

SUBURBIA: THE GOOD LIFE IN CONNECTICUT?
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NARRATOR: It is the way most of us live in Connecticut -- Suburbia.
Where we go to find the good life.
Where the state's economic and political power are based.
What led us here?
And what does the future hold -- for the suburbs?

NARRATOR: For many Americans, the suburbs have historically been a place to search for the good life. In Connecticut, perhaps more than any other state, the suburbs are where we live.

HERB JANICK (Historian): While we're here on this little piece of real estate we could be outside of any Connecticut city and we could be looking at exactly the same thing. Connecticut is really a suburban state where this is the lifestyle and this is the land use pattern that has really dominated the state.

JAY GITLIN (Historian): People are looking for a number of things. I think first and foremost, they're looking for a place that has good schools. They're looking for nature, neighbors who will respect your privacy--give you space and at the same time sort of be there if you need them.

NARRATOR: Connecticut's suburbs are where the state's political power resides.

JOSHUA MAMIS (Newspaper Editor): Most of the major issues facing Connecticut today are being played out in the suburbs.

MATTHEW NEMERSON (Exec. Dir. Chamber of Commerce): We tend to fractionalize into 169 very autonomous bodies all with different roles. The suburbs being that great middle playing field.

NARRATOR: Our long embrace of suburban living has brought hidden costs and an uncertain future.

JOHN BRITTAIN (Law Professor): Forty-two years after the 1954 Brown versus Board of Education decision, we have more segregation today in residential living patterns than we did in 1953.

LAURA WEIR CLARK (Preservationist): If we are not careful in the next 20 years, the indications are that we will lose much of our rural lands, our small towns will lose their character.

NARRATOR: What is the Connecticut suburban experience and what does it reveal about our most personal and fundamental values?

DEEP ROOTS

NARRATOR: Suburban aspirations have been deeply rooted in the consciousness of our state for 150 years. Connecticut in the mid-19th century was primarily a rural state with a few small cities. In the 1840s, the idea of the suburbs began to take hold.

HERB JANICK: Very early mid 19th century - we've tried to establish that relationship of the middle landscape. Not too civilized, not too primitive, and that's what the suburb is. I mean, the suburb was the pastoral kind of environment that all Americans wanted. Connecticut was just in a position to be able to

do it more easily than other people. Connecticut has been able to a- buy into that way of living so completely because it is small. There are not any large physical barriers that would prevent people from traveling to live and traveling to work in some other place. I think it's important for people to understand that this is a very strong part of CT's heritage. That's something we carry with us, with its pluses and with its minuses.

CAROL GRAZIANO (Newington Resident): Carol, what's the good life for you? My backyard. We can be sitting out here and you don't hear anything but the trees blowing in the wind. You can hear the birds and you can come out in the sunshine and you don't have to worry. The good life to me is just being in my backyard. I like the front yard, too, but I like the backyard better.

AMANDA LAMOTHE (Uncasville Resident): Just walking down the driveway to get a newspaper in the morning is wonderful because you know, we're surrounded by trees and it was nothing like where I grew up. You could walk out the door and wave into your neighbor's kitchen and here you can't even see your neighbors.

STREETCAR SUBURBS

GEORGE BOUCHE (East Haven Trolley Museum): Before the 1880's, most people had to live in the cities near where they worked. In 1888 and after that, all the small horse car lines in the cities started to electrify and to extend their line out into the country. That enabled people to move away from the center of the city out to a suburb. Buy a home, a little better quality of life, and commute back into town to go to work.

NARRATOR: The electric trolley opened up rural areas all around the state to residential development.

HERB JANICK: The streetcar was less expensive, ran more frequently, made many more stops. So that people with a different income, people with a different work schedule found it possible to get out of the city.

JAY GITLIN: The trolleys finally brought the benefits of suburbanization to the middle classes, even the working classes. This is a beautiful classical revival home built in 1910 on a lot carved out of the estate of Donald Grant Mitchell. It's situated here in the trolley suburb of Westville, which is the probably the nicest trolley suburb of the city of New Haven.

NARRATOR: In Wethersfield, as in other small towns, the street car brought great growth.

ELEANOR WOLF (Wethersfield Resident): Albert Hubbard in the early 1900's developed what he always said was the first mass housing project. He had about 67 different housing plans, people would go and decide which house they wanted him to build. Mostly a large part of the center of town was his housing. I suppose the biggest change was that people had access to the city for shopping. There were no big stores in Wethersfield at all, but the food and things were supplied by peddlers. We had the fishmonger, we had the meat man, we had the baker, ice man, the scissors grinder, vegetable man, rag picker - all of these people came around to the door. And then the trolley helped put them out of business because then you got into your best clothes and went to Hartford to shop.

NARRATOR: By W.W.I, nearly 70 Connecticut towns had trolley systems. Trolley tracks were laid radiating out from the city's central business district, following the main transportation routes in the city. All tracks led to the heart of the city, with its new business towers and great department stores.

Both the cities and the suburbs thrived as public and private development projects boomed.

HERB JANICK: The rail line and then the trolley line were the real glue that really brought together the suburbs and city in balance here. People left at 5 o'clock to go back to the suburbs, but they came in at 8 o'clock or at 10 o'clock when the suburban women came in to shop in the department store which really was a women's club.

