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# Suburban Nation: The Rise of Sprawl and the Decline of the American Dream

By Andres Duany, Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, Jeff Speck



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For a decade, *Suburban Nation* has given voice to a growing movement in North America to put an end to suburban sprawl and replace the last century's automobile-based settlement patterns with a return to more traditional planning. Founders of the Congress for the New Urbanism, Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk are at the forefront of the movement, and even their critics, such as Fred Barnes in *The Weekly Standard*, recognized that "*Suburban Nation* is likely to become this movement's bible." A lively lament about the failures of postwar planning, this is also that rare book that offers solutions: "an essential handbook" (*San Francisco Chronicle*).

This tenth anniversary edition includes a new preface by the authors.



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- Sales Rank: #49312 in Books
- Brand: Brand: North Point Press
- Published on: 2010-09-14
- Released on: 2010-09-14
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: .32" h x .3" w x 7.97" l, 1.34 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 320 pages

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### **Editorial Review**

From Publishers Weekly

Like "an architectural version of Invasion of the Body Snatchers, our main streets and neighborhoods have been replaced by alien substitutes, similar but not the same," state Duany, Plater-Zyberk and Speck in this bold and damning critique. The authors, who lead a firm that has designed more than 200 new neighborhoods and community revitalization plans, challenge nearly half a century of widely accepted planning and building practices that have produced sprawling subdivisions, shopping centers and office parks connected by new highways. These practices, they contend, have not only destroyed the traditional concept of the neighborhood, but eroded such vital social values as equality, citizenship and personal safety. Further, they charge that current suburban developments are not only economically and environmentally "unsustainable," but "not functional" because they isolate and place undue burdens on at-home mothers, children, teens and the elderly. Adapting the precepts that famed urbanologist Jane Jacobs used to critique unhealthy city planning, Duany, Plater-Zyberk and Speck call for a revolution in suburban design that emphasizes neighborhoods in which homes, schools, commercial and municipal buildings would be integrated in pedestrian-accessible, safe and friendly settings. While occasionally presenting unsupported claims--such as that gated communities (of which there are now more than 20,000 in the U.S.) deprive children of gaining "a sense of empathy" in a diverse society--their visionary book holds out hope that we can create "places that are as valuable as the nature they displaced." (Mar.)

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From [The New Yorker](#)

" . . . [They] set forth more clearly than anyone has done in our time the elements of good town planning."

From [Booklist](#)

Progressive town planners Duany and coauthors share the fruits of their extensive experiences designing new neighborhoods and community revitalization projects in this cogent and illuminating investigation into the nature of sprawl and the failure of suburbs. They mince no words in condemning the soulless, "repetitive and forgettable" landscape of subdivisions, shopping malls, office parks, and congested roadways that ring our cities, and articulate with great precision exactly how and why such places are detrimental to social health. They contrast traditional neighborhoods--"mixed-used, pedestrian-friendly communities" --where people of diverse backgrounds and economic levels interact, with suburbia, where housing, work, shopping, and public facilities are segregated from one another, so people are forced to drive everywhere. Using numerous examples, the authors explain how and why sprawl has occurred, discuss why the quality of balkanized suburban life is so deplorably low, and offer suggestions for a more viable approach to planning in the immediate future. Place matters, and we can do so much better. *Donna Seaman*

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**Ivan Caputo:**

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