

# Places Between:



## U.S. Suburbs in Identity Crisis

**The 14th Urban Research Plaza's Forum**  
**“Urban Culture – Rural Culture: Overcoming a Dichotomy”**   
**March 3-4, 2016 Tom Borrup, Ph.D.**

# Teen Objects to Lonely Suburban Life

Edina, Minnesota



16-Year-Old Stanley Wu: “Edina would be a nicer place if we could all talk to each other and not be awkward for not knowing each other.”



# Suburban Sprawl









# Suburban Culture?





# Defined by What They are Not

- ◆ Not the city
- ◆ Not rural
- ◆ What ARE they?
- ◆ Prompting a Search for Identity

# Growth of Suburbs

- “Most modern suburbs were built through a combination of **racial segregation**, subsidized mortgages, forced low-density zoning and **auto-dependent design**. That’s still the way many suburbanites like it, and even the much-vaunted Creative Class may not be creative enough to redesign places that were built to exclude their kind.”

*Jordan Fraade, Washington Post 2015*

# Suburban Building Style

- ◆ Dominant form is detached single-family homes
- ◆ More than adequate space for movement and parking automobiles





# Conformity is Expected







Accommodations for Cars







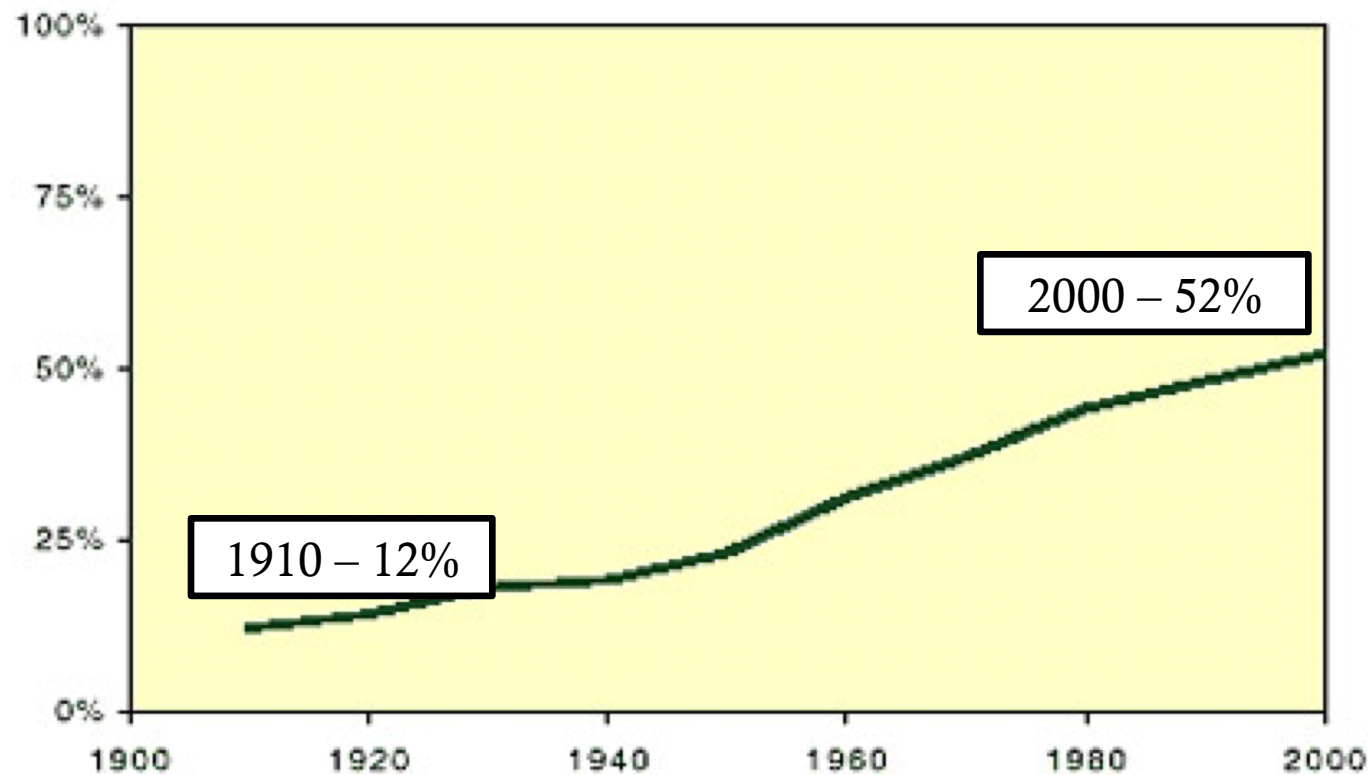
# U.S. Population Change

*(U.S. Census Bureau)*

- ◆ 76 million in 1900 to 281 million in 2000. 1990s experienced the largest growth in U.S. history of 32.7 million
- ◆ Population increasingly metropolitan each decade; 28% in 1910 to 80% in 2000.
- ◆ Suburbs, rather than central cities, accounted for most of that growth

# % U.S. Suburban Population

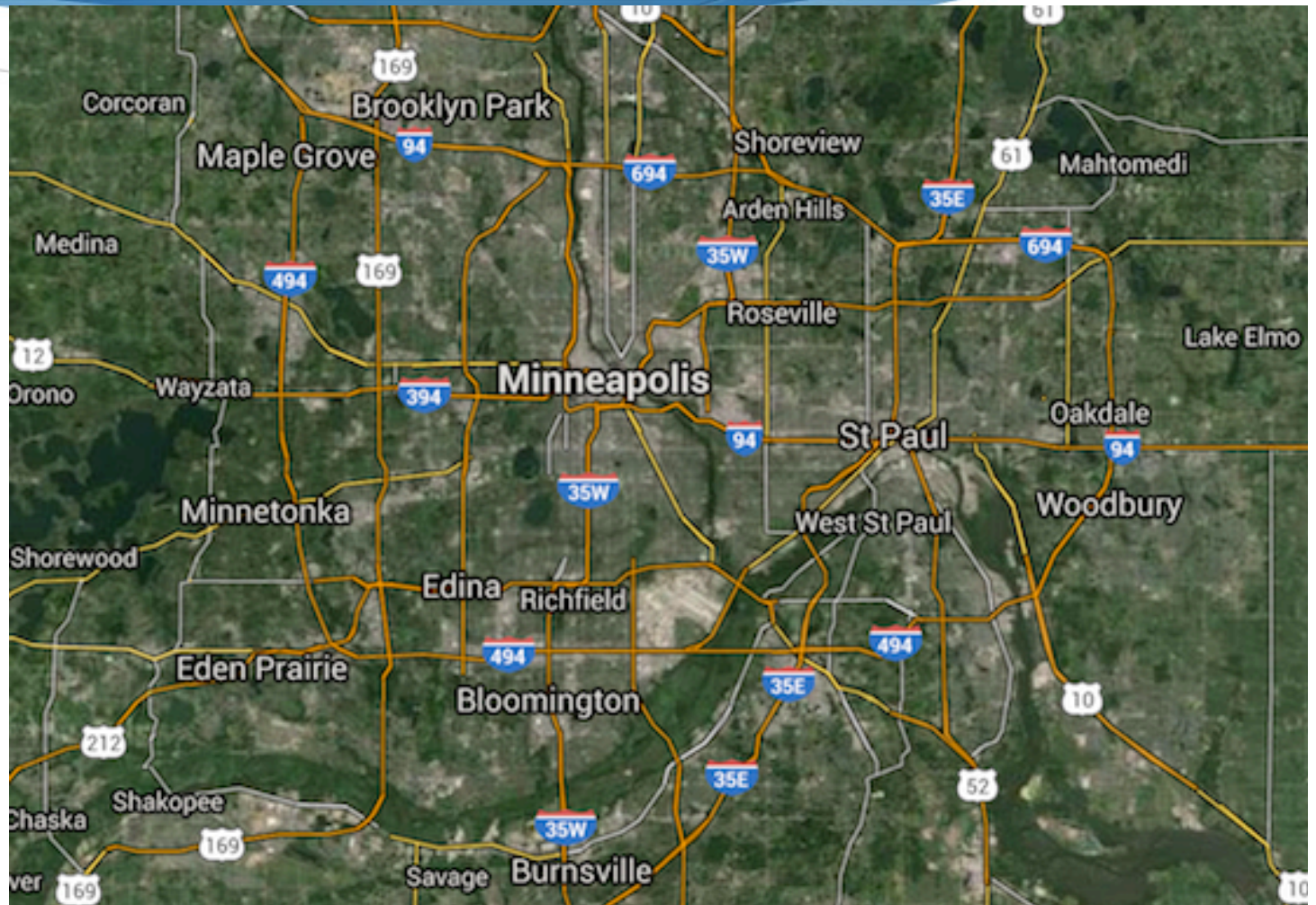
Population Living in the Suburbs  
Percentage of total population



