Journal of the American Institute of Planners

ISSN: 0002-8991 (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rjpa19

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To cite this article: Paul , Linda Davidoff & Neil Newton Gold (1970) Suburban Action: Advocate Planning For An Open Society, Journal of the American Institute of Planners, 36:1, 12-21, DOI: 10.1080/01944367008977275

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/01944367008977275

SUBURBAN ACTION: ADVOCATE PLANNING FOR AN OPEN SOCIETY

Paul and Linda Davidoff and Neil Newton Gold

The suburbanization of population and jobs in the metropolitan regions is an accomplished fact. Rather than fighting this movement, urban development policy should work with it to assure equal access to suburban land and jobs for all citizens of the regions. Suburban Action is an advocate agency engaged in policy discussions with suburban employers, public officials, and private groups and in legal actions aimed at opening the suburbs to blacks and to low and moderate cost housing.

Advocate planning has been defined as the exercise of the planning function on behalf of specified individuals and groups, rather than on behalf of a broadly defined "public interest." From its beginning, the movement toward advocacy planning has stressed the need to plan with, and in the interests of, the formerly unrepresented groups in the planning process—the poor, the black, and the underprivileged. In many cases, this form of advocacy has involved planners working with neighborhood organizations of the poor and the black in order to create alternate plans for renewal, relocation, Model Cities, or highway location. In the process of working for and with these neighborhood groups, advocates have often become aware of the difficulty of solving many of their clients' problems with planning that is limited to neighborhood physical areas. Out of this awareness has grown a sense of the need for regionwide and national approaches to planning for the needs of the black and the poor.

From the beginnings of advocacy planning it has been recognized that *ideological advocacy* in which the advocate represented his own point of view, rather than that of a client, could play an important role in the planning process. This article describes an ideological advocacy agency created to promote the use of suburban resources for solving metropolitan problems of race and poverty.

Ghettos and Public Policy

Present efforts to solve the "urban crisis" tend to restrict solutions to inner-city ghetto areas. Ghetto and poverty areas have been the locus of nearly all the research and action programs undertaken by both public agencies and private nonprofit groups as part of the war on urban poverty and discrimination. Job programs have concentrated on finding employment opportunities for ghetto youth in declining areas. Industrial development programs have concentrated on bringing industry into the ghettos. Housing programs have tried to

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rehabilitate obsolete slum apartments or "renew" ghetto neighborhoods. The Model Cities program, while aimed at improving the lives of disadvantaged residents, has tended to restrict chances for such improvements to Model Cities areas.

What these programs have in common is an underlying strategy based on a false assumption: the assumption that because the problems of race and poverty are found in the ghettos of urban America, the solutions to these problems must also be found there. These ghetto-oriented programs largely ignore the geographic distribution of resources throughout metropolitan regions. The resources needed to solve the urban poverty problem—land, money, and jobs—are presently in scarce supply in the inner cities. They exist in substantial supply in suburban areas but are not being utilized to solve inner-city problems or combat poverty and discrimination. As a result, ghetto residents are denied the income gains and improvements in housing quality that would result from freer access to suburban jobs and land.

The cities must create new opportunities in the ghettos; and they must create decent environments in areas that are now slums. But these goals cannot be achieved until there is effective utilization of all resources in metropolitan regions.

The Suburban Shift

One of the most striking aspects of American economic growth over the last two decades is the fact that 80 percent of the new jobs created in the nation's large metropolitan areas have been located in their suburban rings. The central cities of these metropolitan areas have not only failed to win a significant share of new urban employment, but, in some cases, they have experienced a net outflow of jobs.

In the tri-state New York area, for example, the central city gained only 111,000 new jobs between 1952 and 1966, compared with a gain of 888,000 jobs for the region as a whole. In the St. Louis area, employment in the central city actually declined in this period—by 50,000—compared with an employment increase of 193,500 in the St. Louis suburbs. In Philadelphia, central city employment also declined in this period; from 773,622 jobs in 1952 to 758,925 jobs in 1966. The Philadelphia suburbs, on the other hand, gained a total of 249,433 new jobs in these years. In San Francisco, to take a final example, the central city gained nearly 25,000 new jobs in this fifteen year period, roughly one-eighth of the employment increase that took place in the San Francisco suburbs (202,000).

In the face of the concentration of public attention on the urban crises, it is important that policymakers understand that this remarkable shift in the location of urban growth has taken place and that the process of industrial and commercial decentralization has had a transforming impact on the distribution of opportunities and rewards within urban areas.

Better known than the shift in location of new metropolitan employment is the shift in location of population growth within metropolitan areas. Here, too, the results are striking, and fateful, in their implications for urban policy. Between 1950 and 1966, the population of the nation's central cities increased by 7,400,000. In the same period, the population of their suburban rings increased by 36,500,000. By 1966, more Americans lived outside of central cities in our urban configurations, than inside central cities.

