



# METROPOLITAN POLICY PROGRAM THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

## One-Fifth of America: A Comprehensive Guide to America's First Suburbs

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*Neither fully urban nor completely suburban, America's older, inner-ring, "first" suburbs have a unique set of challenges—such as concentrations of elderly and immigrant populations as well as outmoded housing and commercial buildings—very different from those of the center city and fast growing newer places. Yet first suburbs exist in a policy blindspot with little in the way of state or federal tools to help them adapt to their new realities and secure a role as competitive and quality communities. This paper defines first suburbs throughout the nation, examines their similarities and differences, and, finally, sets out a policy agenda tailored specifically to these distinctive places.*

### I. Introduction

One of the more encouraging metropolitan policy trends over the last several years is the increased attention on America's older, inner-ring, "first" suburbs. Beginning generally with Myron Orfield's *Metropolitics* in 1997, a slow but steady stream of research has started to shine a bright light on these places and begun to establish the notion that first suburbs have their own unique set of characteristics and challenges that set them apart from the rest of metropolitan America. Since then first suburbs in a few regions have assumed a small, but significant, role in advancing research and policy discussions about metropolitan growth and development.

Home to nearly 20 percent of the U.S. population, first suburbs are, and have always been, important. They are generally defined as those places that developed first after their center city, before or during the rapid suburban expansion right after World War II, and before the newly developing suburbs of today. They are usually in the first ring of communities very close to the metropolitan core and often began as bedroom communities for professional, white, downtown commuters—think the Levittowns or, from television, Rob Petrie's New Rochelle, NY and even the Brady family's Studio City, CA home.

*"First suburbs—  
containing nearly  
20 percent of the  
U.S. population  
—are inimitable  
and quite distinct  
from the rest of  
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other parts of  
metropolitan  
America."*



For many years, first suburbs fit this model of the traditional 1950s style suburb. The simple demarcations that divided “city” and “suburb” were crystal clear to most.

However, a generation or so later it is apparent the old notions of cities and suburbs no longer work.

For one thing, now first suburbs are highly racially diverse—more diverse than the nation as a whole—and growing more so. They are also home to more and more foreign-born residents. By 2000, about 29 percent of all immigrants in this country were in first suburbs. They are also home to some of the most expensive housing, the most highly educated residents, and those with the highest incomes.

And yet, despite these positive trends first suburbs are staring down a set of looming challenges that threaten their overall stability. Expensive housing presents mounting struggles regarding affordability, especially as poverty increases in these places despite a decrease nationally. There are also tremendous racial disparities in first suburbs, and the high incomes and education levels found there are not shared equally among all residents.

In short, first suburbs are highly complex, and, in order to compete for residents, jobs and investments, they need policies that respond to their individual circumstances.

Unfortunately, the interests of first suburbs appear underrepresented at the federal and state level. First suburbs often remain absent from larger coalitions that represent the broad interests of municipalities or, if they are represented, they are lumped in with larger “suburban” interests. This general lack of appreciation of the differences between inner and outer suburbs fails to recognize their diversity, their variable assets, and the different challenges they face. The special concerns of small, first suburban jurisdictions rarely receive a fair hearing from state legislators and agencies.

The lack of a common definition for talking about first suburbs and the relative shortage of empirical, quantitative information about either their current condition or what kind of changes have taken place in first suburbs over time contributes to this silence.

Additionally, the lack of a clear definition for first suburbs helps reinforce the notion that these places are caught in a policy blindspot. If we have no way of talking about these places on the national or state level how can policies respond to their particular challenges?

To aid these efforts and extend the research, Brookings initiated a multi-year effort to explore trends that are occurring in first suburbs, identify common problems that may be hindering their advancement, and promote policy approaches and working alliances. This includes regional and national convenings of first suburban leaders, filling the information void on first suburbs through a series of publications, development of a policy agenda for first suburbs in the Midwest, and continued outreach and support to these places—particularly in the area of coalition building among first suburbs.<sup>1</sup>

The purpose of this latest effort is four-fold: to develop a practical definition and framework for identifying first suburbs; to compare the demographic, economic and social experience of first suburbs over the past several decades with that of cities, newer suburbs and the nation; to compare these generational trends across first suburbs, giving these places their first chance to benchmark their trends and challenges against similarly situated places; and to provide an empirical foundation for federal, state and local policies geared to the particular needs and experiences of first suburbs.

This document is a policy brief based on a voluminous collection of data on first suburbs. A much more detailed distillation of the trends discussed here can be found in an accompanying data report along with a deeper recitation of the methodology used herein. The full tables of data are available for public use on Brookings’ website at [www.brookings.edu/metro](http://www.brookings.edu/metro).

Through this work, it is our hope that this information will help advance the discussions and debates around first suburbs. What is more, we hope that as important national concerns continue to play out in first suburbs—concerns such as immigration, race, poverty, eminent domain, governance, and housing—first suburbs will provide important lessons for the future.

## II. Defining First Suburbs and Project Methodology

Understanding the myriad challenges of selecting appropriate geography and relevant indicators, we developed a detailed methodology to select the first suburbs for our study. The procedure was designed to focus both on those places that sufficiently represented what are generally considered part of “suburban” America in 1950 in order to track change over time, and those that are most representative of first suburbs today. For the purposes of this analysis, first suburbs are defined on the county level in order to enable cross-comparisons among each other and between first suburbs and newer suburbs.

The methodology used to define and identify first suburbs for this work is based on age, location, and population.

In chronological terms of the suburban experience, these places generally developed first after their central city and before the rapid suburban expansion emblematic of most metropolitan areas today. So first we only considered counties for this analysis that were part of metropolitan America in 1950. Specifically, first suburban counties are those that were part of a census-identified 1950 standard metropolitan area (SMA). Clearly, the *time* these places developed is integral to *how* they developed.

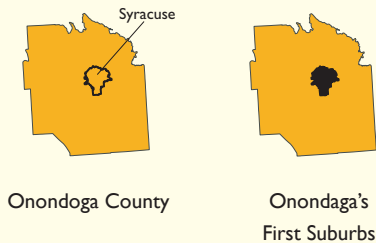
But first suburbs also have the characteristics they do because of their close proximity to the metropolitan core. Thus, all counties that did not contain, or were not adjacent to one of the top 100 cities in 1950 were omitted and not considered a first suburb.

Lastly, first suburbs are obviously the portion of the county outside of the center city. Thus, we removed the city population from the county. Some counties do not have cities that needed to be extracted—places like Macomb, MI; Nassau, NY; or Arlington, VA. But either way, what remains is considered entirely “suburban” (Figure 1). If the resulting 1950 population was over 120,000 residents, that county was retained for this analysis. A more detailed explanation of the methodology and approach can be found in the accompanying data report.

This definition and deduction reveals 64 counties that can be called America’s first suburbs (Map 1). The list includes old places that date back well beyond 1950 like Norfolk, MA and Allegheny, PA. It also includes places located in the newly developing Sun Belt from Fulton, GA to San Diego, CA. Places that are very urban like Hudson, NJ and others that are quintessentially suburban like Franklin, OH are represented. Very geographically large counties like Pierce, WA are included as are places that are quite small like Arlington, VA. The Northeast has the largest number of first suburban counties (27), followed by the Midwest (18), South (10), and West (9). New Jersey, Ohio, and Pennsylvania each have seven counties represented. California, New York, and Massachusetts have six, five and, four respectively.

This analysis examines the demographic, market, and economic trends for these 64 first suburban counties. The major data sources for this effort are the decennial censuses from 1950 through 2000. Ending this analysis in 2000 obviously omits any changes and trends in first suburbs since then. However, the aim here is to describe compelling long term trends occurring in first suburbs, which post-2000 trends probably have not altered significantly.

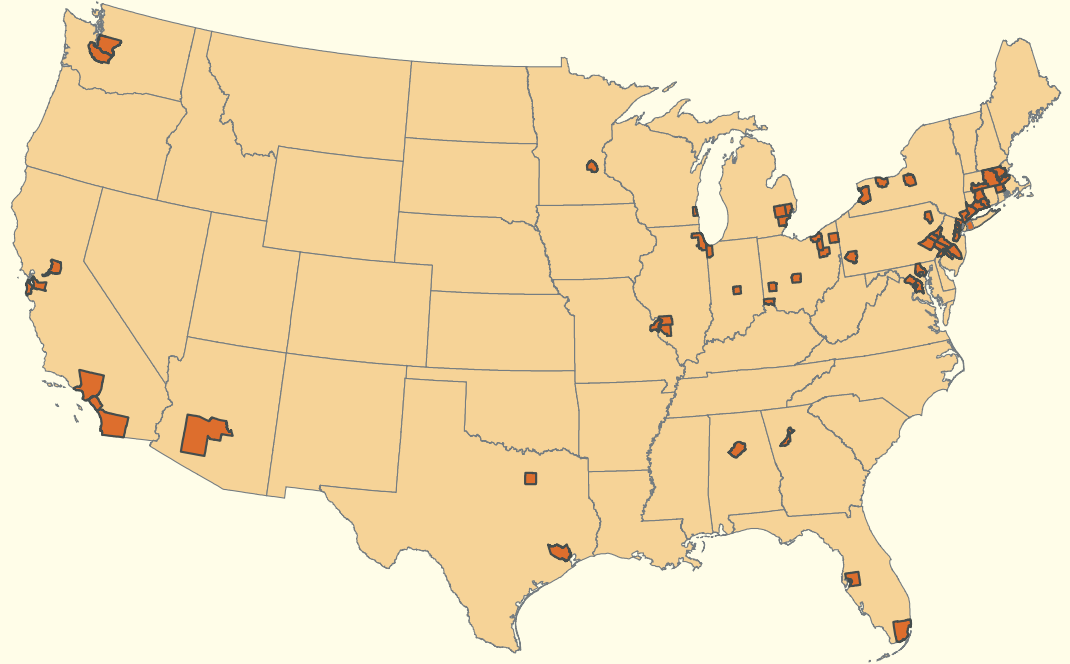
**Figure 1. Example of a First Suburb: Onondaga County, NY**



