In May 1958 the Area Development Council of the Long Island Association sponsored publication of “Long Island Looks to the Future,” a twenty-page supplement to the Sunday edition of the New York Herald Tribune. This promotional tract was intended to present “the case for Long Island,” not only as a place of residence and recreation but as a site for business. Advertisements in the supplement pointed out why any “business or industry [would] profit by a Long Island location,” and the lead article lauded “the almost fantastic growth of Long Island’s commerce,” which made Nassau and Suffolk Counties “just about the most sought-after piece of real estate outside of . . . Manhattan.” Yet the boosterish supplement did not neglect traditional suburban advantages, heaping lavish praise on the home life and leisure activities of the two counties. An advertisement for Nassau proclaimed that county “a better place than ever to live, work and play,” with “gracious living” as well as great attractions for business. Throughout the supplement the prevailing theme was the advantages of balanced development. According to their promoters, Nassau and Suffolk offered a balance between the traditional suburban virtues of domesticity and leisure and the more urban assets of jobs and profits. “It’s Fast-Growing in Industry, and Wonderful for Recreation” announced the headline in one article, and another said of Long Islanders of the late 1950s, “Working Near Home Gives Them More Leisurely Life.”

An ideal mix of work and leisure was what Nassau and Suffolk purportedly offered.

The Herald Tribune supplement of 1958 was, in fact, a proclamation of the revised suburban ideal of the postwar decades. Whereas the theme of escaping to country villages dominated the sales pitch of suburban promoters of the prewar era, by the late 1950s many believed that the ideal suburb had to be more than a haven and refuge. It needed to offer a balanced way of life, including home, recreation, and work. During the decade and a half following World
War II, retailing and manufacturing moved to suburbia as did millions of home buyers, and "Long Island Looks to the Future" not only accepted this wave of commercialization but embraced it enthusiastically. Though still satellites, Nassau and Suffolk seemed on their way to becoming hubs. But unlike the traditional hubs of New York City, Boston, or Chicago, they supposedly would achieve an enviable balance, combining the best of the urban and the suburban. Manufacturing plants would produce handsome tax revenues but not billows of smoke, stores would offer convenience but not foster congestion, and everyone would be able to enjoy their backyard patios just minutes away from their places of work. The ideal of the suburban retreat survived, but by the late 1950s it was increasingly tempered by a belief that commerce and industry were potential friends rather than foes. Through planning and proper development, these urban elements would not destroy suburbia but enhance it.

Just as suburban leaders increasingly sought a balance between home and commerce, so they also continued to struggle for the correct combination of centralized and decentralized rule. During the fifteen years following World War II village governments proliferated along the metropolitan fringe as more communities sought the advantages of municipal autonomy. The ideal of grassroots rule remained very much alive, and many refugees from the big city valued their small-scale governments as much as they did their crabgrass-free lawns. Both were symbols of the good life on the fringe. But at the same time practical necessity seemed to dictate the creation of some overarching authority to coordinate the mass of suburban polities. Village government remained a key element of the suburban dream but enhanced county authority was deemed necessary to check the forces of fragmentation that threatened to run amuck. Throughout the nation suburbanites were adapting their forms of government and strengthening county rule just as Russel Sprague and his Long Island disciples had done a few decades earlier. In the postwar era these compromises in the structure of government were as much a part of the metropolitan scene as was the emerging compromise between residence and business.

Both the forces of centralization and commerce were, then, compelling suburbanites to deviate from the traditional suburban ideal and to adopt a way of life closer to that of the big city from which they had escaped. Yet the appeal of village rule and the dream of the residential refuge remained powerful, and during the postwar decades commercial promoters and political centralizers could only go so far before angry suburbanites applied the brakes. The result was a delicate balance between suburban and urban, a balance that eventually would become a leading characteristic of the post-suburban world of the late twentieth century. This emerging post-suburban pattern was alien both to the
nation's big cities and to the outlying upper-middle-class havens of the prewar era. But as early as the 1950s signs were already indicating the direction of future post-suburban development.

The emerging pattern was so unprecedented that it lacked a name, and in the late 1950s some struggled to apply an appropriate label to the new phenomenon. Recognizing that their retailing hub was neither exactly urban nor suburban, the developers of a giant Long Island shopping center invented the term *co-urban* to describe the novel hybrid. Moreover, they labeled the increasing number of noncommuting suburbanites who lived, worked, and shopped in Nassau and Suffolk Counties as *co-urbanites.* This was a pioneering attempt to name the strange new world on the metropolitan fringe, but the label would not survive. *Technoburb* and *edge city* would eventually supplant *co-urban,* but the shopping center developers were perceptive enough to realize the change that was occurring. Already Nassau, Suffolk, Oakland, and Saint Louis Counties seemed less deserving of the title *suburban.*

**Creating a Co-Urban America**

The period 1945 to 1960 was the heyday of suburbanization in the United States. Outward migration proceeded at an unprecedented rate, and ranch and split-level dwellings spread across the countryside to house the millions of Americans drawn to suburbia. Magazine articles and books analyzed this centrifugal wave of population, and many commentators derided the bland homogeneity supposedly bred by the new suburban developments and the rape of nature that accompanied the construction of endless rows of outlying homes. In the minds of some observers, suburbanites were a shallow-minded horde of conformists who valued the look-alike tract house, the station wagon, and the television set above all else, and who threatened the very foundations of urban civilization. Millions of Americans, however, viewed the new homes along the metropolitan fringe as a dream come true. For them a three-bedroom house on a quarter-acre lot was not a symbol of decline but a sign of success. It represented the good life. No matter whether one believed suburbia was good or evil, no one could deny that it was attracting an increasing share of the American population. During the postwar era, the metropolitan periphery was clearly assuming a new significance in American society.

This boom is evident in the population figures for Suffolk, Nassau, Oakland, DuPage, Saint Louis, and Orange Counties. As seen in table 3, between 1950 and 1960 Orange County more than tripled in population, Suffolk and DuPage more than doubled, the number of inhabitants in Nassau rose more than 90
The Emerging Post-Suburban Pattern


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<td>277</td>
<td>703,925</td>
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percent, and the rate of increase in Oakland and Saint Louis Counties was better than 70 percent. During the 1950s Nassau surpassed the million mark in population, and by 1960 all but DuPage could claim a population over a half million. With better than four thousand people per square mile, Nassau was as densely populated as many cities, and open space was at a premium in eastern Saint Louis, southeastern Oakland, and northern Orange Counties. At the close of the 1950s mile after mile of housing subdivisions, stores, schools, and factories blanketed each of the counties.

One community after another experienced phenomenal growth rates. In 1951, 55,000 newcomers arrived in the Nassau township of Hempstead, boosting the population about 12 percent in a single year. In 1950 the adjacent township of Oyster Bay had fewer than 67,000 inhabitants, but from 1953 through 1956 it acquired 30,000 new residents annually. The Oakland County city of Oak Park, with 5,200 residents in 1950, tripled in population during the next three years, and a Detroit newspaper observed that “almost overnight thousands of new homes grew like mushrooms after a warm summer rain.” Orange County’s Anaheim doubled in population from 1950 to January 1955, rising from 14,556 to 30,059, and then doubled once again between January 1955 and December 1956. The booming community claimed to be “the fastest growing city in the fastest growing county in the nation.” Nearby Buena Park had welcomed an average of fewer than 100 new residents each year during the first half of the twentieth century; then in the 1950s the annual average soared to 4,000. A plan of the city reported that “almost overnight the farming area was inundated with humanity and an unorganized urban character emerged.” The Orange County community of Fullerton was yet another boontown. In 1955 a local newspaper commented on that city’s “amazing growth,” reporting a
population rise of 31 percent in a single year. "All but the most extreme guesses were exceeded by the preliminary report on Fullerton's current population," the newspaper enthusiastically announced.3

Breakneck growth was, indeed, destroying the bucolic past and imposing an increasingly urban character on each of the counties. In 1960 the annual report of the Orange County Planning Commission observed, "The county exceeds eleven states in population and is the fastest growing major county in the nation. "We are growing now at the rate of almost 100,000 people a year!" boasted an Orange County supervisor at the onset of the 1960s. In 1958 a proud Long Island industrialist had said of Nassau and Suffolk Counties, "We have more people than Baltimore, Cleveland, St. Louis, Washington, Boston, San Francisco or Pittsburgh . . ., and there is no indication that we have reached the saturation point." Meanwhile, the Naperville Clarion, "DuPage County's Oldest and Best Weekly," was announcing that its home county was the fastest growing in Illinois.4 In each of these counties, boosters spoke in superlatives about the recent development and future prospects of their communities. Despite continued paeans to a semirural, suburban way of life, explosive growth was the reality that awed and amazed everyone along the metropolitan periphery.