Not only have central cities been on the short end of urban population growth, but their share of future growth is destined to decline still further. According to the most reliable estimates of the distribution of future population growth, nearly all of the one hundred million additional persons who will live in the United States by the year 2,000 will live in suburban areas. There will be little if any growth in central city (or rural) population during this period. In some central cities, in fact, the prognosis is for sustained population outflow to the suburban rings, depending upon availability of sufficient housing opportunities.

The nation's suburbs, then, have been the locus of the bulk of new jobs and new population growth in metropolitan areas. Not surprisingly, suburban areas also have experienced the greatest share of all new housing starts in urban areas, increasing from 60 percent in the 1950's to 70 percent and above in the 1960's. In some of the largest metropolitan areas such as St. Louis, Philadelphia, Detroit, the District of Columbia, Cleveland, Boston, and Baltimore, nearly 80 percent of new residential construction is taking place outside the central city.

Underlying the movement of jobs, housing, and population from central cities to their surrounding suburbs is the availability of a relatively vast supply of vacant land outside of central cities. Indeed, in the nation's twenty largest urban areas, 99 percent of the vacant land lies outside of core cities. The unavailability of vacant land within central cities necessarily sets reasonably firm limitations on the employment and population capacities of these areas. Conversely, the existence of a seemingly limitless supply of vacant land on the urban periphery practically insures that future urban growth will take place in the fringe areas.

In sum, the suburbs of the United States have become the New America of the twentieth century: the growth area of private economy, the locus of most of the nation's new jobs, housing, and population.

Suburban Discrimination

Blacks and other minority groups have not moved out of central cities to the surrounding suburbs. Only the white population has benefited from the availability of suburban job and housing opportunities. By 1966, as a result of the suburbanization of the white population, only 42 percent of urban whites remained in central cities. Among non-whites, on the other hand, more

than 82 percent lived in central cities in 1966—a higher proportion than in 1950.

Still more significant, as an indication of recent demographic trends, is the fact that between 1960 and 1966, 100 percent of the urban white population growth of 10,152,000 occurred in the suburbs. The central cities lost white population during these years. Conversely, during the same period, 90 percent of the nonwhite population gain of 2,757,000 took place in central cities.

A striking piece of evidence from our preliminary research regards the movement of population between 1960 and 1965 in the northern section of suburban Westchester County, New York. The section studied comprises 68 percent of the county's area. In 1965, it contained 14 percent of the county's population and 4 percent of the county's nonwhite population. This area—most of the vacant land in Westchester—is zoned almost exclusively for large lot single family development. Between 1960 and 1965, the white population in this area increased by 20,000, the nonwhite population by one.

These remarkable population shifts have resulted in severely imbalanced population distribution in our metropolitan areas. The cities of the United States are rapidly becoming ghettos of the poor and the black, while the suburbs appear likely to remain affluent and white. We are well on our way to becoming the two nations: "one black, one white—separate and unequal," described in the Kerner Commission report. This growing separation of white and black in U.S. metropolitan areas is a direct result of the nation's acknowledged failure to insure that all social and racial groups are able to gain access to suburban land.

A second, and equally baleful, consequence of the decentralization of American economic life and the outward movement of population from central cities, is the maldistribution of jobs and workers in our urban areas. For nearly two decades, rural refugees, mainly black, Mexican-American, and Puerto Rican, have been arriving in the great cities of the nation to find that the jobs they were looking for have been disappearing—in part, because they have been relocated in the suburbs. While the suburban communities to which these jobs have been moved welcome new tax-paying industrial and commercial facilities, they are unwilling to permit their vacant land to be used for housing for employees who work in the new facilities. In effect, blacks and other minorities are unable to follow their jobs to the suburbs. Thus, these rural migrants are piling up in the overcrowded central cities, without jobs, without access to jobs, without access to information about suburban job opportunities, without decent housing, and without any prospect of overcoming their condition by further migration. At the same time, as if to mock the policies that have created our present crisis, suburban job opportunities remain unfilled for lack of adequate manpower.

Although no data is available on the number of unfilled jobs in suburban areas, census publications, particularly *County, Business Patterns,* and *Census of Manufacturers,* show clearly that in suburban areas many new unfilled jobs are in blue-collar occupations and at unskilled and semiskilled levels. For this reason —and in light of the fact that if present trends continue, 80 percent of future urban employment growth in large metropolitan areas will take place in the suburbs—appropriate linkages connecting the central city labor force and areas of expanding job opportunities must be created.

