

*Major Problems in  
American Urban and  
Suburban History*



DOCUMENTS AND ESSAYS

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*Dedicated to*  
*Anne-Marie Magley Baldwin (b. 2003)*  
*and*  
*Mildred S. Chudacoff (1916–2002)*

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The experiences of Pullman in 1894 and Lawrence in 1912 are, of course, against this conclusion; but the question remains an interesting one to explore; how far does the removal of work-people from the big centers of population undermine the strength of trade unions?

It is equally important to know whether, in these towns of their own creation, the industrial interests seek to dominate the local government. Will people assert themselves as citizens when their interest runs counter to those to whom they, as workers, look for a livelihood? On the other hand, in these towns the industrial power can be more clearly singled out than in the complex metropolitan center, and Professor Ely, in making a study of Pullman in 1885—but four years after the town's beginning—found that already a feeling had arisen that it was a praiseworthy thing to "beat the company."

At Gary one feels that friction and antagonism between townspeople and the industrial control are always just under the surface if not cropping out. The town of Steger, where pianos of that name are manufactured, recently had a controversy of the most acrimonious sort between the firm and citizens who charged despotic exploitation of the kind alleged at Pullman. At LeClaire, the town founded by the firm of N. O. Nelson, relations seem to have been harmonious. The elections of socialistic mayors in Granite City and Flint are to be weighed against elections at Gary, whereby six saloon-keepers became members of a board of nine aldermen. . . .

The industrial exodus, in which Pullman early played the rôle now taken by Gary, is, in its individual parts, a consciously directed movement. It therefore presents repeated opportunities for shaping the civic and social conditions under which large groups of working people are to live for decades to come. It raises in new and searching ways questions as to the obligations which go with economic control, as to the future of local self-government in relation to that control, and as to the organization and large-scale civic development of our industrial districts.

Like the foundlings which were dropped in the turn-cradles of the old-time orphanages, these young communities which industry is leaving at the doorsteps of our cities are no longer things apart and by themselves. For better or worse, they come to share in the common lot.

#### 4. J. C. Nichols, a Kansas City Developer, Touts the Community Features of Suburbs, 1924

Developing suburban subdivisions with community features is a subject of constantly increasing importance to the real estate profession. Community features may be largely instrumental in first attracting the attention of that buying public to a subdivision. They may be the factors that largely create sales in the beginning. Community features can be the means of giving character and distinction to suburban property; the things that create enthusiasm for the property by its residents; the things that cause the tenants and owners in the property to enjoy living there.

## Recreation for the Community

An annual community field day—bringing together all the school children in the district—can be made inexpensive and very effective. For several years we have held such events in the Country Club District of Kansas City, largely underwriting the expenses of the meet. In May of this year we had approximately 3,000 school children on the campus of one of our private schools. . . . All the events were carefully worked out in advance—each school having its own individual feature event, and also entering representatives in the general events.

And then again we have our hikes into the country—perhaps a “wienie” roast for the boys of a certain school. . . .

Other recreational and cultural features include a supervised playground; a community hall, where neighborhood dancing lessons, lectures, and community events may be held; neighborhood flower shows; community Christmas trees, and the singing of Christmas carols as a community activity; the encouragement of horseback riding and of bicycle clubs; and an organization of boys to keep the snow swept from ponds or streams for skating in winter.

We have four golf clubs in the Country Club District. Three of them we have built as an adjunct to our real estate development, organizing financing and developing the club from the beginning. In two of these organizations it is stipulated that no one can become a member unless an owner of property in our subdivisions. We generally provide a site for the course without any charge, on our unsold acreage in the beginning. We start the dues at, say, \$30 or \$40 a year, with no initiation; provide no club house, simply a little room for golf headquarters; and start out with 9 holes, adding others as the club grows. . . . When it has grown to a strong membership, a club generally begins establishing a sinking fund for the purchasing of its own real estate for a permanent course and the erection of a complete club house. These organizations have been able to reimburse us for the amount of money we advanced during the early period, and their value to us has been well worth the giving of the ground without rent during the formative years.

## Community Homes Association

In every subdivision we have developed for many years, we have stipulated that the owner of each lot be obligated to pay not to exceed a mill per square foot per annum towards the organization and maintenance of a community homes association. This tax rests upon all unsold as well as sold sites. It is a tax on land, and not on improvements. Only residents can serve as directors, and without salary. It is an honor to be elected. An annual meeting is held of all the owners and the policy is prescribed, which the directors carry out.

Snows are cheaply plowed from the streets and walks, at a cost of only a few cents to every 50-foot lot. Street trees are sprayed and trimmed at a far less cost than the individual could do it, even if he would. . . . Vacant property is kept cleaned and mowed as a community expense; shrubbery, flowers and ornaments in all public places are maintained; street trees are replaced when necessary; trash is hauled away at community expense once a month from each home. This waste-removal service

alone would otherwise cost the individual owner more than his entire expense of the community homes company assessment.