Throughout the postwar years, this awe-inspiring wave of development devoured thousands of acres of farmland, destroying the very meadows and groves that had lured so many to the fringe. From 1950 through 1957, in Oakland County alone forty-five square miles of land were platted, an area twice the size of Manhattan. During the 1950s development consumed an equal amount of land in DuPage, reducing the inventory of agricultural land in that county by 22 percent. Between 1950 and 1954 in rapidly urbanizing Nassau County, the agricultural domain fell from 27,000 acres to 13,000 acres, with farms accounting for less than 7 percent of the county's area by the latter date. In 1958 one commentator predicted, "There probably will be no agriculture on Long Island to speak of by the turn of the century."5

The most dramatic monuments to the sweeping transformation of suburbia were the expansive new communities planned and constructed by a single developer which sprang up in a few short years. Not satisfied with a simple housing tract covering a few dozen acres, some developers envisioned the creation of whole new cities of houses, stores, churches, and schools. For example, in 1957 DuPage County builder Jay Stream found himself in a clash with the city of Naperville over plans to lay out a subdivision in that municipality. Naperville's uncooperative city clerk finally asked Stream, "Why don't you go build your own town?"6 Stream accepted the clerk's challenge and began construction of a whole new community, which he named Carol Stream after his daugh-
ter. It was to be an independent municipality with separate zones designated for residential, commercial, and industrial development. Moreover, it would include apartment buildings as well as the typical suburban expanse of single-family housing. In the late 1950s Albert and Jack Kaufman of Surety Builders were likewise planning an entire new community in southern DuPage County, to be known as Woodridge. The first homes went on the market in 1958 and the Kaufmans expected to build three thousand structures housing 10,000 to 12,500 people within the following three years. They did not meet this ambitious goal, but by 1965 the new town could boast of more than 5,000 residents, with the number rising rapidly.

The most spectacular and famous of the instant communities of the postwar decades, however, was Levittown, in Nassau County. Begun in 1947 by Levitt and Sons builders, it was completed four years later when the last nail was pounded into the 17,447th home. By the mid-1950s 82,000 residents inhabited the 7.3-square-mile tract, which only a decade earlier had been an expanse of potato fields. Moreover, the Levitts constructed seven shopping districts and nine swimming pools to satisfy the retailing and recreational needs of the thousands of homeowners. Many commentators criticized the modest look-alike tract homes that the Levitts sold to former apartment dwellers, but most of the purchasers were enthusiastic converts to the new suburban way of life. A refugee from a one-room apartment said of his previous existence: "That was so awful I'd rather not talk about it. Getting into this house was like being emancipated." In 1957 a survey of Levittowners found that 94 percent would recommend the community to their friends.

But Levittown suffered one major flaw that few could ignore. It lacked industry and the tax revenues that industry could provide. Manufacturing plants paid more in property taxes than they cost in services. For residences, however, the opposite was true, especially if the residences housed school-age children. That was the case in Levittown and many similar suburban communities. In 1957 more than half of all Levittowners were under the age of seventeen, and between 1947 and 1957 enrollment in School District Five, which encompassed most of Levittown, rose from 47 students in a three-room schoolhouse to 16,300 pupils in fourteen newly constructed buildings. Thus Levittowners had to support a program of breakneck school expansion, but they had no industry to help pay the cost. Homeowners had to foot the onerous bill alone.

Between 1946 and 1957 the property tax rate in School District Five soared from 28 cents per $100 of assessed valuation to $6.057 per $100. By the latter date the district's rate ranked second among the sixty-two districts in Nassau County. In 1955 one Long Island publication noted, "Many residents who left
New York City because of high taxes, and because they wished to live and raise their families in a suburban atmosphere, are beginning to wonder if they have merely leapt from the frying pan into the fire.” Fiery confrontations at annual school budget meetings reflected the tension over high taxes. For example, in May 1957 the District Five meeting erupted into a near riot and its first session was broken up by the fire department, which regarded the disorderly gathering as a fire hazard. When it reconvened three days later, three thousand taxpayers packed the school auditorium and overflowed into the gymnasium. This meeting lasted from 7:30 in the evening to 6:15 the following morning when those present approved the annual budget and a hefty tax hike. This exercise in grass-roots democracy culminated a year of rancor during which charges of Communist influence in the schools added to the already mounting bitterness over the heavy tax burden. In any case, harmony did not prevail in suburbia, and contributing to the dissatisfaction was the lack of industrial taxpayers to relieve the burden of governmental expenses.

The emerging postwar generation of suburban leaders did not ignore the lesson of Levittown. Clearly, the prewar dream of tranquil homesteads far removed from commerce and industry would prove too expensive a proposition for most suburbanites. It was a luxury within the price range of only the wealthiest commuters, who could pay the bills for quaint, semirural municipalities. With a baby boom producing thousands of new pupils for the public schools, a growing number of suburban residents could not afford to snub commerce and industry. Balanced development was increasingly vital if tax levies were to remain reasonable.

Some also favored business development in order to boost job opportunities in the suburbs. Commuting to the central city was costly, inconvenient, and generated mind-boggling traffic jams. Employment close to suburban homes would reduce the number of commuters and further the economic self-sufficiency of the fringe areas. In 1955 the chair of the Long Island State Park Commission Robert Moses urged the creation of jobs in an address on “The Future of Nassau and Western Suffolk.” “Suburban industry among other things,” Moses predicted, “will reduce the number of commuters in serge and seersucker who spend nights and weekends with families they hardly know . . . . The suburbs will be self-contained units tied in many ways to the Big City, but in other respects completely independent. That is as it should be.” That same year the Saint Louis County Planning Commission also promised to “make it possible for the people of St. Louis County to have a proper place of work near their residential area,” and by the beginning of the 1960s this same planning body was explaining the need “to shorten the home-to-work trip” so that “the executive
and the worker [could] reduce his travel time" and "minimize the daily peak hour capacity of highways and other transportation facilities."14

In fact, throughout the 1950s planners and suburban leaders in general were making it clear that manufacturing and commerce had to be part of suburbia; past dreams of isolation from the workplace were no longer tenable. In its 1951 annual report the Saint Louis County Planning Commission observed, "The modern trend is to zone for industry rather than against industry." According to the commission, "the zoning ordinance of the future should be permissive rather than prohibitive." Three years later "a plan of progress" for the Orange County community of Anaheim noted the need for "an adequate industrial and commercial district" to ensure a "continued balanced economy." In the 1956 "General Development Plan" of the Oakland County city of Clawson, the commission observed that new industry offered "the best prospect of increased tax base. More industry will help achieve a high level of municipal services without a proportionate increase in tax burden for the residential owner. Its benefit will be felt by every taxpayer." In 1957 a Suffolk County real estate broker testified, "New industries, businesses and service organizations are being sought and welcomed by all communities, much with an eye to helping with the tax load." According to an official of nearby Oyster Bay, in Nassau County, that township's comprehensive zoning plan was "designed to accomplish three major objectives: protect homeowners, attract desirable industry, and provide a practical balance among residences, business, and industry." The 1959 plan for the DuPage village of Itasca likewise was dedicated to "securing a balance between residential and non-residential development to strengthen the economic base or source of tax revenue available to provide community facilities."15

Even older upper-middle-class residential suburbs, which had developed in the 1920s and 1930s in accord with the prewar ideal, were having second thoughts about excluding business. In 1958 consultants working for the University City Plan Commission in Saint Louis County noted that it had been "the more or less established policy of the city and its inhabitants to preserve the residential character of the municipality and to minimize manufacturing and industrial development." "However, in order for the city to maintain an adequate tax base and at the same time continue as a high-grade residential suburb," the consultants urged, "there should be a carefully worked out plan for limited development of light industry." They told University City residents, "The major consideration favoring an expansion of local industry is the desirability of broadening the local tax base to help maintain public services like schools, water, street improvements, and police and fire protection."16 Known as the "Gold Coast" of DuPage County, the elite community of Hinsdale had
never emphasized business development, but in 1958 that municipality’s plan commission also “recommended that a careful study of the economic tax base be undertaken with the intent being to find ways of broadening the base and substantially increasing tax revenues.” By the beginning of the 1960s few suburban towns and villages were so affluent that they could ignore their tax base. For the multitude of fringe municipalities the manufacturing plant was a boon, not a bane.

During the postwar years, many suburbanites welcomed industrial tax receipts but still dreaded the appearance of smokestacks on the horizon. Yet certain innovations in industrial planning made manufacturing more palatable to these foes of industrialization. Most notably the concept of the industrial park minimized the clash between traditional suburban ideals and the emerging desire for tax revenues and a balanced economy. Industrial parks were carefully planned, attractively landscaped districts of light manufacturing. In these restricted developments, the design of the industrial plants and the surrounding shrubbery and lawns were intended to dispel the traditional stereotype of the ugly, soot-begrimed factory. The parks were laid out to be as inoffensive as possible to nearby homeowners, and the very use of the term park to describe a manufacturing area was a sop to suburban sensibilities. Developers of industrial parks aimed at selling fringe communities on the idea that factories need not pollute the air or threaten residential property values. If masked by shrubbery and separated from residences by landscaped buffer zones, the factory could fit into the revised suburban ideal of the postwar years.