# Metropolitan Regions

# Metro Region: 3.5 million

**City of  
Minneapolis:  
390,000 people**





# 60 Years of Low Density Development

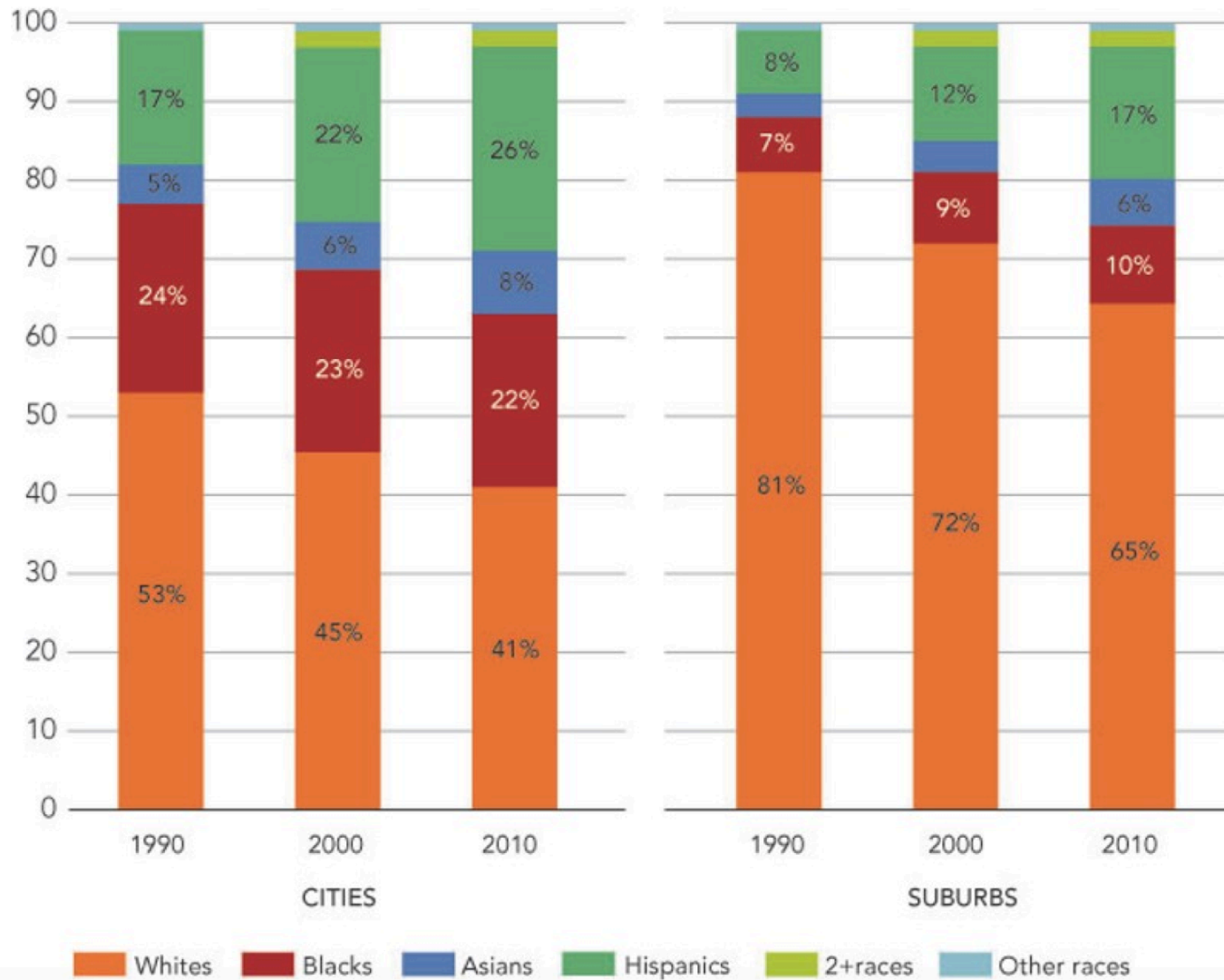


# Encroaching on Agricultural Space





## City and Suburb Racial Profiles, 100 Largest Metropolitan Areas, 1990–2010



Source: 1990–2010 U.S. censuses.



# Car Culture Takes Hold









# Expensive Infrastructure













# Reversing Population Trends

*(U.S. Census Bureau)*

- ◆ 2000 to 2010 urban population increased 12.1%, outpacing overall growth of 9.7% for the same period
- ◆ Year-to-year changes since the 2010 Census concentrated in relatively few large metropolitan areas
- ◆ Majority of the growth (51%) in 27 major cities that grew faster than the average

# Emotional Attachment to Place

*(Knight Foundation / Gallup, 2010)*

*Survey designed to:  
attract businesses,  