In lieu of governmental action to enable central city workers to compete for job openings in the suburbs, the private sector, in its own interest, prevailed upon the federal government to create the urban mass transit demonstration program to experiment with methods of aiding workers to get to suburban plant sites. In so doing, the private sector, particularly that portion in durable goods manufacturing, acknowledged that the present distribution of jobs and workers in urban areas constituted a significant drain on the nation's productive capacity and human resources.

Regrettably, interim results from the various urban mass transit demonstrations strongly suggest that transportation linkages are insufficient to overcome the barriers that separate the unemployed in central cities from suburban job areas. It seems clear that more substantial linkages must be created if the suburbs are to enter fully into the mainstream of American life. Preeminent amount these connections is the creation, reasonably close to suburban job sites, of a supply of widely dispersed moderate cost housing for working-class families. This is the challenge now confronting both government agencies and the private sector.

. . . . a false assumption . . . . that because the problems of race and poverty are found in the ghettos of urban America, the solutions to these problems must also be found there.

Restrictive zoning and land use controls in suburban areas constitute the principal barrier preventing development of job-linked moderate cost housing in the suburbs. Among the specific devices that suburban governments have used to prevent construction of such housing are: minimum lot size requirements, minimum house size requirements, restrictive subdivision regulations, and unduly expensive building standards. In addition to these devices, many suburban communities have adopted zoning ordinances that prohibit development of all forms of multifamily housing within their jurisdiction. Taken together, these restrictive zoning and land use controls have been remarkably effective in preventing low and moderate income fami-

lies from penetrating suburban housing and land markets, in greatly limiting the matching of jobs and workers in urban areas, and in raising the cost of new housing in the suburbs to all homeseeking families. If this nation is to provide for the housing and job needs of its minority citizens, the power of government must be used to break the land use barriers erected by suburban communities. This challenge may soon be recognized as the new frontier of the civil rights movement.

Policy Issues

A basic policy issue must be decided before the nation can embark upon a program of affirmative action in the suburbs. The issue is whether the expenditure of billions of dollars of public funds to rehabilitate the substandard housing stock of central cities and to encourage industry to locate within central cities—particularly, within the slums and ghettos of central cities, is justified in the face of the overwhelming trend toward decentralization of American economic life.

A corollary issue is whether problems and solutions in urban areas are place-limited; that is, whether the fact that the urban crisis is concentrated in the central city slums and ghettos requires that solutions to the urban crisis be limited in their geographic focus to these same slums and ghettos.

DECENTRALIZATION AND PUBLIC POLICY

The facts of suburbanization have long been recognized by planners, demographers, developers, and the general public. What has begun to change is the public policy stance adopted toward these facts. In the early 1950's, recognition of the decline of the central city led to a concern with stemming it and with "bringing back" the fleeing middle class family to live in renewed and rehabilitated downtown neighborhoods. In the mid-1950's, the failures of the renewal program—its displacement of black and poor families, its failure to provide adequate relocation housing—brought a shift in policy toward rebuilding the ghettos for the benefit of their residents. This may be termed the "keep back" theory for ghetto residents.

Now there is a growing recognition that both the "bring back" and the "keep back" theories are inadequate efforts to stem the tide of movement to the suburbs. Urban development policy is moving toward acceptance of suburbanization. Seen in this context, urban development policy is not a set of demands for rearranging general trends of population movement. Instead, it is a set of demands for structural change in the society set against the backdrop of these movements.

In our view, the decentralizing forces of American economic life are not reversible. The absence of vacant land within central cities, coupled with the existence of an enormous supply of vacant land on the urban periphery, will not permit a major expansion of the employment capacity of central cities. Public programs that seek only to rebuild the central city housing stock and to encourage industry to locate within central cities and within ghettos run counter to the movement of the private economy.

While isolated examples of in-city plant location will occur, as in the case of the IBM plant in Bedford-Stuyvesant,[1] the private sector will continue to locate the bulk of its new plants and equipment outside central cities. In the same year in which IBM created 300 jobs in Bedford-Stuyvesant, the company created 3,000 jobs in the New York region as a whole. The blacks of Bedford-Stuyvesant did not have access to these 3,000 jobs.

The bulk of the central city substandard housing stock is found in areas considered ripe for urban renewal. These areas contain most of the nonwhite population of central cities. Increasingly, they are the locus of central city unemployment and underemployment. Land prices in central city urban renewal areas have been rising even more rapidly than have suburban land prices. This is occurring in spite of the fact that the level of land prices in suburban areas is markedly lower than the level of land prices in central city urban renewal areas.

The convergence of these factors gives some indication of the added cost involved in building low and moderate cost housing on developed land in areas characterized by a declining blue-collar job market. They suggest that substantial housing cost savings can be achieved by locating the bulk of new low and moderate cost housing stock outside central cities.