Suburban observers recognized that the industrial park was at least a partial answer to the dilemma confronting them. In 1957 a Suffolk County newspaper editorialized that industrial parks were “likely to meet the least resistance from those who [were] still in opposition to industrialization of this area,” and it noted that Islip township was fortunate in having sites for a number of parks that could “offer employment to local people without harming the residential character of the community. The plant being erected on such a site these days—under the rigid restrictions of the town’s industrial code—is a far cry from the smokestack factory of yesteryear.” That same year a publication of Nassau’s Hofstra College observed, “In view of the necessity to diversify Long Island’s economy and to achieve a better balance in land uses, the industrial park . . . promises to be a vital contributor in terms of greater employment opportunities and a more equitable sharing of local taxes. One of its chief attractions is that it need not clash aesthetically or otherwise with the existing suburban nature of Long Island’s two Eastern Counties.” The following year an account of Long Island industry reported that “Nassau and Suffolk Counties
TABLE 4. Number of Manufacturing Employees, 1947–1963

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<th>County</th>
<th>1947</th>
<th>1954</th>
<th>1958</th>
<th>1963</th>
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<tr>
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<td>13,213</td>
<td>41,410</td>
<td>32,139</td>
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<td>5,554</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orange</td>
<td>6,100</td>
<td>15,755</td>
<td>31,161</td>
<td>96,885</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


abound[ed] with these industrial parks,” which were designed to “fulfill their vital role in community life without incurring the hostility of neighboring homeowners.” A Saint Louis County planning report said much the same thing when it observed, “The use of the industrial park is one of the best methods of meeting the demands of industrial growth and still retaining the amenities of St. Louis County.”

Throughout the postwar era industrial parks and landscaped manufacturing plants were increasingly common features of suburbia. Manufacturers needed extensive tracts of land for their expanding plants and sufficient open space was not available in the central cities. Thus a move to the suburbs became imperative. As seen in table 4, between 1947 and 1963 manufacturing employment rose markedly in each of the six counties along the metropolitan fringe. The number of industrial employees soared sixteenfold in Orange County, almost sevenfold in Saint Louis County, and better than fivefold in DuPage. In four of the six counties the rate of increase in industrial employment was considerably greater than the rate of population increase, and in Suffolk County the two figures were approximately equal.

Only in Oakland County did the growth in manufacturing employment lag behind population growth. Because of the concentration of motor vehicle manufacturing in Pontiac, Oakland began the postwar era with a strong industrial base, which grew erratically during the following two decades, rising and falling with the fortunes of the American automobile industry. Yet the industrial growth of Oakland County far outpaced that of the Detroit metropolitan area as a whole, with the number of manufacturing employees in Oakland rising more than 12 percent between December 1956 and March 1963, whereas the number of such workers declined 20 percent in the metropolitan area. Moreover, despite the ill fortunes of a recession-plagued auto industry, manufacturing employment rapidly increased in the suburban areas of Oakland outside.
of Pontiac. By 1958 more production workers were employed in the emerging suburban townships and municipalities of Oakland than in the city of Pontiac.\textsuperscript{21} While the older industrial hub of Pontiac lost plants, other communities attracted them. For example, in 1954 the Ford Tractor Division moved to the upper-middle-class residential community of Birmingham, and four years later Ford opened a giant Lincoln-Thunderbird plant, employing 3,000 persons, in rural Wixom.\textsuperscript{22}

In other suburban areas federal defense spending boosted the emerging industrial economy. The chief element of Long Island's manufacturing sector was the aircraft industry, which first boomed during World War II, suddenly transforming Nassau and Suffolk into major arsenals. Led by Republic Aviation, Grumman Aircraft, and Sperry Gyroscope, federal defense contractors remained the mainstay of manufacturing in the Long Island counties, and Suffolk residents were especially vulnerable to fluctuations in cold war military spending.\textsuperscript{23} Saint Louis County was the home of the giant McDonnell Aircraft Company, which was the largest of the growing number of industries developing around Lambert Field, the metropolitan area's principal airport. Orange County similarly benefited from the aerospace boom. In 1951 Northrop Corporation's electronics division moved to Anaheim, and six years later Hughes aircraft located its ground systems division in the Orange County community of Fullerton. Moreover, local leaders realized that this was only the beginning. According to an Anaheim planning report of 1957, “Most of those engaged in electronics anticipate a very large scale expansion in the next five to ten years.” Their anticipations proved correct, for employment in the electronics industry in Orange County soared from 11,000 in 1957 to 42,000 in 1964.\textsuperscript{24}

By the early 1960s, then, the so-called suburbs were becoming hubs of industrial development. In 1961 one Long Island booster proudly observed that more people worked in the two thousand manufacturing plants of Nassau and Suffolk Counties than “in the industries of eighteen of our states.” As early as 1955 Saint Louis County planners were already pointing out that their county was no longer simply “the living room for the metropolitan area or the dormitory community.” Instead, during the previous decade there had been “a dispersion of industrial location within St. Louis County warranting complete restudy of traffic and transportation, public utility services, public works facilities, etc.”\textsuperscript{25} A commercial revolution was sweeping across the cluster of residential havens on the fringe, and commentators in New York, Missouri, and elsewhere recognized that suburbia would never be the same again.

Another manifestation of that commercial revolution was the growth of retailing along the metropolitan periphery. In each of the six counties retail sales
figures soared as suburbia captured a larger share of the metropolitan area shoppers. In 1948 the total value of retail sales in the city of Saint Louis was about four times as great as the figure for Saint Louis County; fifteen years later the county almost equaled the city in cash value of sales. During the late 1940s Nassau County ranked seventh among New York counties in retail sales; by the early 1960s it had moved into third position even though it ranked only fifth in population. By 1960 Oakland County was grabbing more than its proportionate share of sales in the Detroit metropolitan area. In 1950, with 13.1 percent of the metropolitan population, Oakland accounted for 10.8 percent of retail sales, but ten years later, with 18.4 percent of the area’s inhabitants, it garnered 19.9 percent of the retail dollars spent.

The most obvious physical monument to this retailing boom was the suburban shopping center. Oakland County was in the forefront of shopping center development, and its Northland Center in Southfield won nationwide attention. Built by the J. L. Hudson Company, Detroit’s largest department store, Northland opened in 1954, offering shoppers nearly 1.5 million square feet of retailing space plus parking for 9,500 cars. A three-story Hudson’s store ringed by ninety-five smaller shops attracted thousands of customers, and from its beginning the center’s developers envisioned Northland as a magnet for further commercial investment and as the hub of a new suburban downtown. One publication from the 1950s accurately described Northland as “a regional shopping center that transplant[ed] downtown to the suburbs.” Moreover, local boosters recognized that the complex offered Southfield the advantages of a big city. In 1959 the city manager observed proudly of Northland, “It’s got more shopping area than downtown Flint, and more parking space than downtown Grand Rapids.”

The center also proved a boon to the Southfield city treasury, accounting for 16.45 percent of the community’s assessed valuation in 1959. In large part because of the giant shopping complex, the city of 30,000 residents enjoyed a considerably lower tax rate than many of its neighboring municipalities. Other Oakland communities attracted retailing investment as well, with ten additional shopping centers opening in the county from 1954 through 1959. But none rivaled Northland Center.

Nassau County’s premier shopping center, Roosevelt Field, opened in 1956. With a 300,000-square-foot branch of Macy’s department store, 77 other retail outlets, and 11,000 parking spaces, Roosevelt Field matched Northland Center as a retailing complex. The developers of the Nassau shopping complex also laid out an adjacent industrial and office zone, making Roosevelt Field, like Northland Center, a multipurpose business hub. Moreover, the same year that Roosevelt Field opened, twenty-two additional shopping centers were built.
in booming Nassau County. The largest of them were Mid-Island Center in Hicksville and Green Acres Shopping Center in Valley Stream, which together with Roosevelt Field attracted a multitude of shoppers who formerly had commuted to New York City for the purchase of clothing and accessories.32

Saint Louis County experienced a similar rise in retailing. In 1948 the Famous-Barr department store pioneered a policy of decentralization when it opened a branch in the county seat of Clayton. Famous-Barr had expected annual sales of $3 million, but in its first year the suburban branch produced $10 million instead.33 Such figures were a green light to other Saint Louis retailers. It was obviously time to move to the suburbs. In 1955 Westroads Shopping Center opened in Richmond Heights, two years later Crestwood Plaza in Crestwood welcomed its first customers, and by 1961 the county could boast of four shopping centers of more than 350,000 square feet.34

Besides factories and shopping centers, Orange County benefited from yet another form of commercial endeavor, the theme park. In 1954 Walt Disney Company purchased a tract of orange groves in Anaheim and the following year Disneyland opened to visitors, bringing nationwide fame to the previously obscure municipality in northern Orange County. "On opening day," reported Life magazine, "a mob of small and large fry started lining up at 2 a.m., eight hours before the turnstiles began clicking." Within its first six months the theme park drew one million customers, and by the late 1950s it was being touted as "the biggest tourist attraction in California and the West, among the biggest in the nation." In 1959 Disneyland employed 3,650 workers and surrounding hotels and restaurants provided jobs for additional Orange County residents. Moreover, for the city officials of Anaheim the theme park was a source of more than amusement, paying an average of over $1 million annually in local taxes during its first twenty years.35 Though not as spectacular an attraction as Disneyland, Knotts Berry Farm in nearby Buena Park proved another magnet for tourists and a lucrative source of tax receipts.