keep residents and  
holistically improve  
local economic  
vitality*





# Emotional Attachment to Place

*(Knight Foundation / Gallup, 2010)*

- Social offerings
- Openness
- Beauty or Aesthetic Character



# Urban Core Values: Are They Shared by Suburbs?

- ◆ Shared public realm
- ◆ Pluralism, cultural diversity
- ◆ Social & economic equity





















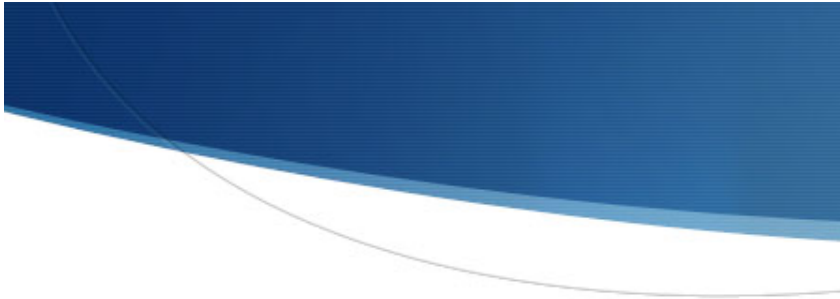
# Not Pedestrian Friendly











# Tipping Point





ROAD CLOSED

Block Party

kids playing in the street





Madison, Wisconsin



# Venue for Celebrations





# Growth in Literature on Urban-Suburban-Rural Patterns

- ◆ Florida, R. (2010) *The Great Reset: How New Ways of Living and Working Drive Post-Crash Prosperity*, New York: HarperCollins
- ◆ Nelson, A. C. (2013). *Reshaping Metropolitan America: Development Trends and Opportunities to 2030*. Washington: Island Press