THE "URBAN CRISIS" AND PUBLIC POLICY

The second major public policy decision is whether the "urban crisis" is in fact an "urban" crisis at all, or a crisis of class and race in the nation as a whole. Public policy has tended to see the problems of slums and ghettos as problems of "renewal areas," "project areas," and "Model City neighborhoods." It is our view that the problems to be found in these areas are not problems of areas, but problems of allocation of public and private resources, and that their remedy is to be found in the reallocation of resources. Public policy to aid ghetto and slum residents should be tested in terms of its ability to enlarge opportunities for blacks and for the poor. This recasting of policy does not imply ending planned improvement of urban spatial and structural conditions, rather, it makes these conditions the means for serving human needs. If neighborhoods are to be rebuilt in central city ghetto areas, it will be necessary in many cases for the population density in these areas to be reduced. Rebuilding at present densities raises impossible problems of cost and residential amenity. To renew the neighborhoods, we must open opportunities for outmigration to new, decent housing outside the ghetto. Once densities have been reduced in this way, clearance of dilapidated structures can take place without creating insoluble problems of relocation or temporary relocation while reconstruction goes forward.

In recent months we have seen a growing awareness, on the part of public and private groups, of the negative consequences of exclusive concern with the ghetto as the place for ending poverty. For example, three Presidential commissions have reported on the need to fashion metropolitan areawide solutions to urban poverty and blight.

In its December 1968, report, the President's Committee on Urban Housing (Kaiser Commission) concluded that: [2]

> The location of one's place of residence determines the accessibility and quality of many everyday advantages taken for granted by the mainstream of American society. Among these commonplace advantages are public educational facilities for a family's children, adequate police and fire protection, and a decent surrounding environment. In any case, a family should have the choice of living as close as economically possible to the breadwinner's place of employment.
>
> It makes little sense for Federally subsidized housing to be concentrated in and around the central cities' slums where social and environmental disadvantages can negate the uplifting qualities of decent housing.

The 1968 Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (Kerner Commission) presented the nation with three choices: [3]

> We can maintain present policies, continuing both the proportion of the nation's resources now allocated to programs for the unemployed and the disadvantaged and the inadequate and failing effort to achieve an integrated society.
>
> We can adopt a policy of "enrichment" aimed at improving dramatically the quality of ghetto life while abandoning integration as a goal.
>
> We can pursue integration by combining ghetto "enrichment" with policies which will encourage Negro movement out of central city areas . . . .
>
> To continue present policies is to make permanent the division of our country into two societies: one, largely Negro and poor, located in the central cities; the other, predominantly white and affluent, located in the suburbs and in outlying areas.
>
> The second choice, ghetto enrichment coupled with abandonment of integration, is also unacceptable. It is another way of choosing a permanently divided country. Moreover, equality cannot be achieved under conditions of nearly complete separation. In a country where the economy, and particularly the resources of employment, are predominantly white, a policy of separation can only relegate Negroes to a permanently inferior economic status.
>
> We believe that the only possible choice for America is the third—a policy which combines ghetto enrichment with programs designed to encourage integration of substantial numbers of Negroes into the society outside the ghetto.

The December 1968 report of the National Commission on Urban Problems (Douglas Commission) stressed the costs of maintaining large inner-city ghettos, both in terms of actual costs to governments of providing services to the ghetto populations and in terms of the socially explosive character of the ghettos. In discussing the employment problems of ghetto residents, the commission noted that: [4]

> Available employment of the type for which slum adults might qualify is generally not available in the slum. In a recent year, 63 per cent of all construction permits for industrial buildings were issued for locations outside central cities. On the other hand, 73 per cent of office building construction permits were issued inside central cities. Central cities increasingly are becoming white-collar employment centers while the suburbs are becoming the job employment areas for new blue-collar workers. This is ironical in view of the fact that low-paid blue-collar workers, especially if they are Negroes, live in the central cities while the white-collar workers are increasingly living in the suburbs. Traveling to work becomes increasingly difficult for both.

Edward Logue, President of the New York State Urban Development Corporation, writing in *Look* magazine, said that: [5]

> As the inner-city housing crisis worsens, we persist in the notion that the central city *by itself* must provide for the housing needs of ill-housed low-income families. We cling to this fallacy despite the reality that the central cities no longer have significant amounts of vacant land and no large supply of decent, available, low-cost relocation housing. We have, in short, adopted an approach to the city housing problem that is guaranteed to fail. But there are answers.
>
> There is an ample supply of vacant land suitable for housing low-income families in a ten mile wide belt around just about every one of our cities, except possibly New York and Los Angeles, where it may be necessary to go 20 miles or farther. Yet access to this land . . . has been denied to low-income families. (Italics in original.)