With nationally famous attractions drawing millions of tourists, an ever-growing number of shopping centers, thousands of retail and manufacturing employees, burgeoning industrial parks, and endless rows of freshly minted tract houses, suburbia no longer seemed so much like suburbia. Little wonder that observers were already attempting to coin a new word for the phenomenon they witnessed. Roosevelt Field did seem more "co-urban" than suburban; it was more of a competitor of the central city than a subordinate. It was not urban nor did it conform to the traditional suburban ideal. It would have been equally out of place in the mock English country villages of the prewar realtors' dreams and in midtown Manhattan or downtown Chicago.
The signs of the "co-urban" world were omnipresent by the late 1950s. Traffic reminiscent of the big city clogged suburban highways, bringing expletives to the lips of harried drivers. In 1957 in the previously tranquil Suffolk County village of Port Jefferson, the local newspaper reported that traffic was "one of [the] port area's most serious problems," and a planning committee said of the traffic tangle, "If strong steps are not taken at this time, ... the existing shopping areas in Port Jefferson and Port Jefferson Station will decline." That same year an industrial survey of Long Island reported that "a critical transportation problem [was] now in existence. ... The traffic problem is a deterrent to industrial expansion and other desirable land use." Urbanlike congestion also emerged as the number of multifamily dwellings increased. Whereas the number of single-family dwellings constructed in Nassau County fell from approximately 30,000 in 1950 to 6,800 in 1959, the number of new units in multifamily structures rose from 1,600 in 1950 to over 2,600 in the last year of the decade. From 1951 through 1953 an average of 254 multifamily dwelling units were built in Saint Louis County but the figure for 1958 through 1960 was 1,271. The rate of construction for single-family structures, however, remained relatively constant. In DuPage County the same phenomenon prevailed, with apartment buildings arising in communities previously dominated by single-family tract homes.36

Moreover, a growing share of the population was spending both night and day in suburbia. Writing of Nassau and Suffolk Counties, the New York Times observed that "before the war commuters exceeded those locally employed by better than 3 to 2" but in the postwar era the proportion had been reversed. "Local employment now provides jobs for 335,000 persons," the Times reported in 1957, "while 175,000 persons are commuters." Indeed, by the late 1950s reverse commuting from New York City to Nassau and Suffolk was an increasingly significant fact of metropolitan life. A survey in 1958 found 64,300 persons commuting outward each workday from homes in New York City to jobs in suburban Long Island.37

According to the federal census of 1960, in Suffolk, Nassau, Oakland, and Orange Counties a majority of those residents reporting their place of employment worked within their home counties. With 73 percent and 68 percent respectively, Orange and Suffolk Counties led in the proportion of noncommuting residents. Only in DuPage and Saint Louis Counties did commuters still constitute a majority of the working population, and even there more than four of every ten employed residents earned their living within the counties.38

These signs of change did not mean that suburbanites were yielding to the onslaught of urbanization without complaint or reservation. During the post-
war era they remained staunchly dedicated to suburban ideals, though many realized the need to adjust and adapt these ideals. For example, in the 1950s Garden City residents fought to modify plans for the Roosevelt Field complex on the eastern edge of their village. They forced the developers to provide a seventy-foot landscaped buffer strip between the development and village residences. Moreover, the village forbid brightly lit signs in the portion of Roosevelt Field that lay within Garden City's boundaries, and on this tract the developers could build only office structures of no more than three stories. Writing of the compromise, a local chronicler concluded, "Garden City, although still sensitive to the situation, was becoming increasingly aware as time went on that there had been no satisfactory alternative." Likewise, in 1958 in the Oakland County residential suburb of Pleasant Ridge, city officials would agree to the sale of municipal property along a major commercial thoroughfare only if the land was used for "professional and administrative offices." Drive-ins, gas stations, and strip shopping outlets were not welcome in Pleasant Ridge. Garden City and Pleasant Ridge sought to remain as gardenlike and pleasant as possible, but they would adjust enough to new realities to allow properly designed office blocks buffered by tasteful landscaping. The protected residential refuge remained very much a part of the suburban ideal, but an increasing number of communities would tolerate an occasional office building and some taxpaying commerce.

By 1960, then, many suburban leaders sought the best of both the urban and the suburban. They continued to laud the green open spaces of suburbia and the merits of the single-family home in a carefully restricted subdivision. But at the same time, commerce was moving outward from the central city and offering the tempting advantages of tax revenues and jobs. Southfield, Michigan, was to become an archetypical edge city and perhaps better than anyone else, its city manager summed up the emerging amalgam of goals that underlay much suburban development by the beginning of the 1960s. In 1959 he boasted, "Give us 15 years, and we'll be the biggest city in Oakland County." But in the same interview he said of his community, "That's what makes this such a wonderful place to live—the openness and greenness. There's no asphalt jungle in Southfield. We don't want to carry this 'togetherness' stuff to extremes." Southfield's leaders would not eschew growth nor would they block development. Commerce paid the municipality's bills and another Northland Center was always welcome to the city treasurer. But openness and greenness had to be preserved, and suburbanites did not want a community where residents lived on top of one another. The emerging pattern was one that embraced traditional suburban ideals but tempered them with new realities. Eventually
this delicate balance of openness and development and commerce and residence would produce the post-suburban world of the late twentieth century.

**Proliferating Municipalities**

During the 1940s and 1950s suburbia proved almost as fertile a field for the growth of new governments as it was for new shopping centers. The proliferation of governmental units evident in the prewar era continued, arousing consternation among those who thought there were already too many municipalities along the metropolitan fringe. As seen in table 5, the number of municipalities increased markedly in four of the outlying counties. Saint Louis gave birth to an especially large brood of village and city governments, with the number rising 140 percent between 1940 and 1960. From 1945 through 1950, the rate of production reached an extraordinary peak, with the incorporation of forty-two new municipalities in the Missouri county during this six-year span. Political fragmentation did not proceed at such an explosive pace in Oakland, DuPage and Orange Counties, but still the number of municipalities was on the rise.

Owing to a change in New York state law in the 1930s, township governments and special districts acquired new authority to provide local services that previously were the responsibility of villages and cities. Consequently, incorporation was no longer such an attractive option for residents of Nassau and Suffolk Counties, and the number of Long Island municipalities remained unchanged between 1940 and 1960. Yet devotion to small-scale governmental units did not wane and was expressed in the multitude of new special districts created in those counties. From 1945 to 1955 the number of nonschool special districts in Nassau County climbed from 199 to 268, and in Suffolk between 1950 and 1960 the figure soared from 246 to 407. Some of these were administered by the township governments and were primarily taxing districts

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with no independent governing boards. But all of Nassau's 41 fire districts and all of the 110 fire districts in Suffolk County had separate boards of commissioners elected by the voters of the districts. In most of these districts the grass-roots tradition of volunteer fire companies survived as suburbanites rejected not only bigness but also the impersonal paid professionals associated with urban administration. Though the county was approaching a population of one million, in the mid 1950s most of Nassau still relied on protection from seventy volunteer companies composed of nine thousand men.

The proliferation of governmental units along the metropolitan fringe was, in large measure, a product of the persistent desire to protect the village life style as well as the growing competition for lucrative tax sources. Fondness for the restricted village remained a powerful sentiment in suburbia, spawning scores of new independent municipalities. From New York to California, the long-standing goal of keeping offensive influences at bay motivated many postwar community leaders to opt for the protection that incorporation afforded. Yet the desire to grab or preserve revenue sources was another common motivating factor of incorporation battles. Homeowners in unincorporated areas did not wish to lose commercial mother lodes to tax-hungry adjacent municipalities eager to annex shopping centers or factories, and the only way to keep the tax receipts for their own use was to incorporate. Most suburbanites wanted to retain the advantages of the prewar residential suburbs, but many also sought the revenues that postwar commercialization produced. These dual factors fueled the many incorporation free-for-alls of the 1940s and 1950s.

Nowhere was the complex mix of motives so evident as in Southfield Township in southern Oakland County, where a battle over the creation of governments rocked local politics for most of the 1950s. On the one hand, some parts of the township wanted the semirural peace and charm associated with the prewar ideal. But on the other hand, the creation of Northland Center and other commercial resources led to attempted tax grabs by nearby municipalities and to incorporation efforts aimed at thwarting these grabs. It was a clash with many combatants, and it led to the partition of the township into multiple municipalities designed to serve different needs.