LAURA WIER CLARKE: You can see right behind us in New Haven, some of those older suburbs where the houses are set closer to the street and closer together and they're off of the major streets so that someone can hop off the street car and walk a couple of blocks to their home. The street car suburbs were suburbs that had to have a pedestrian scale to them.

JAY GITLIN: These sorts of houses built at this time tend to have porches and parlor rooms. People had the expectation that they had a public face, just something that modern, very recent suburbs don't have.

NARRATOR: By the 1930s trolleys started to fade, pushed aside by the growing reliance on the automobile.

ESCAPE FROM THE CITY

NARRATOR: Americans have always tended to solve problems by moving on. The suburbs offered a new frontier, a borderland offering space, nature, a sense of safety, and distance from new immigrants who were settling in the cities.

As the urban working population grew, the suburbs as an escape from the city became the goal of many workers.

As successive waves of immigrants came to Connecticut's cities, earlier arrivals left for what they saw as the safety, privacy, and greenery of the suburbs.

ROBERT DECRESCENZO (Mayor, East Hartford): When people think of East Hartford, they don't normally think of a farming community, but then 'till about 1930 that's exactly what East Hartford was. You take this house here. This farm probably stretched back to Main Street and the house next to it was another farm that stretched back to Main Street. Well in January 1930, Pratt & Whitney opened its plant on Main Street and between 1930 and 1960 the population of East Hartford exploded and the urbanization of East Hartford occurred over relatively very short period of time very rapidly.

This is where the suburbs really started in East Hartford. Around the turn of the century to about 1920 or maybe even 1930, people were moving into neighborhoods like this from somewhere else, usually Hartford or in and around Hartford to get away from the urban life of Hartford and yet still be close enough to go to the same church and go back to the old neighborhood. And they found it comfortable here because they got away from the so-called city problems and yet they were still close by to the place where they worked 'cause many of them worked in the City of Hartford.

POST-WAR BOOM

NARRATOR: In the 25 years following WWII, unprecedented numbers of working and middle-class urban dwellers moved to the suburbs, finally transforming Connecticut from an urban/rural state to an urban/suburban state.

Both state and federal public policies encouraged and funded the suburban movement

JAY GITLIN: Right after World War II there was a tremendous housing shortage. And so tremendous numbers of houses were built. And this is a nice example, I think, of a pleasant post-World-War-II suburban development. It represents in many ways the Democratization of the American dream insofar as the American dream is suburban.

CATHERINE JOHNSON (Town Planner): And one of the things that made it possible for a lot of people to buy these houses was the funding from the FHA. You had 5 or 6% interest. You could take out a 20-year mortgage and you could borrow up to 80% of the house. Prior to that time you had 3 to 5 years to pay off 50% mortgages.

ROBERT DECRESCENZO: Servicemen coming back from the war needed two things: they needed a decent place to live and start their new families, and they needed a job. In this neighborhood they got both. The deal here was \$4,999 with \$499 dollars down and you could move into your brand new home with your new family, walk to work at the Pratt & Whitney plant, and your kids could walk to school. Today, the function of the neighborhood remains the same. It's a place to get a toe hold into the middle class, and then grow from there.

LINDA CHAPLEY (Bristol Resident): My dad grew up on a farm. He was basically forced to go to a city to make a living and I'm sure the suburbs provided him that little enclave, that little half acre of country. Now for my mom, who grew up in a city and just dreamed about living in a home with a white picket fence and things like that, this was the manifestation of that dream. Yet she was still close enough to the city that she loved.

And it was a quantum leap for her generation and my dad's generation from being children of immigrants just eking out a living in this new country to all the sudden be able to afford their own home in an affluent area, send their children to good schools, have one maybe two cars, and take it from there.

ALL ROADS LEAD HOME

NARRATOR: As car ownership increased in Connecticut throughout the 20th century, so did the road system. In 1907, an extensive state highway system was approved by the General Assembly. In 1923 the Post Road was widened. In 1938 the Merritt Pkwy opened. By 1950, the state had more roads per square mile than any state in the country. In 1956 The Interstate Highway Act created the federal expressway.

HERB JANICK: We had a very active road building program quite early in the '20s and '30s so that by the time of World War II, we had 3,000 miles of paved road in a state that's only 5,000 square miles.

MATTHEW NEMERSON: Connecticut embarked on the greatest suburban support program that any state has seen. You know, we really invented the interstate highway and a lot of people don't realize that I-95 along the shoreline was built before there was an interstate system. And it was incorporated in afterwards. That's why we had tolls. That's why there's so many exits on it because in fact it was designed for people to commute from the suburbs along the shore into the cities.

NARRATOR: In 1965 when the new state constitution reapportioned the legislature, the power to shape public policy flowed to suburban residents and their representatives. The suburbs' political power base continues today.

JEFFERSON DAVIS (CT State Representative): Politically here in the General Assembly before we went to one man, one vote, it was the rural areas that controlled the General Assembly and now that we've gone to one man, one vote. The suburbs are where the population is and in many ways they're the ones that also set the political agenda.