Onondaga County	458,336 (2000 population)
Syracuse	147,306
Onondaga’s First Suburbs	311,030

Source: Brookings analysis of Census 2000 data

**Map 1. Geographic Location and List of America's 64 First Suburban Counties**



Alameda, CA	Fairfield, CT	Madison, IL	Orange, CA
Allegheny, PA	Franklin, OH	Maricopa, AZ	Pierce, WA
Arlington, VA	Fulton, GA	Marion, IN	Prince George's, MD
Baltimore, MD	Hamilton, OH	Middlesex, MA	Providence, RI
Bergen, NJ	Hampden, MA	Middlesex, NJ	Sacramento, CA
Berks, PA	Harris, TX	Milwaukee, WI	San Diego, CA
Bucks, PA	Hartford, CT	Monroe, NY	San Mateo, CA
Burlington, NJ	Hennepin, MN	Montgomery, MD	St. Clair, IL
Camden, NJ	Hillsborough, FL	Montgomery, OH	St. Louis, MO
Cook, IL	Hudson, NJ	Montgomery, PA	Stark, OH
Cuyahoga, OH	Jefferson, AL	Nassau, NY	Summit, OH
Dade, FL <sup>2</sup>	King, WA	New Haven, CT	Trumbull, OH
Dallas, TX	Lackawanna, PA	Norfolk, MA	Union, NJ
Delaware, PA	Lake, IN	Northampton/Lehigh, PA <sup>3</sup>	Wayne, MI
Erie, PA	Los Angeles, CA	Oakland, MI	Westchester, NY
Essex, NJ	Macomb, MI	Onondaga, NY	Worcester, MA

Source: Brookings analysis of Census 2000 data

For each indicator, the first suburb was ranked according to one element of the data. We attempted to show the current trends from Census 2000 and also to illustrate change over time. For several indicators, the data goes back as far as 1950. For the rest, such historical information was not available but we endeavored to use the oldest data possible—usually going back to 1970. The Appendix in the accompanying data report lists the indicators examined along with the earliest decade appropriate Census data was retrieved.

For each indicator we also collected baseline data so we can compare first suburban trends to those in their primary cities, the nation, and the remainder of their metropolitan areas.<sup>4</sup> The geographic units of analysis discussed here are:

- **First Suburbs:** The set of 64 counties (minus their primary cities where applicable) identified above.
- **Primary Cities:** The collection of 52 major or center cities associated with each first suburb. For instance, Cleveland is associated with Cuyahoga. Seattle is associated with King. Prince George's, MD is associated with Washington, DC. Detroit is the center city associated with Wayne, Macomb, and Oakland counties. As mentioned, where the primary city is part of the first suburban county, it was extracted from the first suburb calculations but irrespective of whether or not the city data had to be extracted, each first suburb has a primary city associated with it.
- **Newer Suburbs:** To compare first suburbs to the newer suburbs in each metropolitan area, the first suburbs' data and primary cities' data for each metropolitan area that contains a first suburban county was extracted. The resulting metropolitan remainder we refer to as the newer suburbs.<sup>5</sup> There are 38 metropolitan areas for which this cohort was calculated (as with the primary cities, some metropolitan areas have more than one corresponding first suburb.) Data for this group was calculated only as far back as 1970.
- **Nation:** Includes all the data for the United States with no geography extracted.

What follows is a summary of the demographic and economic data from the U.S. Census on a variety of indicators for the 64 first suburbs.

### III. Summary of Findings

One thing this analysis makes clear is that while first suburbs do retain some typically *suburban* traits, they are also beginning to take on characteristics normally associated with central cities and other *urban* places.

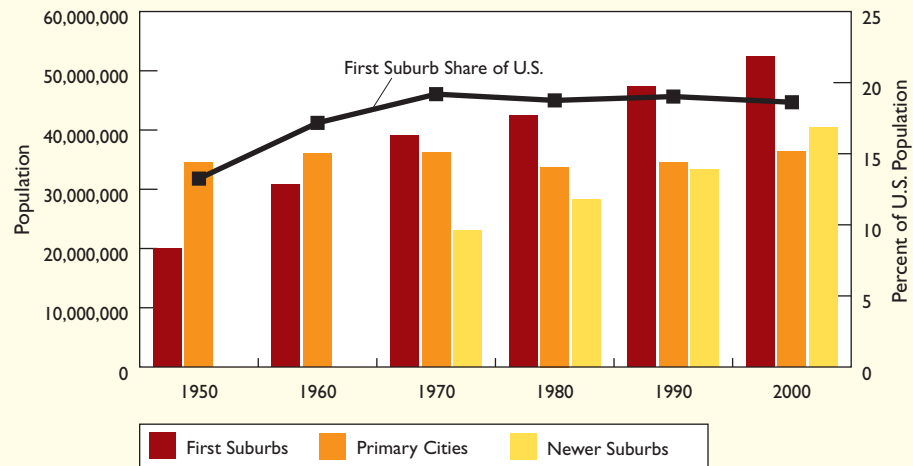
Some of these tendencies are microcosms of what is also occurring on the national level. But there are other important trends in first suburbs that set them apart from both the cities they sometimes surround, and the newer suburbs that are growing up around them. For example, while concentrated poverty is on the decline nationally, it is increasing in first suburbs. While the share of the non-Hispanic white U.S. population is decreasing, it is decreasing at a much faster rate in first suburbs. Overall household incomes rose during the 1990s everywhere in the nation—except in first suburbs. Yet first suburbs are still places with uniquely high homeownership, household incomes, and education levels.

Taken together, first suburbs as a group are inimitable and distinguishable from the nation and other parts of metropolitan America.

But what this analysis also makes clear is that first suburbs are also often quite different from each other—especially between regions. This analysis finds, for example, that there are stark differences between first suburbs that began developing over a century ago in such places as New England and other parts of the Northeast and Midwest from those that suburbanized during the period right after World War II. Southern California first suburbs have their own set of distinguishing trends, as do those surrounding Washington, D.C. The same holds true for Rust Belt first suburbs as well as those in the Southeast.

Following is a deeper discussion into the findings illustrating the distinctiveness of first suburbs as well as the regional similarities and differences.

**Figure 2. Metropolitan Population Growth by Geographic Type and First Suburban Share of U.S. population, 1950–2000**



Source: Brookings analysis of Census 2000 data

### ***A. The Shared Distinctiveness of First Suburbs***

*1. First suburbs have evolved from being fast-developing places that accommodated a large share of the nation's population growth in the 1950s and 1960s to moderately growing places by the end of the century. Today, first suburbs are adding population at a faster clip than primary cities but at a far slower pace than newer suburbs.*

Overall, the population of first suburbs rose 161.3 percent since 1950. That's nearly twice the U.S. average of 86 percent and much higher than the anemic growth of corresponding primary cities which only grew by 5.3 percent over this period.

But it was the 1950s and 1960s when the majority of first suburban growth took place. In these two decades the first suburbs were the new suburbs. During that time, first suburbs doubled in population size while the nation grew by one-third and the primary cities by only 5.2 percent.

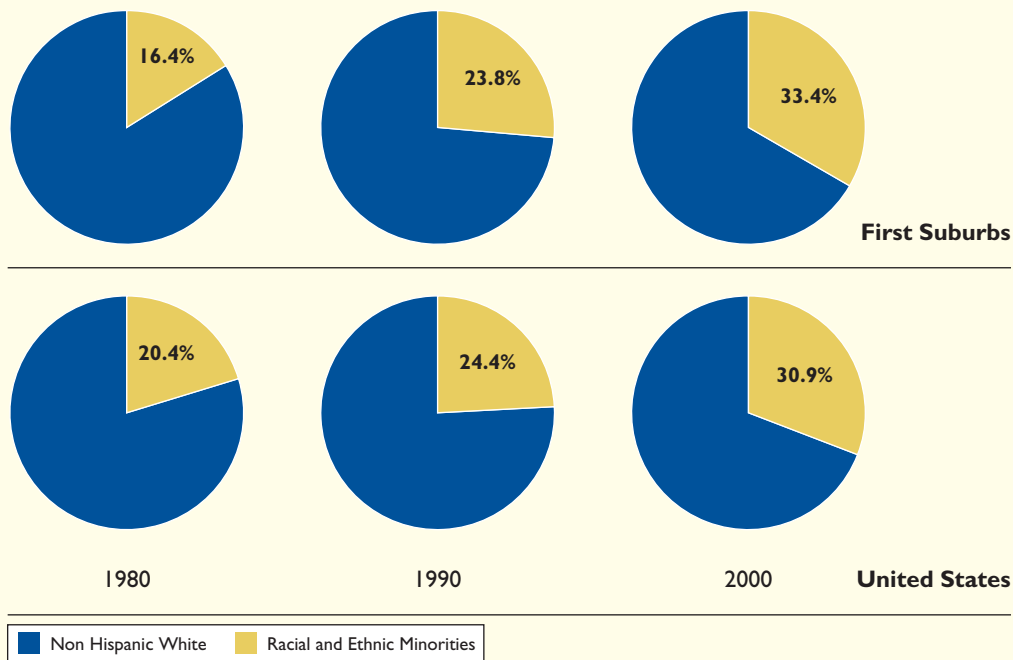
In the 1950s alone first suburbs accommodated nearly 40 percent of the total U.S. population growth. In many places first suburbs were literally where America was growing. But that phenomenon has sharply shifted: first suburbs only absorbed about 15 percent of growth during the 1990s.