The battle over partition of the township began in December 1950 with a conflict between those who favored incorporation of the entire township and those who wished to incorporate as a separate municipality one segment of the township known as Lathrup Village. Lathrup Village was a thousand-acre subdivision laid out in the 1920s by Louise Lathrup Kelley. It was a carefully planned and restricted residential community; all homes had to be constructed of stone, brick, or masonry, with an attached garage. There were few businesses
and no factories within the community, and Kelley and many village residents wanted to keep it that way.45 “During the work day, a lot of us are in direct contact with big business, modern improvements, the hustle and bustle that makes big wheels go round,” explained one advocate of incorporation. “When we come home, we like to be removed from all the hub-bub and pressure of getting big things done in a hurry. The desire is for relaxation in a quiet, friendly, rural village atmosphere.” One townshipwide municipality would destroy this, for, according to a Lathrup leader, “within 10 years of normal development, its entire area will become a closely built up community with city improvements and a big-city atmosphere.” Advocates of municipal autonomy sought to keep their “small community as an informal, friendly village with the minimum of government, with the minimum of officials, and with the minimum of big business.”46

To ensure this goal, Lathrup Villagers gathered signatures on incorporation petitions and rushed to the county courthouse in Pontiac to file their documents before their foes working for townshipwide incorporation could file conflicting petitions. The Lathrup Villagers won the race by twenty minutes. When the Southfield Township forces arrived with completed petitions, they met Louise Lathrup Kelley’s husband coming out of the courthouse, where he had just deposited his community’s documents.47 The county considered incorporation petitions in order of submission, so it gave the Lathrup request priority and authorized an election in the village to determine whether a majority of the voters approved municipal status. After some delay, in May 1953 the community’s electorate endorsed incorporation, distancing themselves from Southfield Township and the forces of high-powered development it seemed to represent.48

By spring 1953 the situation was becoming more complex in the remainder of Southfield Township, for the completion of Northland Center was imminent and other commercial projects were anticipated. Rather than seeking to escape this commercialization, some tax-poor communities sought to embrace it through the incorporation or annexation of the area surrounding the shopping hub. The city of Oak Park, to the east of Southfield Township, began circulating petitions for the annexation of a two-and-a-half-square-mile block of land that included Northland Center.49 Meanwhile, residents of the Magnolia and Southfield Park subdivisions organized the Southfield Citizens’ League, which collected signatures on petitions to incorporate the southern part of the township, including the shopping center, as a separate municipality.50 And Southfield Township officials still hoped to incorporate the entire township, excepting Lathrup Village, as a city. A township supervisor complained: “We don’t
want our township broken up into small pieces. Most of them will not have a stable tax base that way." To make matters more confusing, the city of Berkley contemplated annexation of a tract of east-central Southfield Township. "The time is now right for an attempt at annexation," explained the president of the Berkley Chamber of Commerce.51

As in the Lathrup Village contest, time was of the essence, for the first petition filed took precedence. When the county courthouse opened at 9:00 A.M. on May 14, 1953, the leaders of the Southfield Citizens' League presented their petitions. The county clerk, however, refused the documents since the league did not have the $500 filing fee. The league then launched an hour-long telephone campaign to raise the money, but at 9:25 A.M. the city manager of Oak Park presented his annexation petitions to the clerk, thus beating the Citizens' League by better than a half hour.52 Oak Park's prompt action failed ultimately to produce the desired treasure trove of taxes, for in September 1953 voters rejected the Oak Park annexation bid, leaving Northland Center in unincorporated Southfield Township.53

Meanwhile, the annexation and incorporation attempts were frightening residents in the northern part of the township into action. The community of Franklin valued its quaint semirural environment and its large, uncrowded lots. Its principal developer George Wellington Smith had, in fact, advertised the community as "the town that time forgot."54 Smith and his affluent lot purchasers wanted the town to remain forgotten to all but the wealthy few who could afford solid-gold charm and serenity. They certainly did not want it discovered as a possible site for shopping centers or manufacturing plants. Consequently, Franklin residents sought the zoning protection afforded by municipal autonomy, and in November 1953 the local citizenry voted by a three-to-one margin to incorporate their village.55 The preamble of the village charter read, "We, the residents of Franklin, . . . wishing to preserve our simple, rural way of life and the identity of historic Franklin; do hereby ordain and establish this Village of Franklin Charter."56 "A simple, rural way of life" remained the ideal of the General Motors and Ford executives whose homes sprawled across Franklin and who could afford to eschew tax-producing commerce.

Other communities in northern Southfield Township soon followed Franklin's example. The adjoining community of Bingham Farms filed for incorporation in January 1955 and in June its voters approved the creation of the new municipality. As its name implied, Bingham Farms enjoyed a rural ambiance, which its residents sought to preserve. "What it lacks in size," observed a 1970 account of the village, "it more than makes up in scenic splendor." It was a community with "large tracts of rolling land with beautiful trees," and its resi-
dences were “all characterized by a quiet, understated elegance.” Like its Franklin counterpart, the Bingham Farms charter spoke of preserving a “simple rural way of life,” and to that end the residents sought their independence from the remainder of Southfield Township.57

By the close of 1958 the partitioning of the thirty-six-square-mile township was complete. Fearful that Southfield authorities would allow excessive commercialization and dense development, the northern community of Beverly Hills opted for separate incorporation in April 1958, after having repeatedly thwarted the efforts of Southfield leaders to create a municipality that included both Beverly Hills and the remainder of Southfield.58 With all of the northern Southfield communities having declared their independence, the southern two-thirds could now proceed to incorporate as the city of Southfield.59 Following the creation of the municipalities of Lathrup Village, Franklin, Bingham Farms, Beverly Hills, and Southfield, only a minuscule 117 acres remained outside any municipal boundaries and subject to the control of the township government.60 Thus what had formerly been a single governmental entity now included five independent municipalities plus a small remnant governed by the township.

The balkanization of Southfield was not unique. In Farmington Township, immediately to the west of Southfield, incorporation conflicts dominated local politics during the late 1950s. In 1958 the city of Farmington attempted to annex approximately eight square miles of surrounding Farmington Township and thereby broaden its industrial tax base through absorption of prospective factory sites and capture of the township’s largest taxpayer and chief manufacturing plant, the Star Cutter Company. City officials argued that the municipality “desperately need[ed] new undeveloped land areas into which it [could] expand and grow” and the “well-planned development of the surrounding area [would] provide additional industrial commercial growth to help carry the tax burden and pay for . . . schools.”61 Residents of the township responded with a number of defensive incorporation attempts. An area of estate-size lots quickly chose to incorporate as the village of Quakertown, thus preserving its “simple rural way of life.”62 A large section of the township also petitioned to become the municipality of Farmington Woods, and incorporation proceedings simultaneously began in another area known as Clarenceville. The backers of the Farmington Woods proposal claimed that they sought incorporation to preserve the “residential-rural” nature of the area.63 Those who wished to perpetuate township control of the territory, however, attacked the proposed “city” of Farmington Woods and asserted that continued township rule would ensure “preservation of the suburban character of [the] community, [and] freedom from
exorbitant taxes, overcrowded schools, city noise, and numerous other detrimental factors." After much debate, in August 1958 voters defeated the city of Farmington's annexation attempt, and in November the incorporation proposals for Farmington Hills and Clarenceville likewise both failed to win the endorsement of the electorate. Consequently, most of Farmington Township remained unincorporated, but the battle over municipal status would resume in later years.

To the west, in Novi Township, the grab for tax resources was similarly stirring conflict. In 1957 Ford Motor Company opened a giant plant in the northern part of the township and the unincorporated village of Wixom suddenly
opted to become a municipality, with boundaries that included the lucrative factory. Novi Township challenged the incorporation in the courts but lost. Meanwhile, the municipality of Northville expanded into the southern section of the township, annexing a tract of potentially tax-rich territory. Aroused by the dangers of an eroding tax base, the remaining township chose to incorporate in 1958, thus opting for municipal autonomy before any further marauders could deprive it of land.65

Throughout Oakland County the story was the same. In 1955 a remnant of Royal Oak Township chose to incorporate as the city of Madison Heights because its residents feared loss of their tax resources through annexation raids. Speaking of adjoining communities, one advocate of incorporation noted, "They will grab all the valuable tax land, leaving the township without any major industrial areas to balance the tax rate."66 That same year the city of Troy incorporated because of a similar fear that its Oakland neighbors would slice off the most lucrative tracts and leave Troy residents devoid of revenue.67 Some residents wanted restricted rural charm and beauty with no commerce or tract housing. Others wanted shopping centers and factories to pay the municipal bills. Both goals, however, produced the same effect—a proliferation of new governmental units.