The Center for Community Change in Washington, directed by former Industrial Union Department director, Jack Conway, is discussing the possibility of suburban development of housing opportunities in the Detroit area. The Regional Plan Association and National Committee Against Discrimination in Housing are studying the job and housing opportunities in the New York suburbs. Other research programs are beginning to study the implications of the Kerner Commission's challenge to create a "single society," rather than to perpetuate the walls between the ghetto and the society at large. *As yet, however programs to implement this concern have not moved from study to action. We still do not have viable strategies for expanding the*

role of the suburbs in developing solutions to problems of race and poverty.

The Objectives of Suburban Action

The availability of new jobs and vacant land in the suburbs makes it apparent that the suburbs can contribute greatly to creation of a society in which resources can be shared more equitably among all classes of the population. However, as we view the actions and policies of public agencies in the nation and, in particular, the New York region, we believe that the potential of the suburbs for solving national problems has not yet been grasped by public and private agencies, nor by the majority of the public.

. . . the suburbs of the United States have become the New America of the 20th century . . .

A number of agencies concerned with issues of urban development have recently begun to support more concerted use of suburban resources to solve metropolitan problems of race and poverty. The National Committee Against Discrimination in Housing, with a long and distinguished record in the housing discrimination field, is now studying means to overcome restrictive zoning measures and to utilize the growing number of jobs in suburban areas to solve unemployment and underemployment problems. The Regional Plan Association of New York has significantly contributed to public understanding of the suburban potential. More recently a large number of citizens' organizations and religious associations have taken the lead in attempting to develop nonprofit moderate and low-income housing in the suburbs. Additionally, many of these same groups have led inquiries into the nature of white racism to find ways to overcome the very hostile attitudes toward social change that exist within many suburban communities. We believe that until public opinion and public agencies favor significant change in suburban practices, it will be necessary for voluntary associations to take the lead in demonstrating the reasonableness of a new approach to the relationship of suburbs to the solution of race and poverty problems.

As one organization dedicated to altering the imbalance in current urban policy regarding use of suburban resources, Suburban Action has set the following goals for its work:

1. Assisting in opening suburban land and housing to low and moderate income and nonwhite families, by eliminating restrictive and discriminatory land use barriers.

2. Creating new opportunities for linking suburban jobs and unemployed and underemployed residents of central city and suburban low-income areas.

3. Assisting actions preventing suburban ghettos from enlarging through the creation of adequate housing and employment opportunities for residents of those areas throughout the suburbs.

4. Promoting widespread discussion and analysis of alternatives to the real property tax. In doing this, stressing the need for tax reform in order to reduce the disparities in public services, most notably in education, between cities and suburbs and between rich and poor suburban communities.[6]

Suburban Action's list of objectives excludes mention of education, health, recreation, and other important topics that must be addressed if racial and economic disparities are to be reduced. The exclusions are less related to a sense of priorities than they are to the current abilities of the agency.

Suburban Action's Program

To move toward achievement of its objectives, Suburban Action has a set of programs covering the areas of housing, employment, taxation, and land use. The agency is based in White Plains, New York (suburban Westchester County), and is directing its programs toward conditions within the New York region and toward policy formulation at all levels of government.

HOUSING

Throughout suburban areas, organizations have been formed to work for fair housing (nondiscriminatory housing) and for construction of low and moderate cost housing units. In many cases the housing that can be developed within suburban communities offers only token solutions to regional housing needs. Frequently voluntary agencies may spend a number of years seeking to persuade public officials that their community should address housing needs both inside and outside the jurisdiction. Where successful, these groups may be empowered to build twenty to fifty units of nonprofit housing. The results are significant for the communities since they often represent a significant change in housing policy, but the sum of projects constructed as a result of these private efforts is very small.

We hope that one result of regional organization of fair housing and other interested groups would be expanding the interest of such associations. We would like to see such organizations take a more active role in combating restrictive zoning measures. Fair zoning may be as important as fair housing to achieve a significant increase in the supply of moderate and low-income housing. Additionally, we think it of the utmost importance that local housing groups begin to demand housing not only to meet the needs of local residents, but also to meet the needs of the region's population. We have run up against strong opposition on this issue.

Many activists concerned with housing conditions in their suburban communities believe that their first obligation is to build units that will satisfy the demands of neighbors who are inadequately housed. They do not wish to become involved in the more abstract question of assisting in solving the housing problems of the vast number of indecently housed inner-city residents.

It might be argued that limited local needs should be met first before larger regional issues are tackled. We do not think this is the case. We believe that a program to meet regional needs is of far greater magnitude and requires an immediate start. Very different programs will be involved. Thus, we think that the regional need for housing will provide the most important evidence in the constitutional attacks we hope to initiate against restrictive zoning.