Today, first suburbs do not fit the model of the typical fast growing suburb found on the suburban fringe. The newer suburbs are growing twice as fast as the first suburbs. Nor do they resemble the slow growth of the primary cities. First suburbs are growing twice as fast as the primary cities.

Nevertheless, in 2000 nearly one-fifth of the U.S. population still lived in first suburbs. First suburbs were home to 52,391,412 people in 2000—good for 18.6 percent of the nation's population. That figure is larger than the share of the nation living in primary cities (12.9 percent) and the newer suburbs (14.3 percent). The share of the national population living in first suburbs increased steadily from 13.3 percent in 1950 with a rather dramatic spike from 1950 to 1970. But that growth has tapered off, and the share of Americans living in first suburbs is about the same now as it was in 1970 (Figure 2).

So the suite of state and federal policies that serve to address fast growth on the suburban fringe do not necessarily respond directly to the growth and development needs of first suburbs. In the words of Nassau County executive Tom Suozzi, while much of America is sprawling, first suburbs have already “sprawled.”

**Figure 3. Percentage of First Suburban and National Population Other than Non-Hispanic White, 1980–2000**



Source: Brookings analysis of Census 2000 data

**2. First suburbs are undergoing rapid racial and ethnic change. From 1980 to 2000, the first suburbs outpaced the nation in its growing share of black, Hispanic, and Asian residents, as well as the decreasing share of white residents. First suburbs are also now home to a large and growing number of foreign-born residents.**

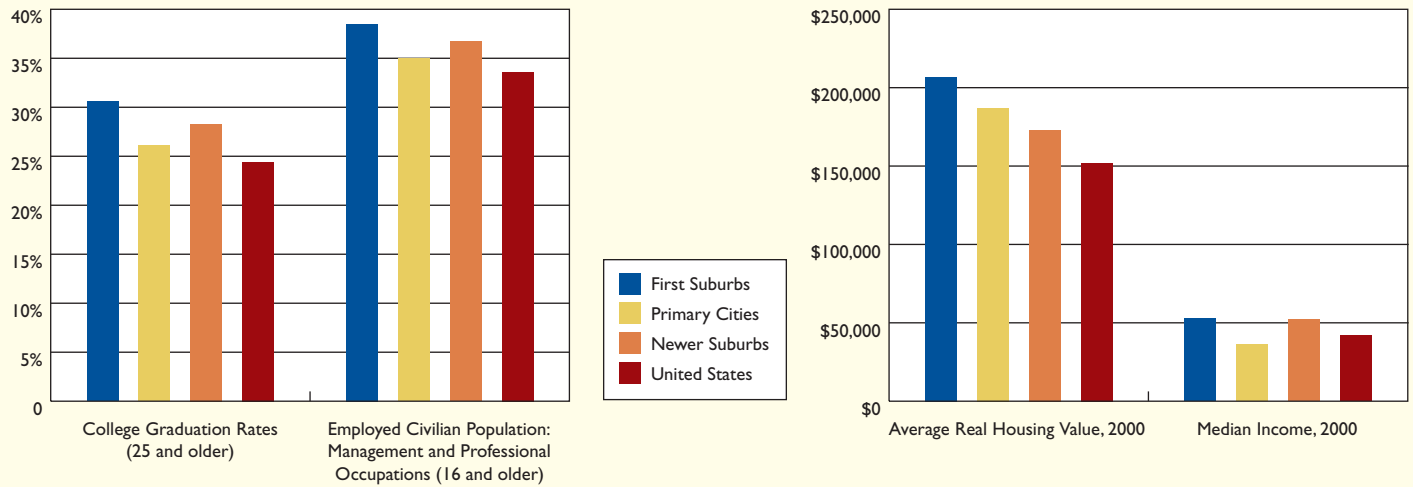
First suburbs were once far less racially diverse than the nation, but rapid demographic changes over the last 20 years now make them more so.

The share of racial and ethnic minorities living in first suburbs more than doubled between 1980 and 2000 and now makes up fully one-third of the first suburban population (Figure 3). During the same time period, the share of the white population in first suburbs dropped 63 percent faster than in the nation as a whole. And the share of first suburban population that is black increased faster than it did in primary cities, the newer suburbs, and the nation as a whole. By 2000, first suburbs had as many Hispanic residents as the primary cities and almost as many Asian residents as the primary cities and newer suburbs combined.

First suburbs are also becoming destination points for immigrants to this country. Almost 29 percent of America’s foreign born live in first suburbs. In sharp contrast, the percentage of the nation’s immigrants living in primary cities declined sharply from about 38 percent in 1970 to 28 percent in 2000. As a result, first suburbs now have more foreign-born residents (9.0 million) than their primary cities do (8.6 million).

First suburbs are on the front lines of a diversifying national population. But while these challenges have long affected the political, social, and economic climate of cities, first suburbs are just now starting to come to grips with these new trends. Those first suburbs hoping to achieve real growth need to provide an attractive living environment for residents of varying race and ethnicity. At the same time, first suburbs will have to adjust to new foreign born populations that place immediate and challenging demands on basic services like schools and health care.

**Figure 4. Education, Employment, Housing Value, and Income Statistics for First Suburbs, Primary Cities, Newer Suburbs, and the Nation, 2000**



Source: Brookings analysis of Census 2000 data

**3. Meanwhile, first suburbs are aging faster than the nation while attracting fewer numbers of children. Yet because of the growing immigrant population, and their historical role as magnets for married couples with children, first suburbs remain home to large numbers of these traditional households.**

The elderly population in first suburbs increased nearly twice as fast as the nation as a whole from 1950 to 2000. As a result, by 2000 the percent of the first suburban population that is elderly is higher than it is in the nation, the primary cities, or the newer suburbs. However, the population of children under 15 is growing very slowly. Combined, first suburbs have just over 190,000 more children than they did 30 years ago.

These demographic changes are having profound impacts on household formation. Since 1950, first suburbs have been home to a greater share of traditional married-with-children households than the U.S. average. While the average household size for first suburbs dropped by over one-fifth in the last 50 years, nearly mirroring the national trend, households still continue to be larger in first suburbs than they are elsewhere.

First suburbs are torn, then, between their traditional role as havens for children and families and their ability to simultaneously cater to an aging population. These patterns will dictate demand in first suburbs for goods and services like transportation, education, and health care but these trends will also have profound impacts on housing in first suburbs.

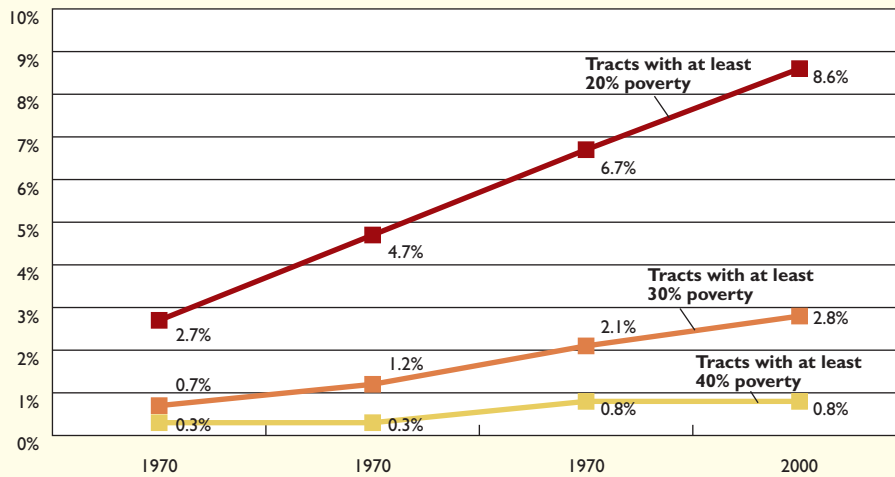
**4. First suburbs have largely retained their position as home to some of the most highly educated and wealthy residents, highest shares of residents with white collar jobs, and the highest housing values.**

In first suburbs the percentage of adults age 25 and older with a college education was 30.6 percent in 2000—significantly higher than the rate in the primary cities (26.1 percent), as well as the newer suburbs, and the nation (both 24.4 percent). Similar trends also exist for high school attainment rates. And since education is highly correlated with income it should not be surprising that the median household income in first suburbs has been about 25 percent higher than nation’s median (\$52,885 vs. \$41,994 in 2000.)

Since 1970, the percentage of first suburban adults in work or actively looking for work—the labor force participation (LFP) rate—has been higher, and the unemployment rates lower than



**Figure 5. Percentage of Census Tracts in First Suburbs Exceeding Specified Poverty Thresholds, 1970–2000**



Source: Brookings analysis of Census 2000 data

elsewhere. In terms of type of specific occupational categories, first suburbs far outpace the national figures for residents employed in so-called “white collar” management/professional and sales/office jobs. And the percentage of first suburban residents employed in “blue-collar” occupations in the service and production/transportation categories are lower than those in primary cities, newer suburbs, and the nation.

Additionally, home values in first suburbs are some of the highest in the nation. Since 1970, they have been one-third to one-half higher than the national average. In 2000, the average value of a house in first suburbs was \$207,000 while the national average was just over \$150,000. Similar trends exist for average rents. Yet because incomes are so high in first suburbs, the percent of households considered “burdened” (i.e., paying more than 35 percent of their incomes on rent) is lower than the national average.

So there is much to build on in first suburbs. Wealthier, educated places have significant advantages over other places. These places also tend to attract new residents. But this demand for housing, coupled with already high housing prices and rents could impact the affordability of first suburbs—especially for the elderly.

