CONFRONTING SUBURBAN DECLINE
Strategic Planning for Metropolitan Renewal
William H. Lucy and David L. Phillips

Sprawling commercial and residential development in outer suburbs and exurban areas has for a number of years masked increasingly severe socioeconomic problems in suburban America. In recent decades income declines, crime increases, and tax base erosion have affected many suburbs to an extent previously seen only in central cities.

In Confronting Suburban Decline William H. Lucy and David L. Phillips examine conditions and trends in cities and suburbs since 1960, arguing that beginning in the 1980s, the United States entered a “post-suburban” era of declining suburbs with maturation of communities accompanied by large-scale deterioration. In-depth case studies are provided of Richmond, Virginia and Washington, D.C., along with examples from Minnesota, Oregon, Maryland, Tennessee, and other locations. In addition, the book offers information and statistics on income, population, and racial transitions in 554 suburbs in the nation’s twenty-four largest metropolitan areas.

Making the case that a high quality natural and built environment is key to achieving economic stability, the authors set forth a series of policy recommendations with federal, state, regional, and local dimensions that can help contribute to that goal.

Confronting Suburban Decline provides a detailed look at the causes of and responses to urban and suburban decline. Planners and policymakers as well as students and researchers involved with issues of land use, economic development, regional planning, community development, or intergovernmental relations will find it a valuable resource.

The authors examine:

• why suburban decline has become widespread
• how the “tyranny of easy development decisions” often results in new housing being built outside of areas that people prefer
• how strategic planning can help assess dangers
• how some suburbs have stabilized or revived
• how interactions between residential mobility and the age, size, and location of housing can help policy makers anticipate dangers and opportunities facing neighborhoods and jurisdictions

William H. Lucy is professor in the Department of Urban and Environmental Planning at the University of Virginia and author of Close to Power (Planners Press, 1988).

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Of note is research by William Lucy and David Phillips, authors of Confronting Suburban Decline: Strategic Planning for Metropolitan Renewal, which found: suburban decline to be most prevalent in post-World War II car-dependent suburbs with deteriorating modest single-family houses. These places also tended to have public and private institutions that lacked a sufficient commitment to reinvestment in private homes and public infrastructure. (Confronting Suburban Poverty, 9). confronting suburban decline. The first lesson is that local governments are able to confront suburban decline and revitalize aging communities, but the ability to carry out and. This was only possible because Baltimore County had jurisdiction over all of its territory. The second lesson is that confronting suburban decline requires the political willingness to confront the problem. Baltimore County’s leaders. Keywords: suburban decline, first-tier suburbs, suburban revitalization politics. Suggested Citation: Suggested Citation. Vicino, Thomas J., The Quest to Confront Suburban Decline: Political Realities and Lessons (March 1, 2008). Vicino, T.J. (2008). 'The Quest to Confront Suburban Decline: Political Realities and Lessons,' Urban Affairs Review 43 (4): 553-581, Available at SSRN: https://ssrn.com/abstract=2182847. Thomas J. Vicino (Contact Author). Northeastern University (email). "The authors provide compelling evidence of growing disparities within suburban regions as older suburbs face "urban' problems." Choice. Product details. This is the best book on outlining the problems faced by older suburbs and why decline is happening. Perhaps the most intriguing finding is that communities with older homes don’t necessarily decline, but that homes built between 1940 and 1970 are most vulnerable. Despite trite talk about"suburban ghettos," suburbs have a poverty rate roughly half that of urban centers (20.9 percent in core compared to 11.4 percent in the suburbs as of 2010). To be sure, poverty in suburbs, or anywhere else, must be addressed. But not long ago, suburbs were widely criticized for being homogeneous; now they are mocked for having many of the problems associated with being "inclusive."