In attempting to educate some of the public about regional housing needs, we are seeking to induce development of associations that will present programs capable of meeting these needs. To achieve this end, one of Suburban Action's first products will be publication of a housing program for Westchester County. This publication will be aimed at exciting interest in the housing question in the midst of an election year when candidates for county and local office may be asked to respond to the questions on housing problems. We recognize that the program we will publish will not be acceptable to most politicians, but we do believe that by making the housing issue an important topic for discussion, we may begin to generate the possibilities for effective coalitions among different classes having a common interest in improved housing.

If this nation is to provide for the housing and job needs of its minority citizens, the power of government must be used to break the land use barriers erected by suburban communities. This challenge may soon be recognized as the new frontier of the civil rights movement.

One of the most important groups we hope to persuade to join in the struggle for a massive regional housing program is private industry. The shortage of both white-collar and blue-collar workers constitutes a serious constraint on the efficient function of large suburban-based corporations, particularly on their capacity to expand their plants and equipment. For this reason we are hopeful that these corporations will enter the housing field, through development of job-linked housing on sites owned by them or on sites susceptible to their influence.

EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS

Suburban Action's employment programs seek to make more efficient use of manpower resources of metropolitan areas by creating links between jobless and underemployed workers in disadvantaged communities and available or pending employment opportunities in the suburbs. This will involve monitoring the location of new employment growth in the region, particularly manufacturing and construction employment. It will involve arranging for contacts between inner-city employees and suburban employers who would benefit from an expanded labor supply. It will also involve creation of demonstration projects that connect inner-city Model Cities communities and suburban job centers.

Emphasis in this program will be on the creation of relatively highly paid jobs for employees presently working at hourly rates of about $2. We have found that many community action programs concerned with manpower development receive notices only of jobs paying low wages. There may be a presumption on the part of employers that community action programs are concerned only with individuals deemed incapable of holding other than low-wage positions. Nevertheless, our initial work indicates that a significant number of suburban jobs paying over $3.50 an hour are open and that private industry will cooperate with interested parties in making these jobs available to low-income persons willing to give up their present positions to take on higher paying jobs.

Suburban Action will also look toward the creation of opportunities for black and Puerto Rican businessmen to invest their resources in the affluent suburbs, as a necessary corrective to current programs that confine opportunities for minority group businessmen solely to declining slum and ghetto neighborhoods.

MUNICIPAL TAXATION PROGRAMS

Present suburban taxing methods are an inducement to fiscal zoning. Even without race or class bias on the part of inhabitants of suburban communities, there would still be strong antipathy to new families who did not "pay their way." Families who move into a suburban community and constitute a drain on a community's tax base are unwelcome neighbors. Suburban Action's programs in public finance will promote discussion about alternatives to the real property tax.

Community growth is expensive. Residents of growing suburban towns often strongly resent changes that will require further increases in their perceived "already too high taxes." There is no way of measuring whether or not their perception is correct, but what we do know is that the present form of raising local revenues gives strong support to tendencies to evaluate new families in terms of their tax-paying abilities. We submit that such abilities do not provide a sound basis for community judgments regarding the right of an individual to reside within a particular community.

If suburban communities are to be more welcoming to those who cannot afford to pay their own way, it will be necessary to redesign the local revenue system to make the tax-paying ability of an individual a matter of relative indifference. For example, if local revenues resulted from a federal income tax reimbursement to a locality, the amount being a function of the community's population and, perhaps, the needs of the community, then the tax-paying ability of a potential resident would become a matter of relative indifference. That individual's wealth would not alter the overall revenue receipts of the community.

A similar system could be created with a state or county income tax. But whatever the system, so long as the members of a community were not compelled to take restrictive action against a potential newcomer because of his financial status, such a system would represent a marked improvement over the present condition. We also believe that a strong case can be made against the real property tax as a major source of local income. The real property tax is unfair to families on stable or declining incomes. It fails in such cases to adequately account for the tax-paying ability of a family.

The public must be persuaded that the quality of services offered by a local government unit should not depend upon the wealth of its inhabitants. The children of a poor community deserve as decent an education as the children of a wealthy community. Further, if all parts of a region—and particularly the relatively underdeveloped portions—are to assume a fair share of the burden of providing decent housing, jobs, and education for the region's population, then we must develop a program for relieving the financial pressures on the community subjected to rapid growth. If growth is not to be viewed as unwanted on the grounds that it is too costly, perhaps the costs of new service facilities required to meet the demands of a rapidly increasing population should be met by higher levels of government.

LAND USE PROGRAMS

Suburban Action's land use programs will seek to eliminate restrictive and discriminatory policies and practices in zoning, subdivision requirements, and building codes that effectively exclude low and moderate income families from access to the region's vacant land. Programs will be designed to foster public discussion about the need to open this supply of vacant land to builders and developers who will build housing for disadvantaged groups now confined to central cities. Land use issues will be broadly defined to include questions related to transportation design and planning and their impact on site selection for new residential and commercial-industrial development.