**5. But first suburbs are also unique in that overall poverty continues to grow as does the number of neighborhoods of high poverty. Widening racial disparities in education and income levels undercut some of the more positive trends in first suburbs.**

Despite the positive trends overall in first suburbs, many warning signs loom. For example, first suburban income did not grow during the 1990s, despite increases nationally and in the other parts of the metropolitan area.<sup>6</sup> Likewise, while poverty rates have generally been low in first suburbs they are increasing over the long term at the same time they are decreasing nationally. Equally disturbing is that while the number of high-poverty neighborhoods is dropping sharply in urban areas throughout the country, it is increasing at an alarming rate in first suburbs. Three quarters of the first suburbs saw an increase in the percentage of their census tracts with at least a 20 percent poverty rate from 1970 to 2000 (Figure 5).

But there are also stark racial divisions in first suburbs. For example, from 1980 to 2000 no first suburb saw declines in college attainment or high school graduation rates among whites, but drops for blacks, Hispanics, and Asians were common. And in terms of poverty rates, blacks

and Hispanics are two and three times more likely to be poor than whites. While these disparities are unfortunately evident throughout the nation, they are getting worse in first suburbs. The Hispanic poverty rate rose by 1.1 percentage points in first suburbs while it dropped by .9 percentage points nationally. And while the black and Asian poverty rates fell, they declined much faster nationally than they did in first suburbs.

The increases in high poverty neighborhoods in first suburbs went largely unnoticed in the 1990s, yet should serve as a wake-up call for many. Overall increases in poverty raise important questions about why the experiences of first suburbs are different from other places. And in some critical ways, it appears that the experience of today's minorities in first suburbs may not represent the same upward mobility transitions that it did for whites in earlier decades.

### ***B. Heterogeneity Among and Within First Suburbs***

First suburbs are distinctive because of the time they developed (several decades ago), where they developed (adjacent or very near center cities), and the changes they are experiencing. Although this analysis shows that there are a clear and compelling set of trends that set first suburbs apart from the cities they surround and the suburbs that surround them, there is also some variation among individual first suburbs—particularly across regions.<sup>7</sup>

For example, while first suburbs are more racially diverse than the nation, some first suburbs in the Midwest are highly homogenous and have very low percentages of the foreign born. High college attainment rates are almost exclusively concentrated in the Northeast. And at the same time homeownership rates are increasing, the six first suburbs in California all saw declines.

#### ***1. Like the larger trends nationally, the focus of first suburban population growth has shifted to the Sun Belt and Western states in recent decades. First suburbs in the Northeast and Midwest are almost exclusively slow, or no growth places.***

The population shifts this nation has experienced since 1950 are clearly evident in the first suburbs. In 1950, Los Angeles was the only first suburb ranked in the top 10 in population that was not located in the Northeast or Midwest. By 2000, six of the 10 most populous first suburbs were located outside these regions. More recent figures reinforce the stark regional differences, with the Sun Belt dominating growth in the last three decades and population loss occurring in some Rust Belt and Northeastern first suburbs. While 14 first suburbs grew by more than 50 percent since 1980, another 10 lost population during that time—all of these losses occurred in the Northeast and Midwest.

These trends show that while factors such as high income and education level may drive population growth in cities, those relationships in first suburbs are less clear. Northeastern first suburbs like Fairfield, CT; Nassau, NY; Westchester, NY; Bergen, NJ; and Norfolk, MA have high incomes and education levels but were among the slowest growing. Dade, FL and Hillsborough, FL have relatively low incomes but grew at high rates. And while California places like San Diego, Sacramento, and Orange have relatively high poverty rates they were also among the fastest growing first suburbs. Clearly, size does matter—first suburbs are, on average, much smaller and denser than other places. But additional analysis is needed in first suburbs to explore these trends.

#### ***2. First suburbs in the Midwest remain largely white and have not experienced large increases in minority or foreign-born residents in recent years, partly explaining their slow population growth.***

In 2000, all of the 31 first suburbs with the highest white population shares were located in the Northeast and Midwest. The top seven first suburbs on this measure all have white populations over 93 percent and are all located in Ohio, Pennsylvania, or Upstate New York.

Ohio and Pennsylvania's first suburbs also rank conspicuously low on the share of their population that is Hispanic. In 1980, only one of the 14 first suburbs in these states had a Hispanic share higher than one percent—Bucks, PA at 1.2 percent. By 2000, the Hispanic population in four of Pennsylvania's first suburbs climbed above 2 percent but all seven of Ohio's remained below (Table 1).

California's first suburbs dominate the list in terms of their Hispanic populations.

And despite an unprecedented wave of immigration in the U.S., six first suburbs actually lost foreign-born residents from 1970–2000. Three of the losses came in places with very small bases—but the losses in Cuyahoga, OH; Erie, NY; and Allegheny, PA are notable. Allegheny alone lost 12,140 foreign-born residents from 1970 to 2000.

**3. *First suburbs in the Midwest and Northeast are more likely to be home to higher proportions of older Americans and shrinking household size than first suburbs in the Sun Belt.***

By 2000, the first suburbs with the highest percentages of elderly population were located exclusively in slow-growing places in the Midwest. Of the five first suburbs with the largest percent of elderly population three—Allegheny, PA; Cuyahoga, OH; and Milwaukee, WI—also have the smallest average household size. On the other hand, five of the top six first suburbs with the lowest changes in household size since 1950 are in California, owing to the larger households maintained by their significant immigrant populations.

Part of the reason first suburbs in the Northeast and Midwest are aging is because their overall populations—including younger residents—are either declining or growing only modestly. Their older populations include those left behind while others migrated to different parts of the country.

**4. *In general, first suburbs in the Midwest and Northeast have higher shares of homeowners and an older housing stock than the rest of the nation, but home values vary widely.***

Every first suburb in California saw a drop in its homeownership rate since 1950 except Alameda where homeownership levels remained stagnant. These places did not start with a high rate to begin with and every one trailed the national rate in 2000. Across the continent however, only two Northeastern first suburbs (Camden, NJ and Monroe, NY) experienced homeownership declines since 1950. In 2000 only one of the top 25 first suburbs with the highest shares of homeowners (Jefferson, AL) was in the South or West.

Not surprisingly, there is a stark difference in the age of the housing stock between the regions. Of the 18 first suburbs with more than half of their existing housing stock built before 1960, only one (Arlington, VA) is in the South and none are in the West. By the same token, Burlington, NJ is the only Northeastern first suburb with less than the national average of pre-1960s housing stock.

In addition, the changes in housing values from 1970 to 2000 show wide differences not just between the regions but even within states. New Jersey, New York, California, and Pennsylvania each had first suburbs near the top and also near the bottom rank in real percent increase in home values. No first suburb saw a decline in real housing values but three in New York (Erie, Onondaga, and Monroe) and two in Ohio (Cuyahoga and Montgomery) experienced increases less than 33 percent. All of Ohio's first suburbs, in fact, saw increases less than the national average of 117.8 percent.

**5. *Politically, the counties containing first suburbs encompass many local governments with the most in the Northeast and Midwest.***

Ranking first suburban counties by their number of subcounty local governments in 2002 according to the Census of Governments helps illustrate the level of municipal fragmentation in these places. Examining all 289 counties with populations over 175,000 shows that the median number of subcounty governments for first suburbs (31) is twice that for other U.S. counties (14). In fact, only seven first suburbs have less than 14 subcounty governments. Conversely, only 39 other U.S. counties' number of subcounty governments is higher than the first suburb median. Individually, Cook, IL and Allegheny, PA have more governments than any county in the nation while St. Louis, MO and Los Angeles, CA are also in the top five.

But when the number of governments is related to a measure based on population (in this case, per 100,000 residents), the gap in median level of fragmentation between the U.S. and the first suburbs shrinks—but only slightly. The median ratio for the number of subcounty governments per 100,000 residents is 7.0 in first suburbs and 3.7 for the rest of the nation. Los Angeles, for example, goes from being ranked near the top in terms of the number of



**Table 1. Percentage of Population by Race/Ethnic Group, 2000. Top and Bottom Five First Suburbs**

Rank	First Suburb	White Share, 2000	Rank	First Suburb	Black Share, 2000
1	Berks, PA	95.1%	1	Prince George's, MD	62.2%
2	Lackawanna, PA	94.9%	2	Essex, NJ	34.2%
3	Stark, OH	94.0%	3	St. Clair, IL	28.6%
4	Summit, OH	93.9%	4	Fulton, GA	26.8%
5	Onondaga, NY	93.8%	5	Union, NJ	20.5%
	First Suburbs	66.6%		First Suburbs	9.3%
	Primary Cities	38.9%		Primary Cities	27.5%
	Newer Suburbs	79.0%		Newer Suburbs	8.2%
	United States	69.1%		United States	12.1%
60	Alameda, CA	46.8%	60	Lackawanna, PA	1.7%
61	Hudson, NJ	43.0%	61	Orange, CA	1.5%
62	Los Angeles, CA	31.8%	62	Hampden, MA	1.4%
63	Prince George's, MD	24.3%	63	Worcester, MA	1.3%
64	Dade, FL	22.4%	64	Berks, PA	1.3%
Rank	First Suburb	Hispanic Share, 2000	Rank	First Suburb	Asian Share, 2000
1	Dade, FL	55.7%	1	Alameda, CA	23.6%
2	Hudson, NJ	47.2%	2	San Mateo, CA	21.1%
3	Los Angeles, CA	44.0%	3	Middlesex, NJ	13.9%
4	Orange, CA	30.8%	4	Orange, CA	13.8%
5	San Diego, CA	27.7%	5	Los Angeles, CA	13.4%
	First Suburbs	15.7%		First Suburbs	6.1%
	Primary Cities	23.6%		Primary Cities	7.0%
	Newer Suburbs	7.9%		Newer Suburbs	3.0%
	United States	12.5%		United States	3.7%
60	Hamilton, OH	1.0%	60	Berks, PA	0.9%
61	Stark, OH	0.8%	61	Lackawanna, PA	0.8%
62	Trumbull, OH	0.8%	62	Stark, OH	0.6%
63	Allegheny, PA	0.7%	63	Madison, IL	0.6%
64	Summit, OH	0.7%	64	Trumbull, OH	0.5%

Source: Brookings analysis of Census 2000 data

subcounty governments to near the bottom when population is considered. In general, California's first suburbs rank comparatively very low while in others (mainly located in the Midwest) governmental fragmentation remains high.