The directors of this homes association are also charged with the responsibility of enforcing restrictions—and have the funds to go to court, if necessary. They take over the control of any playgrounds, fountains, picnic ovens, or other community features. They become a united, powerful organization to present any cause to municipal authorities, or to any public utility. They develop a strong community feeling, a neighborhood pride and betterment of the physical condition as well as the community spirit of the entire section.

### **Architectural Standards**

Stores and shops in a real estate subdivision should be of good architecture, not offensive to the surrounding home owners. All loading and unloading of trucks should be confined to courts in the rear. No overhanging signs or big lettered posters should be permitted. No ugly or filthy rear ends should be tolerated. Filling stations can be made unobjectionable, if proper control of design, color and maintenance is retained.

The design and location of the fire and police station is important and should be made inoffensive. Of course the location of schools, with ample playgrounds, and the distribution of churches and structures needed to meet community needs are important factors in community development.

Another important factor is the giving of character and distinction to certain neighborhoods and certain streets by a particular type of development. This may be done by the grouping of buildings of harmonious architecture; by a pleasing blend of the colors of the roofs of near-by houses; by the careful graduating of grade and floor elevation of one house with another; by the avoiding of the overshadowing of low houses by tall ones. . . .

The curving of the streets, the placing of the trees, the planting of the shrubs, the walk design, and the various street furnishings may all be so arranged as to give a variety of character to various parts of a subdivision. Frequent triangular parks at street intersections give a cosy, domestic character to a residential street. They relieve monotony, they break the sweep of winds, they relieve the hot glare of a straight stretch of paving, they give ever-changing color and create a street scene of value to the entire neighborhood. . . .

### **The Opportunity of the Realtor**

In the development of community features there is a great opportunity for the realtor. He is the man who creates and fixes the appearance of the city. It would be foolish for idealism to carry beyond the things that would pay. But as the realtor develops his properties and as the public appreciation will justify it, better and better community features may be successfully added. The community spirit will reflect itself in the architectural design of every home, in the garden side as well as the street side of the lawn, in the interior arrangement; hangings, paintings, and furniture of the owners, and in the mental attitude and spiritual attitude of the residents themselves.

Children will become interested. They will develop an art appreciation in the broad sense. They will become observant of the beauty of this great world around us. They will see greater beauties in the sunset, in the distant haze-covered hills. They will get a greater joy in the budding of the forest trees in the spring. They will be more thrilled by the singing of the birds in the early morn in the trees around their homes. They will gain an understanding of the miracle of the opening flower in the joyous springtime. They will learn to abhor ugliness and prize beauty. They will learn the value of good design in every physical object that exists. They will appreciate color harmony in our schools and homes, the streets, and the public buildings. Their eyes will be lifted beyond the more sordid things in everyday existence, and they will begin to dream dreams for the future achievement and beauty of their city.

### 5. Harvey Warren Zorbaugh Denies the Existence of Normal Community Life in a Furnished Room District of Chicago, 1929

Back of the ostentatious apartments, hotels, and homes of the Lake Shore Drive, and the quiet, shady streets of the Gold Coast lies an area of streets that have a painful sameness, with their old, soot-begrimed stone houses, their none-too-clean alleys, their shabby air of respectability. In the window of house after house along these streets one sees a black and white card with the words "Rooms To Rent." For this is the world of furnished rooms, a world of strangely unconventional customs and people, one of the most characteristic of the worlds that go to make up the life of the great city. . . .

This lodging- and rooming-house district of the Near North Side lies between the Gold Coast on the east and Wells Street on the west, and extends northward from Grand Avenue and the business district to North Avenue. South of Chicago Avenue the district merges with the slum; its rooming- and lodging-houses sheltering the laborer, the hobo, the rooming-house family, the studios of the bohemian, the criminal, and all sorts of shipwrecked humanity, while some of its small hotels have a large number of theatrical people—and others the transient prostitute. The whole of the district is criss-crossed with business streets. The area north of Chicago Avenue, however, save for Clark Street, is not a slum area. And it is in this area, with its better-class rooming-houses in which live, for the most part, young and unmarried men and women, that we are interested in the present chapter.

An analysis of the *Illinois Lodging House Register* reveals the fact that there are 1,139 rooming- and lodging-houses on the Near North Side, and that in these houses 23,007 people are living in furnished rooms of one kind and another. Ninety blocks in the better rooming area north of Chicago Avenue were studied intensively, by means of a house-to-house census. This study revealed the additional facts that 71

Harvey Warren Zorbaugh, *The Gold Coast and the Slum: A Sociological Study of Chicago's Near North Side* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1929), 69-72, 74, 82-84, 86. Reprinted with permission of The University of Chicago Press.