Moreover, the Oakland scenario was repeated elsewhere. Throughout the nation defensive suburbanites chose to create new municipalities. In 1956 in DuPage County, the community of Lisle incorporated not only to secure better streets and drainage but also, according to a local newspaper, to ensure the "protection of local zoning laws and a local building code." Referring to the campaign for incorporation, the newspaper reported, "Proponents pointed out that the village will be able to enforce a more strict building code which would curb slum-like development."68

Meanwhile, in Orange County dairy farmers were creating municipalities to protect their businesses from encroaching residential and commercial development. In 1955 agriculturalists in the northeastern section of the county feared annexation to the city of Buena Park and in defense incorporated the two-square-mile city of Dairyland. If Buena Park had absorbed the farms of Dairyland, its city council would have zoned the malodorous, fly-ridden cow barns out of business. But the rulers of the new municipality zoned its entire territory for "heavy agriculture," allowing the farmers to milk their Holsteins in peace. At the time of its incorporation that city was reported to have "a population of 600 people and about 60,000 cows," and appropriately, the municipal council adopted as the city motto, "United to Preserve."69

In fall 1955 Buena Park’s threatened annexation of a wedge of land in the
heart of the unincorporated community of Cypress inspired additional incorporation campaigns. The southern dairy farming section of Cypress considered incorporating separately as Dairy City and much of the remainder petitioned to become the city of Cypress. Moreover, some residents actually supported annexation to Buena Park and circulated petitions in favor of that option. The Fullerton News Tribune reported that “a state of confusion reign[ed]” in Cypress as local residents did not know whether they were about to become residents of the cities of Dairy City, Cypress, or Buena Park or remain in unincorporated Orange County. Finally in 1956 the area incorporated as Dairy City, but residents quickly changed the name to Cypress. According to a county newspaper,
many incorporation advocates opposed the name "Dairy City" because "they wanted to avoid the implication that the new city would be reserved primarily for cows." Yet during its early years Cypress, like Dairyland, was primarily a "cowtown" sympathetic to agricultural interests. Thus, in California as elsewhere, incorporation proved a handy device for anyone wishing to thwart potential foes. It protected the herdsman of Orange County and those fearful of "slum-like" development in DuPage County as well as the country gentlemen and anxious taxpayers of Oakland County.

In Saint Louis County this protective device was carried to extremes. Under Missouri law, municipalities could annex unincorporated territory without the approval of the voters in the area to be absorbed. Consequently, about the only way to halt annexation to an adjoining municipality was through incorporation, and this legal fact of life was responsible for the extraordinary municipal birthrate in Saint Louis County during the 1940s and early 1950s. To protect themselves, residents of the most miniature communities opted for independent municipal status. In 1946 residents of a tract of only eleven acres chose to incorporate as the village of MacKenzie, and by 1951 twenty-six of the county's municipalities had areas of fewer than one hundred acres.

Midget municipalities were especially numerous in the northern half of the county, leading to mind-boggling confusion. In 1950 the municipalities of Wellston, Bel-Nor, and Hanley Hills all filed petitions to annex the same territory, but meanwhile residents of the disputed tract submitted incorporation papers to the county court seeking to create the independent municipality of Greendale. That same year Wellston and Hanley Hills also attempted to annex land that was incorporated as the city of Pagedale. Writing of the confusing spectacle, the Wellston newspaper observed: "It appears that someone eventually will have to get around to unscrambling it. . . . And if everybody gets incorporated, a map maker who tries to make a map of each town in a different color is going to run out of colors."

Wellston's editor was not the only one to criticize the political melee among existing and prospective municipalities. During the 1950s one commentator after another attacked the division of suburbia into an ever-increasing number of government units, emphasizing the inefficiency and conflict resulting from such fragmentation. In 1952 the Saint Louis County Planning Commission published a report titled Let's Get Together, presenting "the advantages of an integrated community." "Even long-time residents of St. Louis County are confused by [the] jigsaw puzzle of numerous incorporated areas," the report observed. "There are cities within cities and boundaries as irregular as lightning streaks." According to the county planners, "We are facing disintegration as a
county community unless we can work together." A few years later the county planning commission reiterated its conclusion, warning that the "trend toward a multiplicity of incorporated areas" could "lead to waste and administrative and political chaos." In 1958 a report on "the proposed consolidation of the municipalities of Ladue, Frontenac, and Huntleigh Village" also referred to "the multiplicity of municipal governments" as "one of the most serious problems of St. Louis County." Urging union of the municipalities, the report concluded, "Residents of the three communities, by consolidating, would form a government better able to provide efficiently and economically the municipal services they need and want."

Long Islanders were hearing many of the same arguments. In 1959 a political scientist attacked the "jungle of governments" in Nassau and Suffolk Counties, claiming that Long Island residents had created a governmental "jig-saw puzzle of such complexity that coordination . . . [was] impossible to accomplish." The situation was especially confusing in Suffolk County, where quite literally no one knew where some of the multiplicity of special districts began or ended. "Many of these districts have never been mapped," a survey of Suffolk reported in the early 1960s. "In fact, two towns[hips] have neither maps nor written descriptions for 20 per cent of the districts." Local government in Suffolk County thus remained uncharted, its boundaries and limits as yet unknown to cartographers.

In Michigan and California, too, fragmentation was a dirty word among friends of good government. Some Oakland County leaders sought to exploit fears of fragmentation to win support for incorporation of townshipwide municipalities. For example, in 1957 the threat of fragmentation led to a campaign to incorporate all of Waterford Township. "I feel that something has got to be done to hold the township together," observed one resident. "If incorporation is the answer, then I'm all for it." A 1958 study of local government in Southern California found that "the pattern of confusion, duplication, and overlapping units" was most evident in Los Angeles County but reported that Orange County was "on the threshold of a similar expansion in numbers and types of governments." Alert to the problem, California's governor Edmund Brown in 1959 charged a commission to find answers to the questions, "Do we have too many overlapping jurisdictions?" and "What is the danger point in proliferation of local government?"

Everywhere people were questioning the proliferation of government units and asking what could be done about it. Seeking to preserve a desired way of life and capture tax revenues, suburbanites were creating new municipalities all along the metropolitan fringe. Some of these units were large but many were
miniature domains that conformed to the traditional ideal of suburban government. In municipalities of fewer than one hundred acres there seemed no lack of grass-roots rule. Yet the emerging concern for coordination of government policies and services, already evident in Nassau County before World War II, was leading many suburban leaders to search for something better than unadulterated small-scale government. Just as suburbia needed a more balanced economy, so it needed a more balanced government, one that maintained an equilibrium between the face-to-face rule of the village and the professional administration of the larger regional unit. Outcries against fragmentation reflected a demand for innovative political reforms that would keep the governmental scale from tipping too far toward divisiveness and disunion.

**STRENGTHENING COUNTY GOVERNMENT**

In answer to criticisms of fragmentation, a growing body of suburban reformers favored a restructuring of county government similar to that which had occurred in Nassau County in the 1930s. Nowhere were the demands for reform greater than in splintering Saint Louis County. For years Saint Louis-area newspapers and civic groups had attacked the structure of county rule as outmoded and inefficient. By the late 1940s, however, the onslaught of governmental fragmentation added to the urgency of their cries for change. Suburban Saint Louis was becoming a hodgepodge of pint-sized polities and needed a new framework of county government to provide a semblance of coordination and a foundation for future cooperation.

Missouri's Constitution of 1945 gave Saint Louis Countians the green light to proceed with change. That document authorized “any county having more than 85,000 inhabitants” to “frame, adopt and amend a charter for its own government,” and that charter could vest the county with authority to regulate “the public health, police and traffic, building construction, and planning and zoning” in unincorporated areas. Moreover, the county would be able to “perform any of the services and functions” of a municipality in those incorporated cities or villages that contracted for services from the county. In other words, the constitution gave Missourians the right to transform their counties into purveyors of a wide variety of municipal services, a change that might eliminate the need for incorporating further municipalities. In addition, existing municipalities could opt to buy services from the county and thus benefit from the economies of scale enjoyed by the larger unit. If a county took advantage of the new constitutional provision, it could become a powerful regional government unlike anything that had previously existed in Missouri.
During the late 1940s suburban Saint Louis residents seized the opportunity to discard their governmental structure, and in March 1946 two hundred fifty civic leaders met at the county courthouse to consider the drafting of a charter. Early in 1946 the reform-minded Governmental Research Institute already was producing propaganda calling for "a home rule charter" for the county. The institute urged that suburban voters replace the existing county government "adapted to an agricultural community, with a modern government organized and empowered to handle the problems of an urban community." Not only was the county as then constituted unable "to handle the complex problems of a densely populated community," it was incapable of imposing some order on the 188 local governments within its boundaries. Under a home-rule charter, however, "machinery [could] be provided to enable many of the smaller governments to utilize the county government for the performance of common services." The result would be "a higher quality of service at a saving to the taxpayers." Moreover, the institute saw a crying need for an executive to coordinate county functions. Under the existing form of government, a three-member panel, known as the county court, adopted the budget, fixed the tax rate, and determined basic policy, but a long list of elected officials operated independent of this board. The sheriff, coroner, recorder of deeds, and other such administrative officers were largely lords of their own domains. This uncoordinated dispersion of authority among a bevy of courthouse politicians was anathema to the reform mentality.

