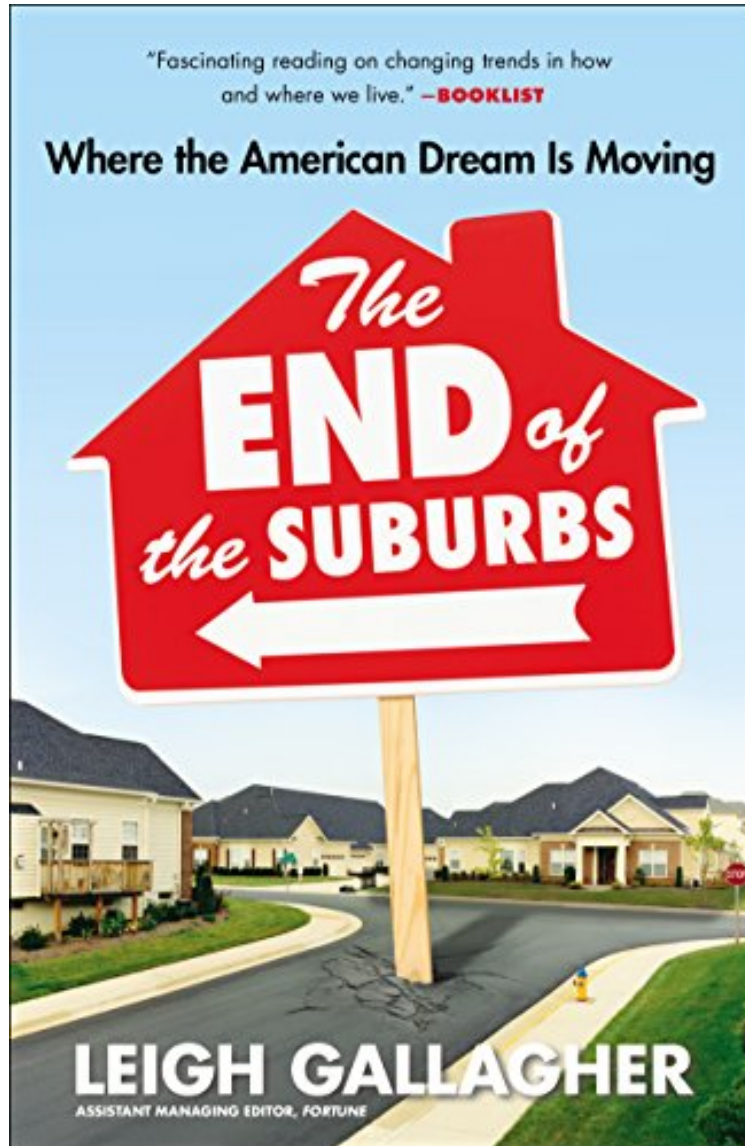


(Ebook free) The End of the Suburbs: Where the American Dream Is Moving

The End of the Suburbs: Where the American Dream Is Moving

Leigh Gallagher

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Leigh Gallagher : The End of the Suburbs: Where the American Dream Is Moving before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The End of the Suburbs: Where the American Dream Is Moving:

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Thought provoking, but purpose drivenBy ChrisInSDA very interesting book. It prompts the reader to critically think about the different stories that are told--on many occasions I found myself pausing and thinking how the scenario suggested has played out, or may play out, in my own community. I thought a lot about what I, as an American, want from the house I just bought and whether or not Ms.

Gallagher had correctly judged my generation's desires from my own perspective. That being said, Ms. Gallagher is a resident of the country's most urban environment and may not necessarily be well placed to pass judgement on the types of communities she has clearly personally rejected as "good." The most interesting parts were the discussion how we got here and some of the challenges presented for the future by the current housing stock. The introduction to New Urbanism was also very interesting, as I'm familiar with, but could never name these distinct communities. I think the discussion around future drivers of change in housing demand lacked much support, however. We get a massive amount of detail around the creation of suburban communities thanks to GM-inspired futurism, how they no longer encourage "neighborliness" because there are less children around, and how their street designs discourage human contact while encouraging traffic accidents etc etc. But besides these "negative" innate characteristics of suburban communities (which are likely considered positives when viewed differently by many of the residents of these homes), the author doesn't really suggest more than one reason why everyone will be abandoning them which she strongly suggests will happen. That one reason? Gas prices. This seems like an massive over-simplification. There was no discussion of the major technological changes happening to automobiles at this very moment. Gas prices are likely to be much less important to consumers 20 years from now than they are today. Even more critically, the author does not mention the massive technological revolution that has changed how many, many people work. The requirement to actually go and sit in a physical office day in and day out is on the decline in most every industry. Cheap telephony and the rise of the internet enable people to stay in communication wherever they are and fewer and fewer people are making the trek into the office each day. Additionally, many of these offices are no longer in the urban core as companies move closer to where their employees live. This will expand, rather than contract, some people's choices on housing. I was really quite surprised at the omission. Sometimes key data or perspectives appear to be left out because they would conflict with the author's overall message and personal opinion. Finally, I was disappointed that there was no discussion on what's next for suburbs other than to suggest that farther flung ones will be abandoned and will turn into ghettos. This is not terribly helpful. If the author believes that the suburbs do not provide the housing stock people of the future will want, I'd love to hear ways people have for transforming the already built environment into something that WILL be what people want. There is limited amounts of land around metropolitan areas and most of it has been developed. And much of it is suburban housing stock. These homes cannot be just discarded if people want to avoid all this driving, as the author suggests they do. It is likewise not possible to simply bulldoze them and re-zone the land. Homes in these communities will remain desirable because of where they are located particularly in pricey coastal cities, even if the community's character is not people would design today. So what can we do to revitalize these places for the future Ms. Gallagher? I recommend this--it seems to have some missing pieces--but it made me think a lot before I would agree or disagree with each premise proffered. That is the sign of a good book.