HERB JANICK: And they have reinforced the pattern of the federal government which is to encourage suburban scattering, suburban sprawl, by subsidizing school buildings, subsidizing sewer buildings, subsidizing road building.

NARRATOR: Before 1920, private automobile or carriage transportation was largely limited to the wealthy, requiring middle class real estate developments to be within walking distance of public transit. The mass-produced automobile changed all that, and put the suburban house further out in the country.

HERB JANICK: The automobile didn't have to stay on a fixed route. The automobile made it possible to fill in suburban areas that couldn't be reached by the trolley or the train. Every family defines its own world. In terms of where they work, in terms of where they go to school, this old link between suburb tied to the city is broken.

JAY GITLIN: Instead of thinking of central places, now we really accumulate our own set of personal destinations. To me our set of highways and these sorts of roads, they all lead home. You know, in a profound way. Instead of leading to the city, they lead home. I love cities mind you, but the city is nothing more than another stop off the turnpike.

EDGE CITY

NARRATOR: As business and industry have increasingly relocated from the city to the suburb over the last 30 years, a new type of suburb -- edge city -- has developed -- a spread-out, self-contained environment offering work, residence, and consumption.

HERB JANICK: It isn't really until the '50s when people are beginning to say, "Geez, do we really need the city?" If we live in the suburbs maybe we can work here too and maybe we can shop here too." And that I think is a major change in the suburban pattern. That suddenly the department stores in the '50s and '60s are closing downtown and are moving out to the suburbs. And we're in a place like this where corporations are saying, "Do we need the big high rise on Park Avenue or can we come out here where are employees are living anyway?"

NARRATOR: This trend opened even more towns to suburbanization. Before 1965 most Connecticut jobs were in the city, now they're in decentralized sites as more offices, industry and retailers locate in the suburbs.

85% of the time, we commute from suburb to suburb rather than from suburb to city.

HERB JANICK: The suburbanization of commerce and industry has in a way made it possible to spread this way of life over more parts of Connecticut. You know, Litchfield County now that a- nobody would ever think of a suburban area - that's a rural area. It's suburban now because people are living there and they're working in other parts - they work at the mall. They work at Union Carbide and they live there. I think it's extended the grip of that way of living

SUBURBAN DREAMS

NARRATOR: Have we found the good life in the suburbs?

JAY GITLIN: This is a nice example, I think, of a high end contemporary suburb. As you can see there's lots of space all around. It's the ultimate in some ways of the de-concentrated, decentralized place.

These are very nice homes plunked down smack dab in the middle of nature so that you are really surrounded by lots of trees, streams. And you might notice that the city is nowhere in sight. The other type of contemporary upscale suburb, a- will look very different from this and in fact will be a return to the idea of living in an older village. A place that's a walking town where you have the texture of history.

NARRATOR: Devonwood is an upper-class subdivision in Farmington that for many represents the American Dream realized to the fullest.

OTTO PAPARAZZO (Developer): It is what I like to think of as almost an anti-subdivision subdivision. The sizes of the lots would vary from as small as a third of an acre up to an acre and a half. Price range runs from a \$150,000 to \$250,000 dollars. The houses in price range run from \$400 to a million two. The average house is in probably in the neighborhood of \$600,000 dollars, and the size of the lot is not nearly as important as the setting. I think Devonwood is probably one of the most successful residential communities in the State of Connecticut right now. - we have sold 300 lots. We control the architecture we control the design of your building, the color of your house, the landscaping has to be approved, and so this strong pattern, the protection of the strong control pattern really makes it. Now this also can be done with inexpensive housing. There's no parking on the existing roads so then if there is a stranger there he's gonna be very obvious to the neighbors. There's almost a mutual neighborhood protection. A sense of security that is here even though there is no guards on the gates and stuff.

NARRATOR: Connecticut's embrace of the suburban lifestyle has in many ways been a successful one.

JONI ZARKA (Farmington Resident): The day that we moved in our neighbors came over and said, "Hi we're your new neighbors. It looks like you're moving in. Can we take your children to McDonald's for you? Get them out of your hair? "What can we do for you?" Very friendly. It has been very friendly, yeah. Can't beat that.

LYNN LINDENGRASS (Farmington Resident): I agree. It's been very friendly and we picked our neighborhood specifically so that we had all age groups of people and a lot of children around. I found the same thing the day we moved in they had lemonade and cookies. It's us though.

SUBURBAN NIGHTMARES

NARRATOR: The benefits of suburban living are clear. The costs are sometimes hidden. In many ways, the more avidly we pursue the good life, the more it recedes before us.

Land development is at the heart of all suburban growth.

LAURA WIER CLARKE: When you fly out of Bradley Field you look down at a state that seems wonderfully rural. The problem with that is that a lot of that wooded land is owned by people nearing retirement age, and it's owned in smaller parcels - that is 50 acres and smaller. What that means is that in the next 20 years, those lands will be changing hands.

NARRATOR: The pursuit of the rural experience paradoxically can lead to sprawl, congestion and loss of open space.

