

11:35 – 11:45 **Sustainability Partner, ENVIRON, On Livability Here and Abroad**

Thomas V. Fusillo, Managing Principal, ENVIRON

Mr. Fusillo spoke on the many different resources/needs that make up a community. These include, but are not limited to, cultural and social resources, safety, and environment - all of which are part of any brownfield project. Brownfield projects have evolved into:

- Livable communities that are sustainable;
- Living areas with sustainable energy, which is a plus for the environment, and;
- Living areas that promote a sense of belonging.

11:45 – 12:25 **Keynote Speaker, The Suburbs Are Dying, So Let's Create a New American Dream**

Leigh Gallagher, Author, *The End of the Suburbs: Where the American Dream is Moving*, and Assistant Managing Editor at Fortune Magazine

Ms. Gallagher discussed the research and findings behind her book, *The End of the Suburbs: Where the American Dream is Moving*. Gone are the days of the binary community choice between “city” and “suburb.” Now, a third option is flourishing across the nation: “urban burbs.” Americans are opting out of traditional, cul-de-sac-filled suburban communities and instead choosing to live in those that are walkable and have access to amenities.

Ms. Gallagher spoke of the why, ways, and means behind the rise of downtowns and the rise of community. For the first time since the 1990's, city growth was larger than that of suburbs. The question posed is: Is this the end of the suburbs that we know of? At the time suburbs were born, they were a great idea; however, a number of factors have attributed to the migration back to cities and downtowns. There is a lack of social interaction with neighbors within the suburbs and a lack of convenient access to amenities. To try to respond to this non-social interaction and the physical distance between houses, some suburban communities have instituted “Trunk and Treat” Halloween events, where children Trick or Treat amongst parked cars. Other factors encouraging moves back to cities include traffic and commutes in excess of 90 minutes.

If you do an internet search on “Suburbia is” the following may pop-up: “hell, dead, boring, should be bulldozed.” The demographic is changing and more young adults are moving to and/or staying in cities and downtowns. One attraction is the ease with which you can “meet your neighbors” in an urban streetscape. Also, there is a premium on “walkability.” Realtors are catching on to the walkability theme by including information from websites such as Walk Score, where an area is given a score on how walkable/accessible it is. The New York Times refers to this trend in downtown, city living as “Hipsturbia,” mixing historical areas with residential and commercial communities. The influence of arts and culture also seems to be a factor in this “Hipsturbia” trend.

Changes developers have been trending toward for downtown areas are to revitalize the residential community. Developers are steering away from revamping malls, and instead are providing condos and lofts in mixed use downtown settings. For example, Toll Brothers, once primarily known for their single-family suburban mega-homes, has trended toward city projects to where over 50% of their business is now in cities and downtown settings. Retailers are also adjusting by having smaller storefronts. This allows for retailer occupancy of smaller, city spaces while providing the feeling of smaller boutiques and a more personalized shopping experience. Corporations are also joining the movement. Many are finding that there is not enough personnel talent in suburbia, and that there is a need to move back to the cities to fill their hiring/workforce needs. They're either opening smaller downtown offices, or undertaking complete corporate relocations, which are often incentivized by cities offering long term tax incentives.

During the question and answer session, discussion focused on whether this a short term trend influenced by younger adults getting married and having kids later in life coupled by the large college debt many are carrying. Will the young adults flock back to the suburbs once they have school-age children? Maybe, but for now the focus is on cities. Suburbs, as we know them, are going out of fashion. Instead, another landscape is emerging – communities with walkable downtowns and access to amenities.