

Our universe began with a bang. Rapid cosmic inflation occurred, time appeared, and space began its endless expansion. The same energy that fueled the event now fuels our sun, our planet, our children and our toaster ovens. We live through it (as do algae diatoms and neutron stars), and it lives through us. Discovering, harnessing and sustaining its power is and has always been the necessary obsession of our human existence. The very course of our civilization is, in fact, dictated by its availability.

But energy is not equitable in its dispersal—nor do we consume it equitably. Isolated villages suffer the pain of insufficient food energy; kingdoms wallow in an overabundance of fossil fuel; archipelagos bear the brunt of tsunami waves; superpowers enjoy more than their share. We find ourselves in a constant energetic cycle—one form converting to another, with no energy created or destroyed—the effects of which move from personal to political, physical to emotional, local to global, human to planetary.

In recent history, these effects are all-too-often negative, and in 2007, the world took notice: Gas prices are on the rise¹; our climate is warming²; pollution is worsening³; obesity is an epidemic⁴. Many energy sources are scarce, and we are responsible for their scarcity. Our overly-consumptive way of life is now understood as unsustainable.

Then what is the answer? How must we adapt? In this 3rd issue of *HERE*, we examine some of the exciting possibilities—and in doing so, remind ourselves that necessity is not only the mother of invention, but of appreciation. For the effort of re-imagining our world begins with defining what we treasure as much as diagnosing what is wrong.

¹ Gas prices rose more than 85 cents per gallon between November 2006 and 2007. [Energy Information Administration]

² The earth experienced its highest globally averaged temperature since records began in 1880. [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change]

³ The Natural Resource Defense Council predicts that 50 U.S. cities will see a 68 percent rise in unsafe air days in coming years. [Climatic Change, September, 2007]

⁴ The number of overweight adults in the world is now 1.6 billion. The CDC declares America's obesity an epidemic.



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PRINTING

GEOGRAPHICS
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Atlanta, Georgia

RECYCLED PAPER

MOHAWK
Cover: Beckett Concept,
Glacier, 100 lb., 100% PCW
Text: Beckett Expressions,
Snow, 70 lb., 30% PCW
♻️ RECYCLED

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Front Cover: Bacillariophyta Algae Diatom, the fastest-growing photosynthesizing organism, now being commercially harvested as a fossil fuel alternative. Read more on page 114. *Back Cover:* Item retrieved from the exposed banks of Georgia's Lake Lanier during 2007's record-setting Southeastern drought. See more on page 80.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The moments we experience are marked by the environments in which we experience them. HERE Magazine explores this intersection of time and place, providing the point from which we reflect on the world around us and define our place in it—an outlet through which to channel our ideas and ideals. Throughout, we strive to maintain a clear-eyed, objective point-of-view, presenting and interpreting widely-available facts and information. We do not advocate any single position, and invite our readers to draw their own conclusions.

On November 28, 2007, Cooper Carry Orange County gathered before an audience in PrimeUrban Development's downtown Santa Ana headquarters to screen "The End of Suburbia" with the filmmaker, a panel of Orange County's leading developers, and urban planning Masters candidate students from UC Irvine. The discussion, planned for an hour, went on for almost three, and it continues today.

Scene One: Opening Sequence. Montage, late 50s newsreel footage selling the Suburban Dream to well-groomed young couples, home from the War, soon-to-be-Boomer-parents. Ordered rows. Ranch homes. Big yards. Shopping centers. Cars. Speed up to images of Gulf War, McMansions, gas tank prices. Voice-over: "Do the suburbs have a future?"

...And that's the essential question of what we're talking about here today. Does the suburban dream have a future? What about the suburbs are worth saving?

I think the question isn't "Does the suburban dream have a future?" The suburbs aren't going anywhere. The question is how we develop it and where we go from here, considering that there's a huge energy and financial crisis that's begun and is likely to get a lot worse. How do we move forward to make our suburbs sustainable in an economic and environmental crisis?

There's been a lot of debate in this country since 9/11 about freedom versus order, and where we should be on that scale. To some extent, I think the suburbs will always be compelling because they promise to offer both; you have the freedom to be and do what you want on your own property, and yet you have the predictability that you may not see in the city.

But many of us who live in the suburbs choose to take vacations in places like San Francisco and New York and Paris. We still find it thrilling to be in a place where people actually have chance encounters on the street and learn about new things, and there's an exchange of ideas in a more concentrated format.

Then maybe this discussion should be less about suburbs and more about cities. Even since '03, there've been some interesting new development projects around the U.S. drawing people back to urban areas.

Even ten years ago there was talk in our industry that urban America was done, over; nobody was moving back to the center cities in the U.S. That was just wildly wrong, I think, in a great way, and that there've been millions of people who have migrated back from suburb to city.

But more than half the U.S. population still chooses to live in the suburbs.