CATHERINE JOHNSON: About 40 years ago, after about a mile or two you were in the country, literally farms. They still exist, but more and more farmers whose children don't take up the same occupation, they're being left with no choice but to sell the land for development. And then in a place where you had this beautiful cultivated landscape, you now have four gigantic houses with 3-car garages. So, that

eventually if we continue this pattern, there's gonna be no difference between built and natural. And it's all gonna be this in-between, this other, neither urban nor rural.

PHILIP LANGDON (Author, *A Better Place to Live*): For the last 30 years we've tended to concentrate all the retailing on these broad highways. You just have to have a car. And that's an expensive way to get around. And it also means that suburbs which ostensibly are designed with the well-being of raising kids in mind, in fact, are very much anti-youngster because the kids really don't have that ability to just get around on their own power.

LAURA WIER CLARKE: We have destroyed the scale of the suburb. We have destroyed a scale that will make it come together and work as a neighborhood because people aren't- won't walk in it. There's no reason to walk in it. And when people don't get out of their cars, the neighborhood won't develop.

PRIVATE LIVES

NARRATOR: The suburban experience has at its heart a quest for privacy -- a collective wish for a private life -- and a quiet place.

AMANDA LAMOTHE: It's a place to go after the world beats you up so to speak. It's just sort of nice to be able to go home and sit out on your back porch and you don't care what you look like. You don't care what you have on and it's nice to not have to have all the noise and confusion. We all work weird hours and everybody pretty much just keeps to themselves. They're all really nice. They wave, but that's about it.

WALTER WHEELER (Stamford Resident): I know out of 50 neighbors I have here, I know half a dozen. One of the things I personally like about living here is that I don't have to deal with my neighbors. You'll see that there are no curtains in the windows in my house. I've got trees around here that do that job.

NARRATOR: Some suburbanites feel that this quest for privacy has led to isolation -- from neighbors, town, and state.

MIKE GRAZIANO (Newington Resident): We live on the end of a cul de sac. In spite of the fact that on TV you normally see suburbia people, you know, a lot of camaraderie so to speak - I really don't find that at all in the suburban area at least where we live. Everybody's so busy maintaining their big homes and cutting their lawns and taking the kids to ballet or tap dancing or whatever, that there really is very little camaraderie among the neighbors in spite of the fact that we do live reasonably close together.

RAY WIEDERHOLD (Branford Resident): They just revitalized our center of town and there's a lot of activity where people are physically close together and you can talk to them. I know a lot of those people but the people up here I don't know. I may drive through in a police cruiser but they're really not out here. I mean, we've been out here quite bit. Have you really seen anybody walking around or - you know, it's the summertime, where are the kids? I don't know, maybe they're off in summer camp. I don't know where they are.

HERB JANICK: People focus in on their own immediate family, their own immediate needs, the needs of their own town at the widest a- reach and I think that that is a a- fragmenting kind of way to think. We don't sense that we have a wider set of obligations and opportunities

HERB JANICK: And I think that's what's dangerous. If we're trying to promote a state where we all realize we have a stake in - in the common good of this society, I think we have to break that down. And I think the suburb in some ways makes it harder to break down.

JOSH MAMIS: Your life becomes one of getting in your car, going to work, coming home, eating dinner, putting the kids to bed, watching TV. There's no real opportunities for mixing like there is in cities or in communities. I realized a lot of the politics of today are an off-shoot of this; why do I have to pay taxes so that somebody else can go to the public school, my kid's not going to a public school, my taxes shouldn't go to support the public school; they're not good enough for my kid or they're not safe or whatever it is, why should I do that? That's easier to say when you don't know your neighbor.

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

NARRATOR: The growth of the Connecticut suburbs reflects a long-held idea that our most cherished ideals can best be realized in small groups—the family, the congregation, the neighborhood, the town.

BUD BRAY (Niantic Resident): We've worked hard, we've gotten where we've gotten, we have these beautiful homes, we love our neighborhoods. Suburban people are wonderful people. They do great things all the time with their little leagues, their PTA's, all kind of functions community service.

LEE DELLERT & CAROL BROWN (Glastonbury Residents): We love it so much.

CB: We've been here for how long?

IN UNISON: 35 years.

LD: Very cohesive group of people. Our children all grew up together.

CB: Even though these guys grownup.

LD: We took care of everybody's children, you know how things should be happening now which are not happening? That's what we did in those days.

CB: Right. We were all a family.

LD: We were a big family. If Chippy was doing something wrong in my yard, Chippy was in big trouble.

CHIP: She'd tell on me.

LD: I would tell on him!

BART RUSSELL (Exec. Dir., CT Council of Small Towns): I think there is a desire for a sense of belonging, a sense of connection. You can participate in the affairs of a small town. You're not, a small fish in a big pond. And for some people, including myself, that's an appealing virtue.

MIKE SWIFT (Staff Writer, The Hartford Courant): The whole sense of volunteerism is really incredibly strong and identifying with a small community is a pretty neat thing. A real kind of unique facet to Connecticut life I think.

And yet at the same time, when you see things like, you know, zoning regulations, NIMBYism, you wonder whether the real flow/push of these communities is to maintain the status quo and keep out things that are different or dangerous. So, it's almost like 2 sides of a coin or something. I think there are these

2 characters of life of excluding as well as contributing that are both run very strong in Connecticut communities.