Suburban Action will initiate a series of legal cases challenging the constitutionality of state planning and zoning enabling legislation and the constitutionality of local laws that bar multifamily housing from their jurisdictions. There is, perhaps, no more important task confronting those of us who would have suburban areas serve all classes of the population than defeating the ability of suburban localities to zone out all but the very small portion of the population that can afford to pay the high entrance charge (purchase of a house on an acre or more of land) so many of these localities have established.

On the basis of Douglas Commission findings and the position taken by many experts within the field, we are confident the courts will be far more receptive than in the recent past to challenges to the propriety of local restrictive zoning controls. We think that Suburban Action, along with a number of other organization agencies now vitally concerned with overthrowing exclusionary zoning practices, will be able to effectively demonstrate that both acreage zoning requirements and exclusion of multifamily dwellings deny access to new housing to an overwhelming majority of metropolitan residents.

ZONING TEST CASE

The test case we seek to initiate will be based on a set of assumptions about where an attack on zoning can be most successfully made and on a set of arguments regarding the deleterious consequences of certain forms of zoning. The case will be brought in a jurisdiction that excludes all forms of multifamily housing. It will be brought by a nonprofit developer who has gone to the expense of preparing building plans for substantial numbers of multifamily housing units and who has attempted to have these plans approved by the municipal planning agency and by the municipal building department. To file such plans the developer must own, or have an option on land suitable for development within the municipality. Since the municipality prohibits all multifamily housing, the developer's plans *must* be rejected. It is this rejection which will set the stage for judicial examination of the constitutionality of zoning ordinances prohibiting all multifamily units.

To create the proper constitutional issue, the developer must select an area that is characterized by:

1. Proximity to a large central city containing substantial numbers of unemployed and underemployed workers of Negro and other minority group extraction.
2. An employment base that is growing very rapidly and that contains a substantial number of unfilled jobs requiring unskilled and semiskilled workers.
3. An absence of vacant low and moderate cost units within a reasonable commuting distance from the employment centers.
4. A work force that is compelled to travel long distances in journeying to work.
5. An existing supply of multifamily housing built before the introduction of the ordinance prohibiting all new multifamily housing.
6. Restrictions requiring new single family homes to be constructed on lots of an acre or more.

The argument will be that prohibition of multifamily housing, by establishing a de facto minimum new housing cost of $30,000 within the community, effectively excludes all persons who cannot afford to spend $30,000 for a house, or who may not need the kind of space characteristic of single family housing. The exclusion of such persons, among whom must be numbered the bulk of the Negro and minority communities, will be said to constitute a denial of the equal protection of the laws contrary to the Fourteenth Amendment of the United States Constitution. Plaintiff's brief will lay out the legal claims and then proceed, in the Brandeis tradition, to establish beyond doubt that the social and eco-

nomic consequences of exclusion adversely affect those individuals and families who could find jobs in the community provided housing opportunities were available. The brief will show that less than 15 percent of the household population in the United States can afford housing at $30,000 and that none of the unemployed and underemployed, who need the kind of jobs available in the municipality, are able to purchase such housing. The brief will then examine the social, political, and economic consequences of sustained unemployment on minority group workers and their families, and it will show the interrelationship between unemployment in central cities and the rising tide of welfare, violence, and social disorganization that has come to characterize ever larger segments of the ghetto population. Finally, the brief will point out the impact of the artificial concentration of minority group families in central cities on the tax base. Decreasing the tax base decreases the ability of cities to provide the kind of public services needed to deal with problems of poverty and social disorganization and to sustain the loyalty of the diminishing middle class, both white and black.

The White Advocate in Suburbia

Early discussions of the advocate planner's role stressed efforts on behalf of the black and the poor in central cities.[7] Later variations on this theme included the discussion of the advocate role every planner plays in speaking for the interests of a client. Lisa Peattie and others have noted that only a narrow line exists between representation of a client's interests and attempted imposition of the planner's values on his client when he acts as organizer as well as technician in advocate projects in the ghetto.[8]

In Suburban Action's efforts, we assume the role of advocate for an interest that is otherwise unrepresented in suburban planning debates—unrepresented not because it is unorganized, fearful, or voiceless, but unrepresented because it is not there. Consequently, we are speaking for what *we* regard as our clients' interests —in fact, we are speaking for ourselves as white planners who want to see changes in suburban economic, political, social, and physical structure.

Suburban Action represents the institutionalization of a concept concerning one form of advocate planning. This concept emphasizes the role of the planner as a proponent of goals, as an actor concerned with the purposes of the system for which he plans. This view stems from a theory of planning that suggests that at least some planners should more actively espouse purposes than means. It is not a denial of the importance of the planner's technical role where he details effective ways to accomplish given goals. But it does rest on the belief that an essential part of the planning process is the determination of appropriate sets of ends for a system.

