



American Dreamscape: The Pursuit of Happiness in Postwar Suburbia

Tom Martinson

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Filmmakers, novelists, social critics, environmentalists - they all decry suburbia, and the myths of mindless conformity uncontrolled sprawl, decentralisation, and cultural blight continue to grow. But so do the suburbs. In a phenomenon unparalleled in the social history of modern, postwar America, more than 138,000,000 Americans-the majority of our national population-now live in suburbs; for the most part, happily. And Tom Martinson, a city planner whose fieldwork for this book has taken him to more than a hundred communities throughout the United States, has discovered why. Whereas recent titles have attracted media attention for their indictments of suburbia as an American nightmare, this lucid, incisive volume displays conclusively that the suburbs, which are no less various than they are ubiquitous, defy the stereotypes of urbanist critics. Separating biases that characterise suburban communities as vacuous, wasteful, centreless places from their actuality, Martinson traces the evolution of suburbs over the past two centuries, examines the values that challenge and unsettle the urbanists, investigates charges that government unfairly favours suburbs over cities, and considers possibilities for the future development of suburbia. Martinson knows the issues, and asks some billion-dollar questions. He also has illuminating answers as well as copious elucidating photographs of suburbs across the country to support them, as with vision, wit, and historical perspective he surveys the wars on one of Americas premier cultural battleground.

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