# The Search for Identity





# The Search for Identity



San José, CA

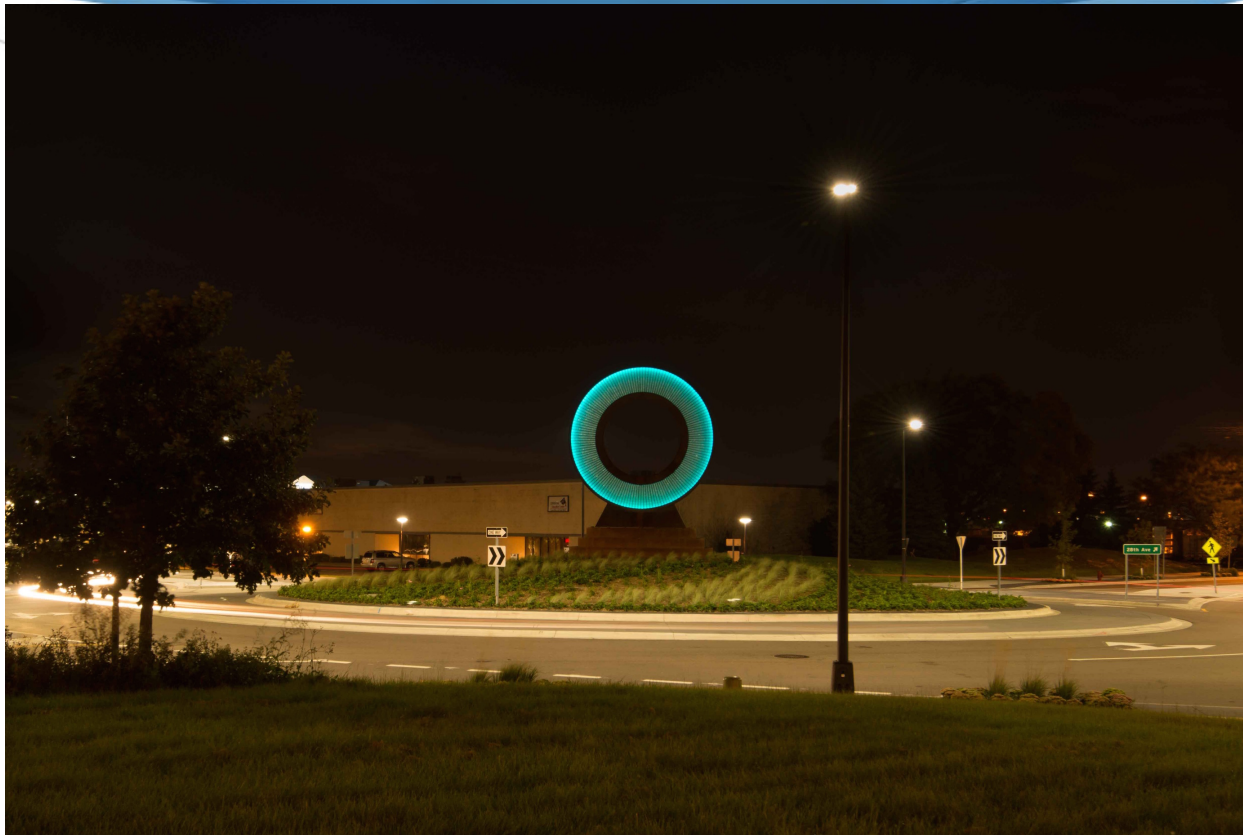


# The Search for Identity





# The Search for Identity



Bloomington, Minnesota



# Envy & Competition





# A Tale of Two Suburbs







Research:  
Early –  
Participatory  
Action  
Research



# Bloomington, Minnesota





# New Suburban Visions





# New Suburban Models





# Dublin, Ohio





# Failed Suburban Models





# Suburban Re-building



June 2015

Under Construction



# New Suburban Models





# Becoming Cities?





# Urban Core Values: Are they Shared by Suburbs?

- ◆ Shared public realm
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Edina, Minnesota







Social Aspirations in Suburban Spaces



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