Throughout the late 1940s these same arguments would dominate discussion of a home rule charter for Saint Louis County. Repeatedly, proponents of change would speak of horse-and-buggy government ill-suited to the populous, fast-growing suburban region. Just as frequently they would cite the need to cope more effectively with the multitude of local units, and the creation of a county executive was consistently at the top of the reform agenda. Coordination, cooperation, and modern, efficient administration were the goals of the Saint Louis County reformers and their sales pitch repeated these themes throughout the charter campaign.

To realize their goals, reformers created the St. Louis County Charter Organization Committee, composed of representatives from the League of Women Voters, county chamber of commerce, bar association, farm bureau, American Legion, real estate board, and League of Municipalities. During 1947 and 1948 the committee organized a petition campaign to collect thirty thousand signatures in support of the creation of a charter commission. In January 1949 the chair of the committee announced that the petition campaign was "over the top," and by the beginning of May the county circuit and probate judges had
selected a fourteen-member commission. With seven Democrats and seven Republicans, the charter commission did not represent any one political interest or viewpoint. Moreover, its diverse membership included three former county officials, two farmers, one labor leader, and the past president of the Missouri League of Women Voters. The St. Louis Globe-Democrat had suggested "that all sections of the county be represented, that the membership include lawyers, businessmen and representatives of women's interests." Clearly, the circuit and probate judges accepted this advice, appointing a commission that represented a range of beliefs and concerns.

These men and women were charged with fashioning a new framework for the booming county. Throughout 1949 and into 1950 they met and heard the recommendations of various groups. Perhaps the chief point of contention was whether to create an appointed county manager, a nonpartisan, professional executive who like a city manager would administer but leave policy-making to the elected legislative board. Both the League of Women Voters and the St. Louis Globe-Democrat favored this reform, but it proved too bold a move for others. Equating governmental change with higher taxes, the farmers were most reluctant to back reform. According to the county farm agent, farmers favored the existing form of government "with a change in the name of the county court and perhaps five members on the administrative board in place of three." The agent concluded that "farmers . . . would hold to the old order rather than favor innovations, such as a county manager."

Less timid was the Wellston Chamber of Commerce, which actually suggested to the commission that the county's seventy-one municipalities consolidate such functions as traffic control, street construction and repair, police and fire protection, and "as many others as lend themselves to consolidation." Wellston's mayor testified against his constituents' radical proposal, but clearly some county residents viewed charter reform as an opportunity for combating the plague of government fragmentation sweeping suburban Saint Louis.

In early 1950 the commission presented its draft of the charter. Answering demands for greater central coordination, the charter specified that an elected county supervisor would be "the chief executive officer of the County" and would appoint the heads of the eleven departments as well as being responsible for preparation of the county budget. This newly created officer was, in effect, to serve as mayor of the county. A seven-person county council was to exercise legislative authority and establish basic policy. The new county government would be able to perform a broad range of municipal functions in unincorporated areas, and municipalities could contract with it for any specific
service. It was, then, more powerful than traditional county governments and had the potential to become a regional supermunicipality.

Yet the document was not a radical one. It did not eliminate most of the independent elected county officers. The Saint Louis County ballot would still include candidates for sheriff, treasurer, clerk of courts, and prosecuting attorney. Moreover, the new charter extended the system of competitive civil service examinations and merit appointments only to the departments of public health, hospitals, public welfare, and parks and recreation. Political patronage could still flourish in the other departments. Significantly, the charter also did not disturb any of the existing political subdivisions of the county. All of the county's myriad municipalities were to survive intact.

Some reformers were disappointed that the charter did not impose greater change, and especially did not do more to curb the power of old-fashioned courthouse politicians. But metropolitan-area civic leaders acknowledged that the proposed framework was a great improvement over the existing system and urged voters to approve it in a referendum scheduled for March 1950. The St. Louis Globe-Democrat recognized that the charter was "admittedly not perfect," and the other leading metropolitan daily, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, concluded, "The charter is not nearly as good as it should be, but it contains some improvements and opens the way to still further improvement." Commission member Mrs. R. Walston Chubb of Webster Groves claimed that previous reform measures in Missouri had failed to win voter approval because they were "too idealistic." "We have tried to profit by their mistakes," Mrs. Chubb explained. "Under this charter, the government can be improved later when it is seen changes are necessary." Likewise, the mayor of Normandy, in the northeastern section of the county, concluded, "While the proposed charter fails by a good margin of accomplishing what the majority of people had hoped for, it is nevertheless a great improvement over our present form of county government." The Webster Groves newspaper summed up the prevailing attitude in the county, when it said of the charter: "We believe it will bring our county government up to date and at the same time, it will enable us to move forward when movement is necessary without seeking the patronage of our state legislators who may not understand our local problems." Stated simply, the charter seemed a step in the right direction.

Moreover, proponents of the document repeatedly mentioned the enhanced possibility of governmental cooperation in the fragmented county. The chair of the citizens' committee supporting adoption claimed that the charter would "promote better cooperative relationships between the nearly 200 governments
in providing common services." The Globe-Democrat noted that the charter did not "authorize the county government to interfere in the affairs of municipalities of the county, or with existing fire, sewer, and school districts." It did, however, "include provisions to encourage cooperation between the county and its municipal units." Likewise, the Post-Dispatch said that the new framework of government "would encourage cities and districts to seek the county's help in providing efficient common services."93

Though the charter might encourage cooperation, it would not facilitate annexation of suburban Saint Louis County to the city of Saint Louis. Fears of annexation were a traditional bugaboo in the county, and some proponents of the new framework of government claimed it would actually allay those fears. The former chair of the county board of election commissioners contended: "The adoption of this charter will make St. Louis county a body corporate and no part of its territory thereafter may be absorbed by another body corporate. We in the county will be free from the agitation of those living in St. Louis who would like to annex part of our territory." According to this political leader, "we today want to be free of the threat of someone wanting to take our front lawn away from us. The adoption of this charter will remove that threat or danger."94 This observer may have exaggerated the possible effect of the charter, but he expressed the prevailing suburban bias. Cooperation among suburbanites was desirable; invasion by the big city was not.

The charter, then, represented a middle way that satisfied the suburban desire to balance local grass-roots rule and centralized, efficient administration. Local autonomy would survive and a multitude of mini-municipalities would continue to clutter the map of Saint Louis County. But a reorganized county government would offer a more efficient administration of county services as well as a range of municipal services. With municipal services available from the county, fewer localities might opt for incorporation and the rate of fragmentation might diminish. By facilitating cooperation between existing municipalities, the new county regime might also mitigate against the worst effects of balkanization. Yet it would not destroy any small-scale village governments. In fact, by allowing undersized municipalities to contract for services from the county, the new county charter might well perpetuate the existence of these independent but generally inadequate units of government. Finally, a strengthened county government would be better able to combat the threat from the city of Saint Louis. Thus the charter preserved the suburban ideal of local rule while offering government suitable for an urbanizing area.

The charter was so well tailored to suburban thinking that it faced no orga-
nized opposition. The newspapers claimed that the courthouse politicians and local political organizations covertly opposed the charter, though the leading Republican officeholder, county judge Luman Matthews, vigorously supported its adoption. Moreover, the Republican precinct committee leaders for the elite residential areas of Ladue and Clayton Townships unanimously urged “all Republicans in St. Louis County . . . to vote in favor of the new St. Louis County charter.” Joining Matthews and the Republican precinct leaders in support were such diverse groups as the Florissant City Council, the St. Louis County Medical Society, the Forum of the First Unitarian Church, and the Ladies Division of the Wellston Chamber of Commerce. About two hundred public meetings were held throughout the county to discuss the new framework of government, though some were poorly attended and aroused little interest. The caustic Wellston Journal remarked that the debate at one meeting “at times reached the heights or depths of boring absurdity,” and the Webster News-Times said of an opinion survey on the charter: “Again it was proved that too many citizens either aren’t interested or don’t know.”

On election day those voters who did care turned out and approved the charter by an almost two-to-one margin. In eleven of the fourteen townships a majority of the ballots were cast for the charter; only three of the outlying rural townships opposed the new form of government. Support was strongest in the most urbanized, eastern portion of the county, where the margin of victory was five to one. Suburbanites in Ladue, Clayton, and University City lined up solidly behind a scheme suitable for their suburban, but urbanizing, region.

In November 1950 Luman Matthews was elected the first county supervisor, and over the next decade he and the members of the county council gradually expanded the county’s governing role. Actually, even before the passage of the charter, Saint Louis County had begun to assume a range of tasks traditionally associated with municipalities. In 1943 the county adopted subdivision regulations for developments in unincorporated areas, and in 1946 the county enacted its first comprehensive zoning ordinance for territory beyond municipal limits. Following passage of the charter, the county extended its planning function by adopting a building code, and by 1957 the county department of public works not only performed the electrical inspections for unincorporated areas but contracted to do so for fifty municipalities and had informal agreements to provide the same service to an additional thirty-four cities and villages. Similarly, this same department was responsible for plumbing inspection in the unincorporated zone and in approximately seventy municipalities, which availed themselves of the service through contract or informal understanding.
The county was also assuming responsibility for parks and recreation. In 1944 it acquired its first parkland and the following year adopted a preliminary park plan, specifying the location of fifty-one proposed recreation areas or natural preserves. Just twenty years after drafting this initial plan, there were thirty-two county parks with a combined area of 3,764 acres. Meanwhile, the county library system was also expanding, bringing edification and enjoyment to a growing population in both unincorporated and incorporated areas.