BART RUSSELL: I think it's pretty clear that the smaller towns believe very much that local issues ought to be decided locally and that state mandates are a thing of the past or ought to be a thing of the past.

LYNN FETTER (Farmington Resident): Everything in Connecticut seems very separate. Each town has their own tax base, their own fire department, their own school system. It's so separate and-and heaven forbid that somebody from Avon would use a Farmington whatever the heck, I mean I was at a town meeting and they were talking about putting in a (and this was like 2 weeks ago), they were talking about putting a sidewalk in by U-Conn. And this man, very angry man, stood up and said, "Well I just want to know who's gonna be using this sidewalk around UConn? I mean, how many Farmington people work at U-Conn?" I thought, "Oh my God!"

RACE AND CLASS

ROBERT DECRESCENZO: If you look at some of the zoning decisions that the outer ring suburbs have made and some of the land use decisions and some of the ways that they portray themselves, I think there is a very active effort to keep certain groups out of those towns and I don't think there's any mystery about that and it's not overt and no one's ever gonna say that, but if you look at the composition of those towns it doesn't happen by accident that some of these outer ring suburbs are 99.8% White and I think they're making a very big mistake.

NARRATOR: The strong link behind suburban living patterns and widespread racial isolation is a relatively recent one.

HERB JANICK: The suburbanization hold on Connecticut goes back much further than the race issue in Connecticut. And people were striving to live this decentralized way long before Connecticut had a great diversity of population. And the whole issue of race, ethnicity, is kind of superimposed on that pattern. Race didn't get involved until the middle of the 20th century when large numbers of migrants (new types of migrants) - from the south, from New York City, from the Caribbean area - came into Connecticut during World War II and were followed by large numbers of Hispanic migrants, Puerto Ricans particularly. That movement into Connecticut coincided with the biggest outward migration of Connecticut urban dwellers to the suburbs that came after World War II and it did for a lot of people provide an extra motive for moving to the suburbs. And that's when in the 1950's and '60s that race became superimposed on the suburban exodus pattern.

NARRATOR: Despite exclusionary racial and religious covenants long-written into deeds, African-Americans have always lived in the suburbs.

ROBERT GILL (Branford Deputy Chief of Police): I was born here and I married here and I brought my family up here. And um, I don't remember a time when I thought that Branford was not a great place to live. There wasn't much to do in the community socially, but we had each other and that was a lot of fun, and of course we had the church.

This is Evergreen Place and it's a parcel of land that the owner of the Malleable Iron Fittings Company made available so that minorities would be able to buy and build homes. And it's adjacent to another street that minorities had lived on for many years and they were all employees of the foundry. And the owner of the MIF made these houses possible and it stayed an all black community for a number of years. Well into the late 70's and early 80's it remained entirely minority.

NARRATOR: Although the move to the suburbs from the cities has historically excluded racial minorities -- that is now changing. The inner ring suburbs around Hartford -- Bloomfield, E. Hartford, Manchester, W. Hartford and Windsor -- are now at least 20 percent minority

JOHN BRITTAIN: I think the suburban dream has both tended to increase racial and ethnic isolation as well as class divisions and I think it also has transcended those race and class divisions, too. As many people of color who can afford to, as the expression goes, vote with their feet and they too are moving.

MIKE SWIFT: The most integrated places in Connecticut now are ironically some of the suburbs; places like Windsor, Bloomfield, now in West Hartford more so too. Windsor -- the school system is over 1/3 minority. Bloomfield it's close to 75%.

SANDY KLEBANOFF (Deputy Mayor, West Hartford): West Hartford is becoming diverse not only ethnically and racially, but economically. You have some of the largest concentrations of wealth in West Hartford, and you have a very large middle income population, but you have a very significant poor population.

MIKE SWIFT: Blacks generally are moving into towns like Windsor and Bloomfield which historically have been more welcoming. You don't see that type of migration in Newington and Wethersfield. Yet, you do see a strong migration of Hispanics to towns like South Windsor.

You definitely have a different character for every town and that's something that's really neat. But you also see that in the character of the migration that different towns are welcoming in different degrees of , you know, different minority groups and there's no question that racial bias, preference, plays a role in that somehow.

I think there is, you know, "White flight" from some of the older inner ring suburbs and those people are being replaced by in many cases, minority groups that are, you know, seeing the suburban dream as well moving to places like West Hartford, Bloomfield, Windsor and you even see that more so in towns that have a reputation for being all White like Glastonbury you're seeing some of those trends as well. Almost always they're employed, often 2-income families. They're parents that care about quality of education for their kids and it's kind of the old quintessential American Dream there I think.

JACK HASAGAWA (Consultant, CT Dept. of Education): One of the things to note here is that this is not occurring, however, across class lines. So if you're looking at black and Hispanic families moving out of New Haven into Woodbridge, you're looking at black and Hispanic doctors, lawyers and business executives.

NARRATOR: Some suburbs are beginning to experience problems historically associated with urban ills, prompting residents to move to towns farther out in the country.