A planner concerned with formulation of goals may work to satisfy the needs of his client. As an advocate of his client's interests, he may seek to understand his client's objectives and to put forth as goals his translation of what he believes to be the objectives of his client.

An alternate view of a planner concerned with formulation of goals is one that shows the planner presenting his own ideas in regard to goals. Here the planner is acting to see that a certain social situation is achieved. He does this because he believes it important for one or more reasons, but he does not propose goals in order to satisfy a client. In fact, in this case he has no client other than his own ideology.

TERMS OF THE SUBURBAN DEBATE

Most educated suburban citizens are aware of the national trends toward suburbanization of population and employment. They are also aware of the pressures of population movement on their own communities. The level of public debate on issues of land development in the suburbs, however, falls far below any broad recognition of these trends and their implications for local public policy. Debate on issues of job and housing development in the suburbs revolves almost exclusively around two issues: local taxes, especially school taxes; and racial integration of the existing housing stock.

. . . urban development policy is not . . . demands for rearranging general trends of population movement . . . it is . . . demands for structural change in the society set against the backdrop of these movements.

The tax issue for the local community is invariably increasing the size of the tax base by inviting in industrial development versus increasing the taxpayers' burden by inviting in additional households with children. Where possible, the solution is to preserve the "character" of the community by inviting in neither jobs nor housing. Next, in order of preference, is bringing in industrial development of the nuisance-free variety. Last on the list is construction of housing for families with children, who must be educated at local expense. The racial issue is the question of whether a Negro homeseeker, looking for a house in a given community, should be permitted equal access with whites to houses on the market.

These debates take place within a purely local, intellectual framework. Each locality assumes that its behavior affects only its own residents. Each local government assumes the burden of protecting the rights and privileges of its own residents only. Unwritten local rules of debate preclude even the mention of the name of the central city in whose metropolitan hinterland the debate is taking place. The farthest afield a liberal discussant can go is to the neighboring suburban community or, at the remotest extension, to the suburban county of which both communities are a part.

A remarkable absence of generalization, abstraction, and recognition of large-scale trends characterizes the tone of public debate in suburban communities. Each citizen is assumed to be competent to discuss the whole range of his town's affairs; every citizen can exercise his voting rights to control the destiny of his community; each citizen is an intimate and valued part of the body politic. In many ways, the suburbanite has achieved the democratic ideal of direct participation in community affairs, of citizen rule, of community control.

SUPPORT FOR SUBURBAN INNOVATION

In this situation, the voice of the advocate for metropolitanwide interests of the poor and the black strikes a jarring note. He speaks for "outsiders," the nemesis of the close-knit community. He speaks against the immediate economic interests of the community. He threatens to tear apart the fabric of local society by including alien elements. Escalating the controversial proposals of local open-housing advocates, he calls for opening not only the existing housing stock but also additional units of low-cost housing, and not only to the black middle class homeseeker but also to lower class renters, white or black, and the unemployed. He speaks in opposition to local concerns for protecting the value of property and keeping tax rates down.

Consequently, in suburbia, the white advocate who addresses himself to changing the beliefs and practices of the white community must look hard to find a local base of support. He can find it in several places: the suburban church; builders and housing developers; some groups within the fair housing movement; and suburban employers of low and moderately skilled workers. These often uncomfortable bedfellows each support certain aspects of Suburban Action's work. Substantial support for the work of the suburban advocate will also come from the foundations, who, like the advocates themselves, have only themselves and their interpretations of the public interest as clients.

We believe that ideological advocate planning that seeks to introduce alternatives in the formulation of policy is a role that many planners should play. Advocacy of this variety can stimulate discussion about policies and programs in ways that public planning agencies, for a variety of reasons, cannot.

NOTES

1 Robert Schrank and Susan Stein, "Industry in the Black Community: IBM in Bedford-Stuyvesant," *Journal of the American Institute of Planners,* XXXV, No. 3 (September 1969), 348–51.

2 The Report of the President's Committee on Urban Housing, *A Decent Home* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1969), p. 13.

3 *Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders* (New York: Bantam, 1968), p. 22.

4 Report of the National Commission on Urban Problems, *Building the American City* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1969), p. 3.

5 *Look,* April 1, 1969, p. 70.

6 See, Netzer, *The Economics of Suburban Growth* (Stonybrook: State of New York, 1968).

7 Paul Davidoff, "Advocacy and Pluralism in Planning," *Journal of the American Institute of Planners,* XXXI (November 1965), 331–8.

8 Lisa R. Peattie, "Reflections on Advocacy Planning," *Journal of the American Institute of Planners,* XXXIV (March 1968), 80–8.