crossing was unlike conventional projects in the sense that developers were primarily motivated by the desire to demonstrate the viability of an alternative to the traditional forms of development in the rural-urban fringe. But some of the same

\textsuperscript{10}The plan called for 317 homes on the site, fewer than one-third of the 1,100 units permitted by the court settlement.

\textsuperscript{11}Stanley Holmes, "Prairie home project may be model for suburbia," \textit{Chicago Tribune}, 14 September 1992.

\textsuperscript{12}"Ecologists, builders applaud subdivision," \textit{Chicago Tribune}, 7 October 1993.
concepts have been incorporated into planned communities in other places on the periphery of the Chicago metropolitan area. These developments represent a compromise for public officials who find themselves pressured by developers as well as by constituents demanding significant amounts of open space. Emphasizing large expanses of undeveloped land, such projects are more likely to receive approval from village boards than higher density developments. One project near St. Charles, Illinois, for example, plans 679 homes on 738 acres, a restored farmstead and barn to be used as a recreation and community meeting center, and one-third of the land to be left as open space. Prototypes that combine residential development with the preservation of open space are gaining support in other parts of the United States as well. In Ithaca, New York, for example, a model village designed to integrate housing with a farm, orchard, aquaculture ponds and restored wetlands is being promoted as "the harmonious integration of landscape and people." 

Even developers have appropriated the rhetoric of environmentalism, not only to counter attacks by anti-growth groups but also because this is proving to be one of the most effective ways to appeal to prospective buyers. A 1995 survey found significant changes in consumer preferences since the mid-1980s, when tennis courts, swimming

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13 In some communities, there is growing resistance even to the use of open space for recreational purposes such as playing fields and golf courses. One Lake County community formed a Conservancy/Scenic Corridor Committee to insure that the natural landscape would not be altered in this way.

14 EcoVillage is being planned for 176 acres of land in the Town of Ithaca and is based on Danish co-housing principles which integrate densely clustered private housing with shared community facilities. From 80-90 percent of agricultural and natural areas will be protected in a conservation land trust.
pools and golf courses were the most sought-after amenities in planned communities. Today, the most desirable feature is a community design that offers low traffic volume and quiet neighborhoods. Ninety-three percent of respondents said that this was either "essential" or "very important," and seventy-eight percent reported that they wanted "lots of natural, open space." \(^\text{15}\) Although large planned communities are not the only type of development occurring on the rural-urban fringe, these projects constitute a significant portion of new growth and tend to influence the expectations of buyers in fringe areas.

The Cumulative Effects of Changing Attitudes Toward Growth

Increasing wariness of the costs associated with residential development has fostered competition among communities for the commercial and industrial growth associated with lower property tax rates. Given the present tax system in Illinois, this is a rational approach for municipal governments. Ironically, however, this strategy has spurred the creation of jobs in the rural-urban fringe, attracting migrants from more urban places and fostering the growth of neighboring places with less antipathy toward residential subdivisions. Therefore, even if a suburb has decided to pursue non-residential development, the unintended consequences of this decision may be overcrowded schools, congested roads, and all of the problems caused by rapid growth. This suggests the need to analyze the effects of non-residential development.

on a regional, rather than municipal, level in order to determine its true impact (Oakland and Testa 1995).

The imposition of impact fees and land donations from developers has added significantly to the selling price of new homes in rapidly growing places, inflating the cost of older housing in the same market. The low profit margin of less expensive single-family and multi-unit housing (as well as resistance from many residents to this type of housing) has encouraged the construction of luxury homes in central Lake County, where the demand for more expensive housing remained strong through the 1980s. This has increased the concentration and isolation of low-income and minority families in the older, industrial cities of the county where housing is more affordable, and has contributed to the economic differentiation of communities. Since most of the new jobs are located in the rapidly-growing areas of the county, the lack of affordable housing in many of these places made it difficult for employers to hire the staff they require, particularly for service jobs.