TOM LEWIS (Geography Professor, MCC): Those that now see the inner suburbs as negative environments will leave like the rings on a pond, you know, when you throw a stone. They'll continue to move out to places like Hebron and Sterling and places further and further out. So the trend will continue.

NARRATOR: The fastest population growth is in the small towns and then in the farther out suburbs.

COMMON VALUES

NARRATOR: Everyone wants good schools, safety, but for many the suburbs seem to be the only place to find them.

ROBERT DECRESCENZO: This is Mayberry Village. Here you have a good mix of very long time residents and very new residents, many of which of are from the City of Hartford and are again using this as the entryway into the middle class. We do have a lot of people from racial minority groups moving into neighborhoods like this because as they get another rung up the middle class ladder, they're looking for the same thing that everybody else is looking for which is a quiet home on a neighborhood street like this. A little larger in a kind of a rural setting with a lot of trees, sidewalks, birds and not a lot of traffic.

I've had a lot of people tell me they don't care who their neighbors are as long as they keep their property up and they have the same middle class values that they do. A well kept lawn, quiet, respectful of your neighbors on a quiet street and where you share the same values of your neighbors in terms of how you live your life .

NARRATOR: Although more suburban towns are experiencing a growing racial diversity, resistance to subsidized housing remains, reflecting a continued strong bias toward segregation by class.

EMMETT WALLACE (Easton Resident): It's partly values, partly attitudes. The fear that we have of those who are somewhat different. And there is a reality that we don't want to risk having a poorer education. We don't want to risk having slums in the community.

DARLENE SHARRATT (Farmington Resident): I think it would be fine to have a wide diversification if they could take care of things and have a strong work ethic and improve beyond what they've been given and it wouldn't bother me in the least as long as they wanted to live within the same lifestyle as everybody else. It's the journey to get there. And if we as taxpayers give people things, there's no journey so there's no appreciation for what you get.

LYNN LINDENGRASS (Farmington Resident): I mean 20 years ago I had to work and go to school and raise a child at the same time and my husband had to work to get to the point where down the line we could get here. And I mean it would have been wonderful if somebody gave me money to buy a house. I would love it. But I wouldn't appreciate it.

NARRATOR: For some suburbanites, it's not who you are that determines whether you are welcome in a neighborhood, it's how much you earn.

ROB WERNER (Darien Resident, formerly of Hartford): I don't think that anyone sitting here would have a problem with some Black actuary who works at the Aetna living next door to 'em. I mean or, you know 10 Black actuaries who work at the Aetna.

EVELYN MUKJIAN DALY (Unionville Resident): But doesn't that make it a class issue rather than a race issue.

ROB WERNER: Well, it's both. It's both. It's just people are more suspicious of minorities because there are these problems that people tend to associate with minorities.

ALAN GREEN (Consultant): We had been in an urban setting all of our married years prior to moving here in 1977. I don't want to live next door to someone who is not maintaining their property. But that to me doesn't have anything to do with what they make, or whether they're section 8 or whether they're white or black. Race matters in this country, but I would hope that as we've grown as a society that it's not so much of a factor as it used to be. What we're really faced with now is economic isolation. And that's certainly going to have an impact on race because if you are a person with a darker skin in this country the opportunities are still limited.

THE CITY AND ITS SUBURBS

NARRATOR: “Suburban” once described an intimate relationship with the city. Now it defines a wide -- and emotional -- distance.

HERB JANICK: The suburb represents everything that the city isn't. I think that's pretty important. I mean the city is crowded. The city is dirty. The city is unhealthy. The city is made up of different people, different races, different classes, and the suburb is the opposite to that.

MIKE SWIFT: We people almost take on an article of pride here that they will say, “I haven't been to Hartford in 20 years. I don't need to go there.” And they're proud of saying things like that. It's very strange to me. It's not unusual now to hear developers, even academics say, “Maybe we need to just throw away the cities and start anew.” And that attitude is out there and I think it's getting stronger.

NARRATOR: What do suburbanites think about the city?

LYNNE VALENTE (Avon Resident): I used to hear people all the time and say, “Oh, where'd you guys move from?” Hartford. “Ohhh. Hartford!” [LAUGHS.] You know. Yeah. And I would get like militant, “Yeah, Hartford. That's where we moved from.” You know?

EVELYN MUKJIAN DALY : I know plenty of people where we live that are fearful of coming into the city. It doesn't cross their mind to come in for anything. I'm just amazed.

LYNNE VALENTE: Yeah, there's a lot of people like that.

EVELYN MUKJIAN DALY: I think number one is the fear factor. They hear of the violence. They see it on television. They're afraid. And somehow the cultural events don't override the fear. And plus the suburbs are starting to offer a lot more that the city used to offer: shopping, restaurants, some cultural events - limited, but some

MICHAEL DALY (Unionville Resident): I couldn't imagine that there were actually people who would be neighbors of mine less than 15 minutes from the city who would go 5 years without coming in. And their only connection is the television news at 6 o'clock to the city.

NARRATOR: The exodus to the suburbs continues to put great stress on middle class neighborhoods in the state's cities

ROB WERNER: People are surprised that there are neighborhoods like this one that look very much like a place where Wally and the Beaver grew up. Most of the people who have lived here a long time take tremendous pride in their homes and it's the kind of place where people go out on Saturday mornings and sweep the street in front of their house.