THE END

Doom and gloom scenarios dominate much of the public speculation about looming energy scarcity and its social, environmental and economic impacts. One of these, the award-winning documentary, "The End of Suburbia: Oil Depletion and the Collapse of the American Dream", presents a vision of an almost-obsolete world drawing a last shaky breath as the energy needed to fuel and sustain suburban growth runs out—to disastrous effect. Whether you believe that energy demand will outstrip resources in 15 years or 50, one thing's clear: We live, and have always lived, on a planet with limited resources. But are we really facing the end, or simply the beginning of a new way of inhabiting our world, of reconsidering what's important as we continue to grow and build?



It's still vital, growing in population every year. We're here to uncover why that is, even in an age of energy insecurity.

The suburbs offer things that I think the center cities struggle with after people move from being single to married to having children—like schools. Do you just move back to the cities and then hope that schools and other kinds of social infrastructure are formed to support that move? I think it's a pretty big experiment. ...

...and who knows if we'll accept it? As a society, we've always sought what's most economical and convenient; that's how suburbs evolved. I think we're faced with evolving the suburbs to demands of a world that's going to get more expensive and less convenient.

It's less about convenience and more about desire. It used to be the suburban model was the American dream, because it solved all those things we felt we needed and desired. Now I think the question is how do we build what we think people emotionally want, what they long for? How do the suburbs change to become that again?

The suburbs are already on the precipice of radical change. Fifteen years ago my marketplace was five minutes from my office, and now we drive an hour just to warm up. Transit is the big issue. Transit in between the suburbs is going to be affected tremendously because you're not going to be able to just drive to L.A. anymore because it's so costly.

Our focus must be towards transit-oriented development.

Scene Two: Transportation, history and present. Newsreel of Robert Moses accepting award from GM for highway design. Experts hold forth on growth and densities near highways, community atrophy everywhere else. Shots of gridlock. Quick cut to fifties-era traffic jam, drivers suffering first stirrings of road rage. "Quit your honking, Mac, we ain't going nowhere."

Suburbs have always been, by definition, separated by some distance from the centers of commerce and industry. Work one place, live in another, drive however long it takes to get there. But we've lost control of this ideal: traffic is, literally, out of control. How do developers take responsibility and help clean up the transportation mess we've gotten into?

We've found that when gas got to around \$3.50, MetroLink and OCTA user activity went up 40 percent. As gas goes up, people in the suburbs and in cities will use transit-oriented development in some form; buses, subways, whatever. I think there's leadership in Southern California to help affect that change.

But Southern California isn't enough. We need a real national infrastructure project based principally on rail transit. It's clearly the future. It's not planes; it's not the car. It's high-speed rail.

I think we need some sort of Marshall Plan on our transportation infrastructure, to put those LRTs back in, to retool our car factories to make hybrid buses and different kinds of public vehicles.

It seems unlikely that the person driving their comfortable SUV will voluntarily get out of it, and out at the bus stop or train station with hordes of other commuters.

Part of it is marketing. We have to figure out how to redefine the public transportation promise, so that it isn't scary and dirty and bad. There's something to give me a sense of hope that whatever change I'm going to make is gonna be better for my kids.

Corporate America is getting on board by putting businesses in suburbs. They're thinking, "I don't want my people on the freeway for two and a half hours—they need a better quality of life. I'm going to move where my employees live, not make them commute to me and come into the office brain dead already."

Nothing will change until we begin to look three-dimensionally. We plan on one plane; we don't plan on two or three. If we were to begin to plan on three planes—air rights, air overage, air over public land that is clearly used only for automobile consumption—that would be an interesting way to look at how the suburb can in fact densify without interrupting the ownership patterns that we've created.

But that involves public participation. And when we go through a process with the suburban community, all of a sudden the first thing on their mind is, "What are you going to take from me to make this happen? I'm going to fight you because I have something to lose," and they never get to, "What do I have to gain?" There is an opportunity here.

I think you have to force the issue on the suburbs, and say, "You've either got to introduce new opportunities and methods of moving people around, or the idea is dead."

But it's not just one idea, or the choice between cars or rail. We have to embrace the idea of multi-modal transportation. You need buses to feed into a rail system. You need taxis. You need bikes and subways. You need limos, even. Our mindset has to change right along with the infrastructure, right along with community will and political will; and all that has to work in sync.

Scene Three: Peak oil and looming energy crisis. Footage of dingy pump jacks, bell curves, charts and graphs, bad news all around. Pundits proclaim, "No more cheap, easy oil." Experts talk about downsizing. Call to live, work and eat more locally. Voice-over: "The age of the 3,000-mile Caesar salad is over."

Are issues of energy and conservation and resource depletion on the map for the development community in a substantial way? Or is the model still focused more on the medium-term financial picture—what will make the most money today or in five years?

Our approach reminds me of Pearl Harbor Syndrome, where the guys who saw those planes coming refused to believe it and call it in because in believing it, they would know that they were dying. That is going on. It's all about whether we think we're in a crisis. No one who's living in their white picket fence house in suburbia is going to give something up. It's just not going to happen.