Midwestern first suburbs, in particular, are characterized by excessive governmental fragmentation. These areas generally have dozens and dozens of local jurisdictions, each with their own land use, zoning, and taxation powers. This is significant for three reasons. First, it exacerbates sprawling development patterns as individual jurisdictions compete for favored commercial, industrial, and residential activities. Second, it means that many local suburban jurisdictions are very small in size. The capacity of these individual jurisdictions to grapple with the challenges identified above is, in many cases, severely limited. Finally, it represents a significant challenge for the organization of first suburban interests in a particular region and state.

## IV. Policy Implications

So what do these trends tell us? For one thing, first suburbs do indeed matter. First suburbs make up a significant portion of the national population and are places where many defining national issues play out.

Although in some important ways first suburbs are statistically similar to cities and newer suburbs, they need their own set of policy reforms to respond to their unique challenges and opportunities. It is critical for first suburbs to develop and articulate their own policy agenda so they can be well-positioned in national and state conversations about these larger issues.

This analysis also shows that, from a policy perspective, first suburbs as a whole may be hampered by their heterogeneity. The experiences of first suburbs in the Midwest are very different from those in the West and South, and likewise first suburbs in California are very different from those in Missouri and Ohio, for example. Yet national policy makers need to recognize these differences in order to develop comprehensive approaches that help first suburban and, ultimately, entire metropolitan areas.

The following policy framework is based on the trends and analysis found in this report. It also builds off prior Brookings work on first suburbs and consultations with leaders from healthy and stable, as well as stressed and declining, places. It presents five broad policy areas in the context of federal, state, and local policies for strengthening and sustaining first suburbs.

### *1. Address the special challenges of an elderly population*

The number of elderly residents in first suburbs increased nearly twice as fast as the nation as a whole from 1950 to 2000. So-called “non-families” (including the elderly living alone) are now the most prevalent household type in first suburbs. Those places with the highest percentage of elderly are concentrated in the slow growth Rust Belt. But in numeric terms first suburbs with the largest numbers of older Americans are in hot housing markets like the New York, Boston, Chicago, and Los Angeles metropolitan areas.

Despite their increasing prevalence in first suburbs, public policy discussions about the elderly rarely receive the attention they deserve. Experts contend that many assume that either elderly people need substantial government assistance and many publicly-provided services or they have no unmet needs and require little governmental attention. In fact, most older Americans lead complicated lives that rarely place them on either end of the spectrum. All but the most fortunate seniors will confront an array of constraints on their household budgets even as they continue to seek an active community life.<sup>8</sup>

What is more, millions of elderly first suburban residents are coping with the widening gap between stagnant incomes and appreciating housing prices. The affordability gap has been partially caused and greatly exacerbated by the recent withdrawal of federal investment and interest in affordable housing.

The aging of the population will require a continuum of housing responses ranging from helping seniors age in place to the production of new single-family home communities, service-enriched senior apartments, and continuing care retirement communities. This diverse housing demand will also require continuous innovation in financing instruments as well as significant advances in local land use and zoning.

On the local level, multi-use developments that include housing might allow older people to conduct their daily activities largely within their own apartment building or complex. If such developments are built near their first suburban homes, the elderly may be able to move from houses now too large into more appropriate apartments, remaining in their own neighborhood as they age. It will also require an unprecedented degree of cooperation and coordination between the housing, transportation, and health care sectors.

## *2. Pursue a coherent set of policies to meet the needs of the rising foreign-born population*

Almost 29 percent of America's foreign born live in first suburbs—up from 26 percent in 1970. And over 30 percent of the 21.5 million immigrants that came to this country from 1970 to 2000 settled in first suburbs. Individually, 15 first suburbs would have lost population if not for immigration during this time.

The enormous inflows of foreign-born residents are literally transforming many first suburban communities. While first suburbs in the longest-established immigrant gateways continue to experience large gains of these residents, other first suburbs that heretofore had very few immigrants are struggling with the widely-known challenges of accommodating these new residents: issues such as language barriers, education and health care challenges, and work-force supports.<sup>9</sup>

Yet in order for first suburbs to thrive in the new millennium, they must find ways to economically and socially integrate these immigrants, which is a longer term effort. Indeed, incorporating immigrant newcomers is a two-way process that both immigrants and receiving communities participate in together.

Unfortunately, there is not a coherent or explicit set of policies focusing on immigrant incorporation. Instead, the national debate centers on the big picture issues of national security, the protection of America's borders, and rules governing the flow (and illegal flow) of immigrants. What first suburbs need are local programs and policies to help deal with the myriad obligations of serving immigrant newcomers once they have arrived.

First suburbs need help to get beyond the national debate to address realities on the ground. They must craft approaches to respond sensitively to the changing composition of their communities, create a welcoming environment that helps immigrants succeed in these places, and cultivate an atmosphere where immigrants are perceived as contributors to the health and long term stability of first suburbs.

Such an effort includes a suite of approaches. First suburbs need to make sure that the delivery of services and public safety are not impeded by communication barriers. Providing information like relevant signage and basic details about local laws and services in the prevalent languages of immigrant groups go a long way to dismantling these barriers. At the same time, they also need to build the English language capacity of immigrants in schools and through adult language training. This will help immigrant youths and adults succeed in the workforce by enabling them to take advantage of key supports such as mainstream institutions and community colleges, which are increasingly playing an important role for immigrants.

Clearly, these approaches are difficult for first suburban jurisdictions to address individually. For that reason, the county level may be the best place to administer such activities. Even then, federal and state support will be needed to ensure first suburbs are able to conduct such efforts sufficiently. In December 2005, a bipartisan coalition of first suburban local leaders in the New York metropolitan area formed specifically to lobby for increased federal aid for costs related to a recent influx of immigrants.

### ***3. Create and sustain economically-integrated neighborhoods of choice***

While historically low, poverty rates in first suburbs have been steadily rising, despite a decrease nationally.<sup>10</sup> And although concentrated poverty is dropping sharply in urban areas throughout the country, it is increasing at an alarming rate in first suburbs. Research has shown that concentrated poverty can exact a considerable toll on families (e.g., lagging school performance, higher crime, loss of business activity, and civic capacity) and impose great public costs to taxpayers.<sup>11</sup>

To break the spatial concentrations of poverty, mixed-income housing policies in first suburbs are needed. It appears that while the mistakes of historical urban policies on affordable housing, transportation, and land use that segregated low-income populations are not likely to be repeated in cities, there is a potential to repeat those mistakes in first suburbs—albeit in less extreme forms.

Therefore, a range of policies are needed to provide choice and opportunity in first suburbs, perhaps by providing entry to neighborhoods that low-income households could not otherwise afford, or from which they might otherwise be excluded. The federal government's gradual expansion of Section 8 vouchers is one effort to provide renters with greater neighborhood choice. But in some first suburbs, Section 8 is may actually be leading to the concentration of poverty, partly in response to public housing demolition in the urban core. Therefore, federal steps that limit the clustering of Section 8 vouchers in first suburban neighborhoods are also important. Additionally, federal lawmakers should consider revisiting the low income housing tax credit statute in order to foster the development of more family units outside of poor minority neighborhoods.

For their part, states should allow first suburbs to develop inclusionary zoning programs on the county level to ensure that affordable housing is located throughout their metropolitan areas and not concentrated in just a few older communities. First suburbs in “hot” housing markets might also consider supplementing federal housing voucher funds to help their lower-income households access a broader range of neighborhoods.

Even if mixed-income development is not a “silver bullet” in addressing deep-rooted problems of poverty, there is little question that housing in economically-integrated communities can provide an important platform for addressing social and economic inequalities over the longer term.

But first suburbs and their residents also need supports beyond mixed-income housing to reverse the poverty trends. To that end, policies at the federal, state, and local levels need to help lower-income families overcome barriers to economic and social mobility and contribute to improved outcomes for the places they live. This includes expanding access to income supports. Recipients of the federal Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), for example, are often heavily concentrated in first suburbs, such as in New Jersey, Maryland, Georgia, Florida, and Michigan. Other income supports such as the Child Tax Credit, food stamps, and subsidized health insurance play a key role in bolstering family incomes and local economies. First suburban leaders can promote local and state policies that streamline access to these supports, and find common cause with urban and rural leaders whose constituents also derive important benefits from these programs.<sup>12</sup>

Along side these income-boosting initiatives, first suburban leaders need to curb market abuses that charge higher prices to low-income families for basic goods and services. Through regulation, targeted expenditures, and market innovations, leaders can lower these high costs for low-income families and boost their economic and social mobility.<sup>13</sup>

#### *4. Remake and renew the economic and physical landscape*

Incomes are not rising and, in fact, are declining in many first suburbs. At the same time, real estate market values are stagnating in some of these places as the housing stock ages.