You can see there's 4 for sale signs in a row and there's a 5th one right back there and these are the kinds of things that make living in this neighborhood unsettling because you never know who's going to move in and you try and keep an open mind. Most people who do move in will be no problem, but past experience has told us that some of the new neighbors will be problems and bring some of the ills traditionally associated with urban problems into the neighborhood.

It's very difficult to talk about this without getting into generalizations which are often unfair. And you also have to deal with the racial issue. But often times what is characterized as a racial issue is in fact a cultural or social norm issue.

NARRATOR: Hartford had the greatest percentage of population decline of any major city in the nation from 1990-1994, losing 11% of its population; New Haven, Bridgeport and Waterbury were among the top ten population losers.

MIKE SWIFT: This remains the richest state in the union if you look at per capita income yet, we have inner city areas where in some neighborhoods if you look at census tracts which are blocks of areas about several city blocks, you have incomes which are like down to 1/2 what they are in East St. Louis, you know, some of the most depressed urban areas in the country.

JOHN BRITTAIN: And the cities have been left with the poorest of the poor and all of the municipal overburden providing for social welfare and public safety. I think that leads to ultimate social unrest in the future and causes all sorts of consequences for the state.

NARRATOR: Manufacturing jobs have historically been the first step into middle-class life for the unskilled worker. But the cities no longer provide many manufacturing jobs. Retail employment is also a mere shadow of what it was in the glory days of the downtown department store.

Today's unskilled urban resident has no easy way to get to the suburbs, where jobs are increasingly located.

MIKE SWIFT: Within Hartford there are something like 20,000 households in the 1990 census which did not have an automobile which is an amazing statistic. Those are people that are essentially shut out of the labor force in terms of the real growth going on in jobs out in the far suburbs.

NARRATOR: If the cities fail, will the suburbs follow?

MIKE SWIFT: Metropolitan Hartford is one economy. If property taxes in Hartford get so high that Aetna decides we can't afford it here anymore, it's unlikely that they're gonna relocate to Simsbury. They're probably gonna go to Georgia or North Carolina, Raleigh-Durham, wherever. And that is going to reek havoc in the suburbs just as much in the cities, possibly even more.

JEFF DAVIS: Only if we have economically vibrant and socially vibrant cities are we going to have economically and socially vibrant economy as well as state. So even though the suburbs may set the agenda, I think it is a misplaced agenda because what we should be concerned about is the condition of our cities.

NARRATOR: The uncertainty of job security in a weakened defense- and insurance-based economy has led many suburban residents to hesitate when confronted with the risks involved in helping the cities.

MICHAEL DALY: I'm not sure why Connecticut that is in such deep economic straits for everybody has to think it should be at the forefront of this particular issue of doing something to change everything. I mean, if you have a lot of people who have flown to the suburbs and now you take away their ability to achieve that existence, maybe the people who are the CEO's of the companies that are here now might say, "Why am I here? I mean, we don't have to be here in Connecticut. We'll go somewhere else where this doesn't exist." And I just have to ask myself why Connecticut feels it should be at the particular forefront of achieving.

FOR THE KIDS

NARRATOR: More than anything else, the suburbs are about our kids and how we seek to secure their future.

JONI ZARKA (Farmington Resident): I have young children and I'm raising a family and I happen to think that the suburbs, the best place to raise children. If I were at a different point in my life, my husband and I if we were a young couple or if we- our children were gone and we were near retirement, we may not be living in the suburbs. We may be living in a city or somewhere else. But for me I just wasn't willing to take a chance with my children by raising them in a city. I just felt a little safer raising them in a suburb.

LYNNE VALENTE: Even though Paul's mom got mugged, it wasn't the crime that brought us out. It was the schools. And there was no families. You wanted other families, you know, you want your kids to play with other kids. And there's no sense of community that way.

MICHAEL DALY: It's just how we live and it's just one less stress. I always still think that the lifeblood economically and socially does come from the city and it is important to us, but I'm not going to risk the family, my family living in some of these problems.

JAY GITLIN: There is a very strong sense of community here but where do you find it? It's in the schools. A lot of suburbs are like this. We've sort of re-conceptualized what community is. Those are the centers of social activities and that's the center of public discourse. It may be a limited public discourse, but that's where it is. And people do come together and they tend to come together around their kids.

NARRATOR: Have we really done the best for all of our kids by living in the suburbs?

The landmark Sheff vs O'Neill case has focused attention on the quality of education and lack of diversity in state schools.

Schools in Hartford, New Haven and Bridgeport are now nearly 100% minority enrolled, while the outer-ring suburban schools remain overwhelmingly white.

BUD BRAY: In the morning, I have a route driving a school bus in New London in which I'll pick up the offspring of the more affluent citizenry of that community. These are largely White students whose parents are obviously well educated and they live quite well. In the afternoon I pick up inner-school children that go to an elementary school who live in dilapidated all too often unsafe, unsanitary, inner-city housing; single parent offspring, a host of problems you can see in their eyes that they suffer. The irony is that within the same community are both the suburbanites and the urban dwellers and what they reflect are unfamiliarity with each other. They largely don't know each other.