10 of 11 people found the following review helpful. A Detailed Account of the Affluent Suburban Exodus By Ohio Generalist Leigh Gallagher's *The End of the Suburbs* is a detailed account of the rise and fall of America's love and consumption of comfortable, car-dependent suburban living. Starting as far back as ancient Egypt, Gallagher tells us, rich high society types sought the quiet and comfort of the countryside. This, presumably, was the first suburb. The first half of the book is an interesting account of the rise of traditional American suburbs and it's continuing factors. Mainly the post war population boom, mass produced building materials, and the beginning of America's obsession with the automobile. Then, predictably, the author takes us through the housing boom of the 90s and 2000s, setting us up for the fall we have all experienced: The perfect storm of rising gas prices, overproduction, and questionable investment practices that created the housing crisis and largest recession since the great depression. It is from this point, that Gallagher begins detailing recent changes in the housing market (driven mainly by the changing tastes of millennials). People of this age are now renting, buying smaller homes, and placing a premium on a more walkable and social way of life. The term Urbanism or "New Urbanism" is used over and over again. I have had very little exposure to the term, but not being a novice to the principals of city planning it's not hard to understand the concept. Urbanism we are told, is a return to traditional methods of designing homes, cities, and neighborhoods. Where residents are live where they work and walk to and from both. It's a focus on a more communal way of life. It has home builders scared to death and young couples frothing at the mouth. I can't disagree too much with the author's account. My wife and I are in the process of selling a suburban property we purchased in 2005 and moving closer to downtown in a small, comfy home. When my realtor asked what I'm looking for in a new house, the top on my list were something more walkable and near friends. But this is my experience and after listening to the authors description of these new urbanists it's hard not to come to the conclusion that the migration back to city centers is really only for yuppies and the well-to-do. Indeed, it's hard not to roll your eyes when you hear the author describe one couple who moved from an affluent suburban neighborhood in Mass to a "fixer-upper" in Cambridge. The father is so excited that he can ride his bike to Google (where he works) and the wife can walk right around the street to Whole Foods. When the author speaks to her, she's in her car (which is likely not your dad's Pontiac) and is so embarrassed that she was caught driving. The book also details the tastes and clothes of other such "urbanists." Toward the end, it's a little hard to take. The larger issue to me, and one that wasn't addressed sufficiently, is if this new urban reset is going to leave the majority of America behind. It's not like the suburbs will be empty. The thing that made the suburban

movement profound in the first place was that it was that the homes were accessible to nearly anyone. How can the new urban renewal be just as impactful if the only people who move there are the young and wealthy? 5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Well Written and Informative By G. Robinson I thought I was pretty knowledgeable about this topic since I'm a real estate agent focused on urban properties and I see the movement of people from the suburbs into the city, but there was a lot of information in this book that I didn't know. It was very readable and well researched, it's like reading a New York Times feature article -- very enjoyable and interesting!

“The government in the past created one American Dream at the expense of almost all others: the dream of a house, a lawn, a picket fence, two children, and a car. But there is no single American Dream anymore. For nearly 70 years, the suburbs were as American as apple pie. As the middle class ballooned and single-family homes and cars became more affordable, we flocked to pre-fabricated communities in the suburbs, a place where open air and solitude offered a retreat from our dense, polluted cities. Before long, success became synonymous with a private home in a bedroom community complete with a yard, a two-car garage and a commute to the office, and subdivisions quickly blanketed our landscape. But in recent years things have started to change. An epic housing crisis revealed existing problems with this unique pattern of development, while the steady pull of long-simmering economic, societal and demographic forces has culminated in a Perfect Storm that has led to a profound shift in the way we desire to live. In *The End of the Suburbs* journalist Leigh Gallagher traces the rise and fall of American suburbia from the stately railroad suburbs that sprung up outside American cities in the 19th and early 20th centuries to current-day sprawling exurbs where residents spend as much as four hours each day commuting. Along the way she shows why suburbia was unsustainable from the start and explores the hundreds of new, alternative communities that are springing up around the country and promise to reshape our way of life for the better. Not all suburbs are going to vanish, of course, but Gallagher's research and reporting show the trends are undeniable. Consider some of the forces at work: The nuclear family is no more: Our marriage and birth rates are steadily declining, while the single-person households are on the rise. Thus, the good schools and family-friendly lifestyle the suburbs promised are increasingly unnecessary. We want out of our cars: As the price of oil continues to rise, the hours long commutes forced on us by sprawl have become unaffordable for many. Meanwhile, today's younger generation has expressed a perplexing indifference toward cars and driving. Both shifts have fueled demand for denser, pedestrian-friendly communities. Cities are booming. Once abandoned by the wealthy, cities are experiencing a renaissance, especially among younger generations and families with young children. At the same time, suburbs across the country have had to confront never-before-seen rates of poverty and crime. Blending powerful data with vivid on the ground reporting, Gallagher introduces us to a fascinating cast of characters, including the charismatic leader of the anti-sprawl movement; a mild-mannered Minnesotan who quit his job to convince the world that the suburbs are a financial Ponzi scheme; and the disaffected residents of suburbia, like the teacher whose punishing commute entailed leaving home at 4 a.m. and sleeping under her desk in her classroom. Along the way, she explains why understanding the shifts taking place is imperative to any discussion about the future of our housing landscape and of our society itself—and why that future will bring us stronger, healthier, happier and more diverse communities for everyone.