First suburbs need tools and resources for both community revitalization and to help existing and new homeowners make home repairs, renovations and expand their homes in order to maintain neighborhood stability and property values and to ensure that the housing stock remains attractive and current with consumer demand.

Some recent policy innovations have emerged that offer this kind of tangible help to first suburbs. In May 2005 Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton introduced legislation to provide economic and tax incentives to revitalize first suburbs across the nation. The bill promotes investment in existing places with established infrastructure (including access to transit) to improve substandard, distressed, or underutilized real estate, and reinforce the physical fabric of suburban neighborhoods. The keystone is a \$250 million reinvestment fund designed to provide grants to first suburbs for smart growth-type initiatives.

On the state level, some places offer tax credits to redevelop older properties and for home improvements. But beyond that, states need to be committed to a policy of reinvestment that focuses on infill development. This includes not only incentives for reinvestment, but also the elimination of policies that disproportionately reward new development elsewhere.

For their part, first suburbs need to develop a series of infill guidelines and models that facilitate working with the private sector to redevelop certain neighborhoods. The Redevelopment Ready Communities (RRC) program in metropolitan Detroit is an innovative model for streamlining local administrative processes by removing barriers to redevelopment. Through a set of best practices and a certification system communities signal to the private market that they are prepared and have taken steps to accept redevelopment proposals. Coalitions of first suburban leaders are beginning to work closely with development councils that resemble the work of community development corporations (CDCs) which usually are not found in first suburbs. The First Suburbs Development Council in Cuyahoga and the Gateway Cities Partnership in Los Angeles are two important examples.

But beyond the nuts and bolts of redevelopment and reconstruction, first suburbs also need bold, new visions for how to remake their physical landscape.

First suburban infrastructure has the potential to provide the framework for metropolitan development patterns into the future. Yet because many first suburbs have infrastructure that suffers from age and limited maintenance, or was constructed in a fragmented fashion, that potential is often lost. At the same time, first suburban municipalities often compete with one another for prime development further undermining other parts of the physical landscape like shopping malls and commercial corridors.

These challenges require a new vision for first suburbs—a guide for what they can become—both holistically and in parts. Such a vision, of course, would vary from place to place depending on their own opportunities and challenges. But at minimum, first suburbs should focus on bold plans that preserve first suburban ideals of design and quality, centrality and convenience, infrastructure and networks.

In Nassau, NY, County Executive Tom Suozzi recently unveiled such a vision for a “new suburbia” focusing on strengthening traditional downtowns, brownfield remediation, and emphasizing emerging minority and immigrant neighborhoods. The plan envisions new affordable housing to retain young workers, preserving open space and parks, and reconnecting an extensive but disjointed transportation network. A commercial hub is also planned to accommodate certain types of large-scale development as well as greatly increased densities.<sup>14</sup>

While the county level is probably the most appropriate level for launching such a vision, a series of state policies and enabling laws must be put in place so efforts that span municipalities like overlay districts, corridor planning, and transit districts can be realized. States also help design the skeleton of regions through their investments in infrastructure. How and where these investments are made are paramount to first suburbs.



### 5. *Promote regional cohesion and collaboration*

Politically, the counties containing first suburbs hold many local governments with the most in the Northeast and Midwest. These areas generally have hundreds of local suburban jurisdictions each with their own land use, zoning, and taxation powers.

The high level of fragmentation among first suburbs creates competition among them, and may hinder their ability to grapple with challenges of a regional nature. Issues like transportation, housing, and economic development are very difficult for first suburbs to manage themselves. And the complexities of metropolitan growth and development—over which states continue to play a dominant role—do not necessarily respond to the needs of first suburbs because their interests are not well represented on the state level.

First suburbs need to change this paradigm and advocate for regional and statewide growth management and enhanced local land use planning. Several states, like Pennsylvania and New Jersey, have created incentives to encourage collaborative planning between municipalities without relinquishing local control. Other statewide land use plans as in Florida, Washington, Rhode Island, and Maryland articulate diverse sets of goals and guidelines that directly benefit places like first suburbs.

But in order to advocate for systemic change on the state level, first suburbs need to form their own coalitions to push for reforms regionally and in state capitals. Addressing necessary policy reforms will require first suburbs to operate more as a formal network of governments rather than as a fragmented collection of parochial jurisdictions. Many first suburbs have such coalitions—King, WA; Los Angeles, CA; Hennepin, MN; Wayne, MI; and others throughout Ohio—but most do not. Yet, if created, coalitions of first suburbs can wield enormous influence—aligning on some issues with the central city, on other issues with rapidly growing suburbs and rural areas.

Finally, counties are sometimes neglected units of government that have the potential to assist first suburbs, particularly in one-state metropolitan areas, by acting as submetropolitan regional entities. In the context of the county, the central city and first suburbs could potentially pursue common policies.

First suburban counties can also emphasize multi-municipal collaborations that support economic development and corridor restoration. Allegheny, PA helped broker the deal that enabled three tiny municipalities along the Monongahela River to redevelop an old U.S. Steel plant that crossed all three localities. The county's redevelopment authority helped organize a revenue sharing district so that these three places—each with their own tax rates, zoning codes, and planning commissions—all receive a portion of the property taxes generated by the project. They also established uniform planning and building code standards for the site and shared the cost of some of the roadway infrastructure.

## V. Conclusion

A recent survey of urban scholars ranked the deterioration of first suburbs as one of the most likely influences on metropolitan America for the next 50 years.<sup>15</sup> And although there is a common experience among many first suburbs, it is generally not recognized or voiced on the national level. Yet creating policies tailored to the needs of first suburbs is critical for a real metropolitan reform agenda that aims to change growth patterns, promote reinvestment in core communities, and increase opportunities and incomes for low-income working families.

In many metropolitan areas, first suburbs may now be uniquely positioned to exert a positive influence on a range of policy issues. It is our hope that through this work a national discussion will flourish around these special places. As it stands, a new century demands a new vision for first suburbs so they can remain quality communities, compete with newer suburbs, and realize their economic and physical potential.



### Appendix 1: Change in Select Statistics for First Suburbs

First Suburb	Percent Change in Population, 1950–2000	Percentage Point Change in Share of Population Other than Non-Hispanic White, 1980–2000	Percent Change in Foreign Born Population, 1970–2000	Percent Change in Population Age 65 and Over, 1950–2000	Percent Change in Population Under Age 15, 1970–2000	Percentage Point Change in BA rate, 1970–2000	Percent Real Housing Value Increase, 1970–2000	Percent Real Income Growth, 1980–2000
Alameda, CA	289.2%	27.4%	621.8%	471.2%	18.4%	22.5%	207.8%	27.4%
Allegheny, PA	13.0%	4.4%	-29.2%	179.9%	-38.8%	16.7%	44.0%	-8.4%
Arlington, VA	39.9%	18.4%	366.5%	228.4%	-19.0%	29.9%	93.8%	27.3%
Baltimore, MD	179.1%	16.0%	221.3%	624.6%	-13.6%	17.6%	91.0%	2.5%
Bergen, NJ	64.0%	17.8%	142.8%	234.9%	-25.1%	22.2%	128.2%	17.9%
Berks, PA	99.7%	3.3%	85.6%	261.8%	4.0%	13.1%	115.5%	12.4%
Bucks, PA	313.3%	4.2%	156.6%	518.6%	-3.1%	19.0%	131.1%	18.5%
Burlington, NJ	211.5%	7.1%	119.7%	421.8%	-7.6%	15.6%	93.5%	21.1%
Camden, NJ	143.5%	12.6%	120.2%	303.4%	-10.3%	14.9%	67.8%	13.9%
Cook, IL	179.4%	21.1%	256.1%	421.3%	-14.3%	14.9%	68.5%	-2.2%
Cuyahoga, OH	92.9%	8.5%	-2.2%	330.4%	-31.5%	15.1%	32.9%	-4.9%
Dade, FL	669.3%	31.4%	480.6%	1342.7%	75.0%	10.9%	71.2%	0.2%
Dallas, TX	471.3%	32.6%	3158.2%	708.1%	60.8%	10.4%	46.9%	1.5%
Delaware, PA	33.0%	9.7%	36.1%	197.8%	-29.6%	15.7%	81.0%	9.5%
Erie, NY	106.1%	3.2%	-7.2%	401.7%	-34.5%	14.3%	33.5%	-1.4%
Essex, NJ	11.3%	21.3%	102.2%	60.4%	-11.0%	18.8%	129.5%	19.8%
Fairfield, CT	115.0%	9.6%	121.0%	239.8%	-10.4%	23.2%	153.8%	24.0%
Franklin, OH	180.4%	7.0%	212.1%	334.7%	-10.6%	16.7%	68.1%	11.1%
Fulton, GA	151.6%	25.5%	5240.3%	292.2%	205.1%	27.2%	96.8%	20.9%
Hamilton, OH	140.3%	6.3%	88.2%	364.7%	-23.6%	16.3%	62.7%	0.4%
Hampden, MA	48.0%	8.2%	6.7%	164.8%	-25.0%	12.3%	86.4%	8.8%
Harris, TX	587.3%	25.5%	2842.6%	990.9%	127.3%	12.3%	59.4%	-10.2%
Hartford, CT	103.1%	11.9%	46.7%	294.2%	-20.4%	17.3%	58.0%	10.9%
Hennepin, MN	373.7%	9.6%	349.4%	908.8%	-10.9%	20.2%	63.7%	6.9%
Hillsborough, FL	455.5%	16.9%	1354.0%	805.8%	136.7%	15.6%	111.9%	13.9%
Hudson, NJ	5.9%	22.1%	96.2%	68.2%	-16.7%	18.2%	395.6%	18.5%
Jefferson, AL	80.0%	5.3%	442.3%	364.9%	-12.7%	16.0%	96.4%	4.4%
King, WA	342.2%	16.8%	565.7%	498.7%	24.7%	17.5%	146.7%	5.8%
Lackawanna, PA	3.8%	4.3%	-53.3%	134.3%	-20.7%	15.9%	187.3%	4.7%
Lake, IN	63.0%	11.2%	38.3%	303.7%	-29.3%	11.1%	63.4%	-11.6%
Lehigh/Northampton, PA	90.7%	4.4%	86.2%	251.6%	2.8%	15.7%	124.2%	9.1%
Los Angeles, CA	177.8%	23.3%	421.1%	230.3%	22.5%	12.3%	140.5%	6.9%
Macomb, MI	326.1%	4.9%	69.5%	1130.0%	-25.5%	10.3%	50.9%	-5.4%
Madison, IL	42.0%	3.3%	-4.2%	159.2%	-26.5%	12.1%	52.0%	-0.7%
Maricopa, AZ	678.4%	10.4%	1235.1%	2066.5%	236.5%	13.4%	120.6%	16.8%
Marion, IN	-36.9%	11.3%	432.7%	28.8%	38.2%	15.5%	91.9%	5.9%
Middlesex, MA	44.5%	11.0%	78.9%	94.1%	-27.4%	25.3%	203.7%	28.5%
Middlesex, NJ	183.2%	24.0%	331.8%	433.1%	-12.0%	21.6%	80.0%	17.4%
Milwaukee, WI	46.9%	6.2%	27.6%	263.8%	-33.9%	14.6%	42.4%	-3.8%
Monroe, NY	232.3%	5.1%	55.2%	508.9%	-17.1%	15.6%	14.9%	-2.7%