JACK HASAGAWA: I believe firmly that you can't have a world class education unless that education addresses what kids have to do when they get out of the school. And one of the things that kids have to do when they get out of school is to be comfortable, to be able to form meaningful relationships for a variety of reasons with people who are different from them.

JOHN BRITTAIN: This has an impact upon the economic conditions, too, because the students who are not graduating with any educational ability from the urban areas are needed to supply the greatest work force of the future.

THE COMMON GOOD

NARRATOR: The pursuit of the good life in the suburbs reflects a classic American conflict – how to balance the welfare of the family vs. the common good of the statewide community.

HERB JANICK: I don't think the aspirations to live in this kind of place should be criticized. They're not totally negative. I think what they do though is they encourage us to develop this morality. People don't invest in the problems of others. It encourages this privacy and this kind of encapsulation that I don't think is healthy because we all live in a larger community and this makes it easy for us to forget that.

BUD BRAY: As a younger man I was inspired with the idealism of the '60s. Now I realize that there's a part of all of us that is motivated to get to the suburbs, have a nice house on a cul-de-sac, lots of privacy, a pool in the back yard. I had to make the decision not too long ago whether one of my daughters was gonna attend an inner-city school or a suburban school to complete her high school education. And I must confess that when it came down to it, I did probably the exact thing that I suggest we should not do and I opted for the suburban experience for my daughter. I can understand the difficulty of making a decision that would necessarily cause risk to you and your loved ones.

NARRATOR: Can the good life in Connecticut survive?

LAURA WIER CLARKE: We've built ourselves into a corner or a suburban box and it's going to take a while for us to dig our way out of it. So many small towns are going to be absorbed right into a continuous suburban development of what we see around us, that Connecticut will lose the character that we associate with the state. We consider that character to be one of Connecticut's really strongest assets, not just culturally, but economically.

MATTHEW NEMERSON: If we don't change the direction we're going we may destroy the wonderful things that we have. Eventually the quality of life, the picturesque sense that you have of the community that is not urban will be destroyed. It will be a different kind of urbanity. It will be 8 lane roads with one story shopping and strip malls and office parks as far as the eye can see and then off in the distance somewhere crowded streets with again, one family houses on them. And that will be bad for cities and for the suburbs that are destroyed.

ROBERT DECRESCENZO: To a certain extent people think you can put walls up around the central cities and the problems will never get out to some of these outlying suburbs. I could tell you they're wrong.

JOHN BRITTAIN: Until they come together towards some priority policy to reinvigorate the urban cities, this state is continued on a destiny for a collision course in time between the haves and the have-nots.

SANDY KLEBANOFF: All of us have come to understand that without the city none of us really can survive. But preserving what's precious about those individual boundaries yet finding ways to do things with a larger grouping, that's our challenge. Because if we all turn inward, we can't make a go of it anymore. We just can't. It's clear to me that the trick in all of this is to make sure that we don't do what I call level down. The suburbs have got to continue to provide the kinds of services that people want. And we don't want to become slums and we don't want to become havens of crime and gangs.

JOHN BRITTAIN: I think there is room for the suburbs to stay as they are and to be nice places to live, perhaps, with a slightly enhanced diversity. I think what we have to do is restore and reinvigorate the cities to make them alive and more vibrant, too, and to begin to have some of the schools, that are just as good if not better than suburban schools so that we can attract suburban parents to bring their children to school when they come to work and to take them home when they return to.

MATTHEW NEMERSON: I think that in five years you will see people literally saying, "Let's see if we can't not only save money which is politically very popular, but let's create more of a sense of community." Whether we ever get to the point of giving up control of zoning, of schools, that will be one of the real tests and I think a lot of people say that may not happen. Now the next step, which is very difficult, is to articulate talking about integration - integration by race, integration by ethnic group and integration by income group. And I think that that's the kind of leadership that has to come from religious leadership. It has to come from business leadership. And I think ultimately it has got to come from statewide political leadership.

JAY GITLIN: But we need a way to think about these things that will not take away people's sense of protection. And not seem to threaten what they've built and what they've framed in a very private way.

JEFF DAVIS: People have to be able to talk about things, get some sense of comfort not only for where we are now but for what our options are, for where we go in the future. I think the more and more that we force the dialogue, that we put issues out in front of people, the more and more they're going to begin to understand that they have common interests in trying to solve problems on a regional basis. Whether it be in the courts or whether it be house to house or whether it be here in the General Assembly or whether it be in the Governor's office. Unless there is a continued pressing on all those different fronts, we will continue to fall further behind the rest of the states in this nation and it will continue to suck more tax dollars needlessly out of our pockets.

MARC SHAFER (West Hartford Resident): And if all of us move to the suburbs we can all go awww, you know, and just pretend there's not a problem here anywhere. But that's what the problem is is that everyone is just trying to run away from it. Everyone is just trying to say, "OK. I'm moving as far away as I can from this problem and it's just not gonna catch me for a long time because by the time it catches me I'm gonna be 90 and I don't care." You know, so at some point we have to rise up and try to stem this thing. We have to say, "What are we gonna do about this?"

CREDITS