But there is enormous opportunity for energy conservation in the suburbs, by simply going back to some pretty basic design principles of working with the land and sun. The development community couldn't be more lame on this topic, and as a developer I can say that.

It's not just developers, though. It's the people, it's government, it's business. What about conservation on a larger scale? What if all retail centers had to turn their lights off at 10:00 at night? I mean, imagine turning Manhattan off for a week. But the will for that has to go back to the people, to pressure the leadership.

But there are simple moves that are not being made. People don't necessarily want to turn on their AC. If their home was sited and vented differently, they might not. This is simple stuff.

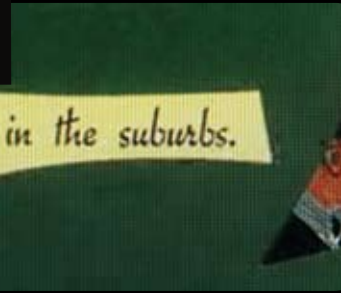
It comes back to the idea of public realm. Suburbia is urban. If you take urban and take out the great public realm, you have suburbia. Now we need to go back to suburbia, put the public realm back in place. It's not downsizing; it's upsizing. If you take and downsize to small neighborhoods again, you're just perpetuating the problem. The issue is to go up in those places that are already built, put the public realm in place.

How do you do that? How do you sell the American public on the public realm when so many are very distrustful of government, they're distrustful of bureaucracy, distrustful of change?

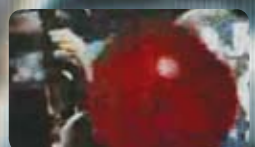
Yeah, they're distrustful, because they're treated as the enemy. To governments, the citizen has become the enemy. All the time we hear, "Let's manage how we're going to deal with the citizenry when we go to present our project. How're we going to manage those people who are coming to this meeting?" Instead of, "We need to embrace their voices; these people are what we're all about."

Scene Four: New Urbanism. Music turns uptempo. Experts talk about scale, walkability, connection, density. Footage of traditional American city blocks transitions to modern couples pushing strollers along tree-lined boulevard of a new development, ground floor retail, top-floor residential. VO: "There's no shortage of ideas out there."

New Urbanism, mixed-use development seems too easy an answer for revitalizing suburbia in the face of dwindling resources—and if it were the solution, wouldn't it have been more widely adopted already?



THE TARGET:
2,700,000
HOMES AND APARTMENTS
by the end of 1947



I do think that there is an opportunity for the citizenry and the government to take back and create a public realm that's right, and that may be our movement. Transit is a public realm issue. Roads are a public realm issue. Parks are a public realm issue.

There's also a lot of opportune land that's being covered by blacktop that we're not getting to. It's the connective link between everything. It's the fabric.

Suburbia is the most overabundant resource of infrastructure in the world. And it's the best you can get. The city has the worst. Maybe we should think about, instead of going and building more new, using what we have and figuring how to take those opportunities to go into the second and third dimension.

Exactly. Redevelopment. Transforming first-generation suburbs into more dense environments, more walkable communities. That's going to be a generational thing, too. There are going to be younger families that will start buying those houses, and will be willing to pay more for them.

The opportunity is for partnership between the public and private sectors. Form-based codes, for example, are a great opportunity for developers to go to a city and say, "This is what makes our job easier," and for the city to come back and say, "Well this is what we need," and so to meet and dialogue, and not be as adversarial as they've been in the past.

Even if there is greater public and private cooperation, and there is a strong push towards developing higher density, more walkable, accessible places, how does that affect the issue of choice—actually getting people to buy in to the notion that less can be more?

We're still struggling with perception. There is a perception of safety in the suburbs, which is uncomfortable to acknowledge, because it translates, whether people want to admit it or not, to a fear of diversification. There's a fear that diverse neighborhoods equal not safe neighborhoods, even in new urban-type communities. But I think that's different with the next generation.

The real hope is with the next generation. I'm lucky to be surrounded by 20-somethings every day; they're a lot smarter than I am. There's an elevation of intelligence. We need to be led by the 20- and 30-somethings sooner than we are allowing it to happen. I hope that more organizations tend to let those people be in those leadership roles.

We can't wait for the next generation. This is the crisis before the crisis, and the opportunity is to act now.

Consider this panel here, concerned people who are willing to discuss this issue. Are we going to leave here today, get in our cars and go back to our houses and tell our spouses that we had an interesting conversation about new urbanism and then say, "What's for dinner?" Or will we walk out of here and say, "We're forming action committees. We're gonna storm the barricades!" We're gonna make sure our guy gets elected president because, God damn it, it's important?"

But the people on this panel were selected because you represent the leadership of the real estate and development community here, and so the responsibility for what's going to happen in the next ten, twenty years in Southern California...

Is ours.

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To view selected film clips and a video of this symposium, visit coopercarry.com/events.