### Appendix 1: Change in Select Statistics for First Suburbs (continued)

First Suburb	Percent Change in Population, 1950–2000	Percentage Point Change in Share of Population Other than Non-Hispanic White, 1980–2000	Percent Change in Foreign Born Population, 1970–2000	Percent Change in Population Age 65 and Over, 1950–2000	Percent Change in Population Under Age 15, 1970–2000	Percentage Point Change in BA rate, 1970–2000	Percent Real Housing Value Increase, 1970–2000	Percent Real Income Growth, 1980–2000
Montgomery, MD	431.2%	23.1%	587.3%	966.7%	23.0%	20.8%	77.9%	7.7%
Montgomery, OH	154.2%	7.5%	82.5%	491.3%	-27.2%	11.6%	31.5%	-3.6%
Montgomery, PA	112.5%	7.7%	82.7%	261.0%	-10.1%	21.0%	91.7%	17.9%
Nassau, NY	98.4%	14.7%	108.5%	398.3%	-28.8%	18.0%	119.0%	20.4%
New Haven, CT	83.7%	10.4%	35.3%	219.1%	-14.6%	16.0%	80.0%	15.1%
Norfolk, MA	65.8%	9.0%	78.2%	144.3%	-24.2%	24.6%	170.3%	26.5%
Oakland, MI	201.6%	10.8%	121.3%	548.2%	-8.7%	21.5%	91.2%	6.8%
Onondaga, NY	156.8%	3.2%	45.3%	338.9%	-24.6%	14.7%	30.1%	3.2%
Orange, CA	1216.4%	26.9%	921.6%	1237.4%	53.5%	14.8%	171.0%	13.8%
Pierce, WA	283.7%	8.5%	210.6%	447.6%	70.0%	9.5%	115.7%	13.4%
Prince George's, MD	312.8%	33.3%	359.8%	704.1%	-10.2%	9.6%	46.4%	7.5%
Providence, RI	37.3%	11.4%	57.0%	150.6%	-16.7%	13.1%	108.5%	9.9%
Sacramento, CA	485.0%	18.0%	783.3%	1064.5%	65.7%	10.3%	100.5%	9.1%
San Diego, CA	615.1%	18.9%	657.0%	994.3%	106.3%	13.2%	177.4%	18.4%
San Mateo, CA	200.1%	21.0%	310.2%	497.0%	-4.0%	21.5%	280.3%	33.0%
St. Clair, IL	24.3%	3.7%	58.4%	107.3%	-31.5%	12.6%	62.0%	6.3%
St. Louis, MO	150.1%	10.9%	102.9%	406.8%	-23.9%	19.0%	67.5%	-0.2%
Stark, OH	78.8%	1.7%	5.4%	231.6%	-22.1%	11.7%	70.9%	-7.6%
Summit, OH	140.6%	3.5%	26.5%	446.1%	-19.5%	17.3%	61.7%	3.2%
Trumbull, OH	41.7%	3.1%	-47.6%	198.0%	-33.5%	7.8%	38.9%	-14.2%
Union, NJ	40.9%	17.5%	111.6%	203.0%	-22.9%	16.8%	95.0%	15.5%
Wayne, MI	89.5%	7.2%	22.4%	405.5%	-32.7%	12.0%	54.4%	-6.6%
Westchester, NY	53.8%	13.4%	103.0%	151.7%	-12.8%	20.4%	152.4%	25.8%
Worcester, MA	68.7%	5.9%	12.1%	117.2%	-2.1%	19.1%	162.4%	24.5%
<b>First Suburbs</b>	<b>161.3%</b>	<b>17.0%</b>	<b>263.7%</b>	<b>341.7%</b>	<b>1.7%</b>	<b>16.1%</b>	<b>101.5%</b>	<b>7.7%</b>
<b>Primary Cities</b>	<b>5.3%</b>	<b>15.8%</b>	<b>138.1%</b>	<b>44.3%</b>	<b>-13.1%</b>	<b>15.4%</b>	<b>171.7%</b>	<b>9.5%</b>
<b>Newer Suburbs</b>	<b>75.1%</b>	<b>10.8%</b>	<b>208.2%</b>	<b>131.1%</b>	<b>32.5%</b>	<b>17.0%</b>	<b>115.2%</b>	<b>15.5%</b>
<b>United States</b>	<b>86.0%</b>	<b>10.4%</b>	<b>223.4%</b>	<b>185.2%</b>	<b>4.1%</b>	<b>13.7%</b>	<b>117.8%</b>	<b>9.9%</b>

\*Newer Suburb data is from 1970–2000

Source: Brookings analysis of Census 2000 data



## Appendix 2: Select Statistics for First Suburbs, 2000

First Suburb	Population	Percent Population other than non-Hispanic White	Percent Foreign Born	Population Age 65 and Over	Population Under Age 15	BA rate	Average Housing Value	Median Household Income
Alameda, CA	941,514	53.2%	28.2%	10.1%	21.5%	33.5%	\$343,012	\$64,672
Allegheny, PA	947,103	10.2%	3.1%	18.3%	18.8%	29.0%	\$112,026	\$42,047
Arlington, VA	189,453	39.6%	27.8%	9.4%	14.1%	60.2%	\$265,052	\$63,252
Baltimore, MD	754,292	26.6%	7.1%	14.6%	19.6%	30.6%	\$161,517	\$50,704
Bergen, NJ	884,118	27.7%	25.1%	15.2%	19.3%	38.2%	\$299,223	\$64,913
Berks, PA	292,431	4.9%	2.6%	15.8%	19.0%	20.8%	\$131,758	\$50,517
Bucks, PA	597,635	8.9%	5.9%	12.4%	21.3%	31.2%	\$193,755	\$59,725
Burlington, NJ	423,394	23.7%	6.3%	12.6%	21.0%	28.4%	\$158,186	\$58,688
Camden, NJ	429,028	20.9%	6.6%	13.4%	21.0%	26.8%	\$133,181	\$52,597
Cook, IL	2,480,725	33.4%	17.6%	13.4%	21.4%	30.9%	\$202,994	\$54,952
Cuyahoga, OH	915,575	19.9%	7.4%	17.2%	19.1%	31.5%	\$157,696	\$47,185
Dade, FL	1,890,892	77.6%	49.3%	12.6%	21.1%	22.8%	\$152,484	\$38,818
Dallas, TX	1,030,319	44.4%	16.8%	7.4%	24.7%	26.1%	\$126,054	\$51,414
Delaware, PA	550,864	20.4%	6.7%	15.6%	20.6%	30.0%	\$155,857	\$50,104
Erie, NY	657,617	6.3%	4.6%	17.0%	19.2%	27.1%	\$112,289	\$46,243
Essex, NJ	520,087	50.1%	19.6%	13.3%	21.3%	36.2%	\$263,794	\$56,307
Fairfield, CT	743,038	19.0%	16.2%	13.6%	21.5%	44.4%	\$395,651	\$72,885
Franklin, OH	357,508	10.6%	4.7%	11.5%	22.3%	37.0%	\$174,810	\$56,484
Fulton, GA	399,532	40.0%	12.8%	7.1%	22.5%	48.4%	\$248,738	\$61,997
Hamilton, OH	514,018	14.8%	3.1%	14.2%	21.8%	30.7%	\$155,946	\$51,095
Hampden, MA	304,146	12.8%	6.9%	15.6%	20.2%	22.7%	\$143,270	\$44,189
Harris, TX	1,446,947	42.6%	16.6%	6.1%	25.8%	26.9%	\$120,951	\$53,413
Hartford, CT	735,605	17.9%	10.6%	15.5%	19.8%	32.0%	\$170,726	\$55,425
Hennepin, MN	733,582	12.5%	7.5%	11.9%	20.8%	39.9%	\$192,873	\$60,322
Hillsborough, FL	695,501	31.3%	11.2%	11.7%	21.5%	25.0%	\$116,488	\$43,675
Hudson, NJ	368,920	57.0%	41.5%	12.4%	17.7%	24.0%	\$199,932	\$41,609
Jefferson, AL	419,227	23.0%	2.5%	13.7%	20.3%	28.0%	\$141,134	\$44,555
King, WA	1,173,660	23.9%	14.8%	9.7%	21.5%	36.1%	\$265,360	\$57,802
Lackawanna, PA	136,880	5.1%	1.8%	19.1%	18.2%	21.7%	\$120,967	\$32,786
Lake, IN	381,818	25.8%	6.3%	13.1%	21.4%	17.7%	\$124,370	\$45,879
Lehigh/Northampton, PA	401,195	6.9%	4.2%	15.6%	19.6%	23.8%	\$146,553	\$50,277
Los Angeles, CA	5,362,996	68.2%	33.6%	9.8%	24.4%	24.5%	\$263,514	\$47,424
Macomb, MI	788,149	8.4%	8.8%	13.7%	20.2%	17.6%	\$149,063	\$52,433
Madison, IL	258,941	10.7%	1.3%	14.3%	20.5%	19.2%	\$93,049	\$41,680
Maricopa, AZ	1,751,104	25.9%	10.5%	14.4%	21.5%	28.1%	\$165,300	\$48,285
Marion, IN	78,584	17.5%	4.3%	12.3%	22.8%	25.4%	\$122,908	\$45,001
Middlesex, MA	1,364,041	15.0%	14.5%	13.1%	19.6%	42.1%	\$291,326	\$61,658
Middlesex, NJ	750,162	38.1%	24.2%	12.3%	19.9%	33.0%	\$183,934	\$61,408
Milwaukee, WI	343,190	8.9%	5.1%	16.5%	18.3%	31.4%	\$149,198	\$49,188
Monroe, NY	515,570	9.0%	7.3%	14.3%	20.2%	35.4%	\$129,214	\$53,921
Montgomery, MD	873,341	40.5%	26.7%	11.2%	21.4%	54.6%	\$269,156	\$71,475
Montgomery, OH	392,883	14.3%	2.7%	14.4%	20.4%	26.0%	\$128,661	\$45,932
Montgomery, PA	750,097	14.7%	7.0%	14.9%	20.2%	38.7%	\$200,102	\$60,868
Nassau, NY	1,334,544	26.0%	17.9%	15.0%	20.7%	35.4%	\$301,654	\$71,875
New Haven, CT	700,382	18.3%	8.6%	15.2%	20.4%	27.7%	\$176,354	\$52,449
Norfolk, MA	650,308	12.1%	11.8%	14.4%	19.8%	42.9%	\$286,638	\$63,358