Increasing resistance to higher housing densities, as well as the extraordinary amount of land that has been preserved as open space, has tended to spread development over a larger territory than the same number of units would have consumed during the 1950s or 1960s. At the same time, the decrease in household size has brought a significant increase in the number of housing units without a corresponding increase in the number of people living in the region. Although the Chicago metropolitan region has experienced slow population and economic growth over the past twenty-five years, the deconcentration of people and jobs to the rural-
urban fringe has been extraordinary (figure 27). By the 1990s, the deleterious consequences of the inexorable push of population and jobs to peripheral areas of the metropolitan area had become evident in Chicago and the inner ring of suburbs as these places were forced to confront the problems associated with declining and aging populations, decaying infrastructure and the erosion of the tax base. One observer compared the metropolitan area to a species of fungus, saying, "There are mushrooms that grow in a circle that gradually gets bigger and bigger as the ability of the mushroom to live in the inner part is destroyed . . . . I fear we are like that fungus. The middle is gradually eliminated as everything is eaten out of the soil and the ring gets bigger every year."  

Given the remarkable deconcentration of the population in the Chicago region, it is not possible to predict where the limits of metropolitan expansion may lie. What is certain, however, is that rural villages that still lie beyond the leading edge of suburban growth will have to face many of the same challenges that the communities considered in this study have had to confront. How residents and political leaders respond to these challenges will, to a great extent, determine the patterns of metropolitan settlement in the twenty-first century.

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Fig. 27. Increase in Population and Land Use in the Six-County Chicago Metropolitan Region, 1970-1990.
7 November 1994

Carol Sonnenschein
709 Valley Park Drive
Libertyville, IL  60048

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Carol S. Sonnenschein

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By: Charles Selle

Title: Managing Editor

Date: March 17, 1995
Dear Mr. Schroeder:

I am completing a doctoral dissertation this term at Loyola University of Chicago entitled "The Impact of Rapid Population Growth on Suburbs in the Rural-Urban Fringe." Part of my research involved a survey of local newspapers in order to ascertain how attitudes toward rapid growth have changed over time. I would like your permission to reprint excerpts from the Grayslake Times and the Wauconda Leader in my dissertation.

I have enclosed samples of the ways in which I have used these quotations and citations. The dissertation will be published by University Microfilms, Inc., which requires letters of permission before publishing dissertations containing copyrighted material.

If this meets with your approval, please sign this letter where indicated below and return it to me in the enclosed return envelope. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Carol S. Sonnenschein

Carol S. Sonnenschein

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By: William M. Schroeder

Title: General Manager

Date: 27 Mar 95
REFERENCE LIST


Bogue, Donald J. 1950. The Structure of the Metropolitan Community: A Study of


Howe, Frederic C. 1906. *The City, the Hope of Democracy.* Charles Scribner’s Sons.


Monchow, Helen Corbin. 1939. *Seventy Years of Real Estate Subdividing in the Region of Chicago.* Evanston: Northwestern University.


Partridge, Charles A., ed. 1877. *Past and Present of Lake County.* Chicago:


VITA

The author, Carol Susan Sonnenschein, is the daughter of Benjamin Meyer Sonnenschein and Lona Hale Sonnenschein. She was born September 23, 1947 in Cincinnati, Ohio.

Her elementary and secondary education was obtained in the public schools of Cincinnati, Ohio. She graduated from Withrow High School in June, 1965.

In May, 1985 she received the degree of Bachelor of Arts in sociology from Barat College and in May, 1990 she received a Master of Arts degree in sociology from Loyola University Chicago.
DISSERTATION APPROVAL SHEET

The dissertation submitted by Carol S. Sonnenschein has been read and approved by the following committee:

Kenneth M. Johnson, Ph.D., Director
Professor, Sociology
Loyola University Chicago

Philip W. Nyden, Ph.D.
Professor, Sociology
Loyola University Chicago

John Pelissero, Ph.D.
Professor, Political Science
Loyola University Chicago

The final copies have been examined by the director of the dissertation and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that the dissertation is now given final approval by the committee with reference to content and form.

The dissertation is, therefore, accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Date: 3/31/85

Director's Signature