**Appendix 2: Select Statistics for First Suburbs, 2000 (continued)**

First Suburb	Population	Percent Population other than non-Hispanic White	Percent Foreign Born	Population Age 65 and Over	Population Under Age 15	BA rate	Average Housing Value	Median Household Income
Oakland, MI	1,194,156	18.6%	10.0%	11.3%	21.1%	38.2%	\$217,250	\$61,991
Onondaga, NY	311,030	6.2%	4.7%	14.3%	21.6%	30.6%	\$108,312	\$49,588
Orange, CA	2,846,289	48.7%	29.9%	9.9%	22.9%	30.8%	\$305,693	\$58,903
Pierce, WA	507,264	20.3%	6.6%	9.6%	23.1%	20.8%	\$175,129	\$48,554
Prince George's, MD	801,515	75.7%	13.8%	7.7%	22.7%	27.2%	\$155,730	\$55,222
Providence, RI	447,984	15.4%	11.8%	16.2%	19.4%	20.3%	\$140,737	\$40,707
Sacramento, CA	816,481	33.7%	14.0%	11.0%	23.3%	25.2%	\$171,589	\$47,739
San Diego, CA	1,590,433	40.6%	18.4%	11.7%	22.7%	25.2%	\$255,938	\$48,271
San Mateo, CA	707,161	50.2%	32.3%	12.5%	19.3%	39.0%	\$539,066	\$70,583
St. Clair, IL	256,082	33.2%	2.1%	13.2%	22.9%	19.3%	\$90,074	\$39,111
St. Louis, MO	1,016,315	24.0%	4.2%	14.1%	20.8%	35.4%	\$157,343	\$50,554
Stark, OH	297,292	6.0%	1.8%	15.3%	20.0%	19.5%	\$127,612	\$43,102
Summit, OH	325,825	6.1%	3.3%	14.5%	20.5%	29.6%	\$155,556	\$51,449
Trumbull, OH	225,116	10.3%	1.8%	15.7%	20.1%	14.5%	\$97,962	\$38,351
Union, NJ	401,973	37.6%	19.4%	14.9%	20.7%	33.0%	\$241,661	\$62,723
Wayne, MI	1,109,892	16.3%	8.3%	13.5%	21.4%	22.0%	\$149,030	\$50,709
Westchester, NY	727,373	32.3%	21.1%	13.7%	21.4%	45.1%	\$386,805	\$70,894
Worcester, MA	578,315	8.9%	5.9%	12.7%	22.0%	27.9%	\$177,173	\$52,018
<b>First Suburbs</b>	<b>52,391,412</b>	<b>33.4%</b>	<b>17.1%</b>	<b>12.5%</b>	<b>21.5%</b>	<b>30.6%</b>	<b>\$206,728</b>	<b>\$52,885</b>
<b>Primary Cities</b>	<b>36,300,693</b>	<b>61.1%</b>	<b>23.8%</b>	<b>11.1%</b>	<b>21.3%</b>	<b>26.1%</b>	<b>\$186,946</b>	<b>\$36,349</b>
<b>Newer Suburbs</b>	<b>40,357,944</b>	<b>21.0%</b>	<b>9.6%</b>	<b>11.7%</b>	<b>21.8%</b>	<b>28.3%</b>	<b>\$173,011</b>	<b>\$52,177</b>
<b>United States</b>	<b>281,421,906</b>	<b>30.9%</b>	<b>11.1%</b>	<b>12.4%</b>	<b>21.4%</b>	<b>24.4%</b>	<b>\$151,910</b>	<b>\$41,994</b>

Source: Brookings analysis of Census 2000 data



## Endnotes

1. See e.g., William H. Lucy and David L. Phillips, "Suburbs: Patterns of Growth and Decline." in *Redefining Urban & Suburban America: Evidence from Census 2000*, Vol. I. B. Katz and R. Lang, eds. (Washington: Brookings Institution, 2003); Thomas Bier and Charlie Post. "Vacating the City: An Analysis of New Homes vs. Household Growth." Brookings, 2003; and Robert Puentes and Myron Orfield, "Valuing America's First Suburbs; A Policy Agenda for Older Suburbs in the Midwest." Brookings, 2002.
2. Dade County was formerly renamed Miami-Dade County in 1997 after being approved by voters.
3. Northampton and Lehigh counties are combined for our study since parts of the city of Bethlehem is located in both counties.
4. The boundaries of these places are not held constant over time. Changes, especially due to annexation, were common in some places.
5. The 2000 metropolitan area definitions were used here.
6. Paul A. Jargowsky, "Stunning Progress, Hidden Problems: The Dramatic Decline of Concentrated Poverty in the 1990s." In A. Berube, B. Katz, and R. Lang, eds., *Redefining Urban and Suburban America: Evidence from Census 2000*, Vol. II (Washington: Brookings Institution, 2005).
7. As this analysis uses an admittedly coarse level of geography—the county level—it is also important to remember that within first suburbs tremendous variation remains. For example, within Cook County, IL demographic and economic information is very different in Winnetka (one of the most affluent places in the nation) than it is in Robbins (one of the poorest).
8. Sandra Rosenbloom, "The Mobility Needs of Older Americans: Implications for transportation Reauthorization," in *Taking the High Road: A Metropolitan Agenda for Transportation Reform*, B. Katz and R. Puentes, eds. (Washington: Brookings, 2005).
9. Audrey Singer, "The Rise of New Immigrant Gateways: Historic Flows, Recent Settlement Trends." In *Redefining Urban and Suburban America*.
10. It is important to note that the national poverty rate has risen since 2000.
11. Alan Berube and Bruce Katz, "Katrina's Window: Confronting Concentrated Poverty Across America" (Washington: Brookings Institution, 2005).
12. See Brookings Metro Program research series on the Earned Income Tax Credit at <http://www.brookings.edu/metro/eitc.htm>.
13. Matthew Fellowes and Bruce Katz, "The Price Is Wrong: Getting the Market Right for Working Families in Philadelphia," Brookings, 2005.
14. Bruce Lambert, "Rethinking the Nation's First Suburb," *New York Times*, Section, 14L1, page 1, December 25, 2005.
15. Robert Fishman, "The American Metropolis at Century's End: Past and Future Influences." *Housing Policy Debate*. Vol. 11 Number 1: 199–213, 2000.

### **Acknowledgments**

The Brookings Institution Metropolitan Policy Program would like to thank The Ford Foundation for their support of our work on the challenges and opportunities in America's first suburbs. Brookings also wishes to thank the Fannie Mae Foundation, The George Gund Foundation, the Heinz Endowments, The Joyce Foundation, The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, and the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation for their support of our work on metropolitan trends.

Many individuals provided very valuable review and important comments at various points throughout the course of this work. We especially wish to thank Tom Bier, Christy Brennan, Anthony Downs, Kimberly Gibson, Damon Jones, William Lucy, Myron Orfield, Janet Pack, and Barry Seymour.

Final responsibility for this project rest with the Brookings research team, which consisted of Robert Puentes and David Warren, with support from Alan Berube, Matthew Fellowes, William Frey, David Jackson, Bruce Katz, Amy Liu, Mark Muro, David Park, Audrey Singer, and Jennifer Vey.

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