The new municipal role of Saint Louis County was most evident in the transformation of local law enforcement. During the first few years under the charter, the elected sheriff retained responsibility for policing the unincorporated county. A bastion of political patronage and ineptitude, the sheriff’s office, however, proved woefully inadequate to perform this task. Complaints mounted and peaked following a shooting incident involving two deputy sheriffs. On June 26, 1953, at a barbecue party of courthouse employees at the El Avion roadhouse, Deputy Sheriff Nicholas Burke shot and wounded Chief Deputy William Smith. Sheriff Arthur Mosley claimed Burke, who had been “suffering from severe migraine headaches for the past year, suddenly became temporarily insane, went berserk and came into the restaurant shooting wildly.” Others presented different accounts, and some claimed that Burke and Smith had fought over who was a better marksman. Moreover, confidence in the sheriff’s office was not enhanced by Mosley’s claim that it was “not necessary” to arrest the supposedly lunatic gunman following the shootout. The St. Louis Post-Dispatch referred to the incident as “a barroom brawl” and county voters regarded it as prime evidence of the incompetence and corruption of the sheriff’s office. In the minds of many county residents, an urbanizing region required an urban-style police department, not a band of trigger-happy political appointees.

Consequently, in 1954 voters approved a charter amendment creating the Saint Louis County Department of Police. Modeled after city police forces, the department was governed by a bipartisan board of police commissioners appointed by the county supervisor; the commissioners in turn chose the police superintendent. The county squad not only patrolled unincorporated areas but under contract also served some municipalities. By the beginning of the 1960s, the county provided full police services to eight municipalities and radio-dispatching service to thirty-nine additional cities and villages.

Zoning, building codes, parks, libraries, and police departments were all traditionally associated with city government, but now Saint Louis County, like Nassau County, was assuming these responsibilities and becoming a producer of municipal services for both incorporated and unincorporated areas. Yet in
Saint Louis County, as in Nassau, the grass-roots units of suburban government remained intact and the suburban ideal of small-scale, village rule was not unduly compromised. By adopting Russel Sprague's two-tier scheme of government, suburban Missourians, like their counterparts on Long Island, believed they could retain the suburban ideal at the same time they achieved more efficient and effective regional administration. They rejected a sheriff's department suitable for rural America and substituted a city-style police department, but simultaneously they clung to their small-town governments and fostered the municipal balkanization of suburban Saint Louis. They were, then, both dividing and uniting, and in the process fashioning a form of government suitable for the suburban ideals and urban realities of their emerging co-urban county.

During the 1950s Suffolk Countians were also following the lead of their Nassau neighbors and molding a balanced polity to satisfy their desire for both governmental intimacy and efficiency. By the middle of the decade Suffolk's population was soaring, imposing new burdens on the county government. Moreover, state investigators were delving into county practices and exposing an unflattering record of corruption and incompetence. Consequently, the leader of the county's dominant Republican Party, R. Ford Hughes, felt that restructuring the framework of government was imperative. "What we need, and ultimately will have," Hughes contended, "is a charter form of government similar to that originated and adopted by Nassau County in 1938." "Our county's government has crawled along while its residents progressed from the ox cart to the jet plane," Hughes argued in December 1955. "Now, we must get up and walk.”

Responding to Hughes's complaints, in early 1956 Republicans drafted a proposed charter that conformed to the two-layer theory of local government. The document provided for a county executive to ensure centralized administration, a county police department to upgrade law enforcement, and the transfer of public health duties from the townships and villages to the county. Though the document strengthened central authority, the forces of decentralizing grass-roots rule strongly influenced the final version of the proposed framework of government. The five less-populated, rural townships of eastern Suffolk were dedicated to ensuring that each of the ten townships, no matter its population, would continue to have one vote, and only one vote, on the county board of supervisors. Thus the balance of power with the five western suburban townships, where 80 percent of the population lived, would be maintained. When a leader of Islip Township, with 119,340 inhabitants, suggested apportionment on the basis of population, Supervisor Evans Griffing of
Shelter Island Township (population 1,230) rose in defense of the interests of his fragment of the county. Suspicious of centralizing reforms that might threaten township authority, Griffing expressed a familiar sentiment when he said, "Home rule is the best rule." Griffing won the battle, and the proposed charter retained the traditional composition of the board: one supervisor from each township, regardless of population.

The eastern townships also insisted that the board of supervisors appoint the proposed county executive rather than allowing the county's voters to elect that official. Because of the numerical supremacy of voters in western townships, easterners assumed that an executive elected at large would always be from the western half of the county and would give that area an upper hand in county government. Consequently, the final document provided for an appointive executive with no authority to veto acts of the board of supervisors or break tie votes of the ten-member board. The executive would administer but would not have policymaking authority and would not enjoy an independent electoral base.

The planning and policing provisions of the proposed charter also reflected the parochialism of many Suffolk Countians. The original draft of the charter empowered the county planning department to devise a master plan, and all township plans would have to conform to this county blueprint for development. Moreover, the county was to assume responsibility for zoning. Both of these centralizing provisions were deleted from the final version after spokespeople for the townships and villages objected vigorously. The final charter proposal also specified that a county police force would be established only if five adjoining townships voted in favor of such a force. If they did so, only those townships would be subject to the county police and pay for its support. In other words, naysaying residents in the eastern half of the county could keep their township law enforcement agencies and avoid centralized policing.

The proposed charter would, then, enhance central authority to a degree, but it embodied numerous concessions to placate the county's local units. Township and village governments would not disappear and they would still be able to zone their domains as they wished. But the charter did seem to offer new opportunities for countywide coordination of services and supposedly would update Suffolk's antiquated structure of government.

A creation of the county's Republican leaders, the charter was not popular with Democrats. Yet in order to be adopted, it had to win the approval of the state legislature and the Democratic state governor as well as a majority of Suffolk's voters. In March 1956 the legislature endorsed it, but the next month Democratic governor Averill Harriman vetoed the charter. Justifying his veto, he claimed the charter was too limited in its reforms. According to Harriman,
the county needed a more thoroughgoing overhaul, including the creation of a powerful elected executive with the authority to break ties on the board of supervisors. Moreover, apportionment of the board should have been on the basis of population. Thus the governor deplored the concessions granted to the townships and urged the creation of a bipartisan committee to draft a more radical document. Partisanship clearly played a role in Harriman's veto, and Republican leader Hughes attacked it as "political persecution" and "petty vindictiveness." The veto was to begin a two-year battle as the Democratic governor sought to coerce the Republican county into taking more drastic action.

Suffolk leaders responded to Harriman's action by creating a new nineteen-member charter commission, including four Democrats, to draft a revised document for submission to the 1957 session of the state legislature. The framers of this second charter sought to answer some of Harriman's objections and specifically recommended an elected executive. Suffolk Countians, however, would not yield on the apportionment of the board of supervisors. Equal representation by township had to be retained, and by early 1957 Harriman seemed willing to concede this point. Yet the representatives of the eastern townships on the board of supervisors proved more intransigent than the governor. When the revised document was submitted to the board in March 1957, these easterners convinced a majority of the board to amend the proposed charter to eliminate the elected executive and to provide again for appointment of the county chief.

Predictably, Governor Harriman repeated his veto of the previous year, dooming the revised document. Just as predictably Suffolk County Republicans roundly condemned the governor for denying Long Islanders the right to govern themselves. Hughes referred to Harriman's veto as "repulsive," and a Suffolk County newspaper angrily editorialized: "Our pampered, demagogic, multi-millionaire play-boy Governor has done it again. He vetoed the new edition of the Suffolk County Charter over which men of far greater integrity, character and intelligence have been sweating blood for two years." This irate journal could only conclude, "It is perfectly obvious that Governor Harriman is still playing his petty politics to the hilt."

Following the second veto a volunteer citizens group known as the Suffolk County Citizens Charter Committee assumed the task of revising once again the proposed charter. This group forthrightly favored a strong elected executive with veto power, the authority to break ties on the board of supervisors, and responsibility for appointing county commissioners and department heads. The executive would, then, be comparable to a strong city mayor, and the creation of such an office was a marked deviation from the traditional structure of
county rule. In February 1958, by a six-to-four vote, the board of supervisors approved this draft. One of the eastern supervisors defected and joined the five westerners to form the majority. But the remaining four easterners remained bitter and did not concede defeat easily. One western supervisor said of the battle: "It was a beaut. The east end feels an elected executive will lead to their doom." An eastern supervisor argued that the proposed county executive would exercise "almost dictatorial" powers, and Shelter Island's Supervisor Griffing concluded, "I can only hope that the people of the county will see fit to repudiate at the polls what the board is doing here today."116

In the words of one local newspaper, this third draft of the charter was "tailored to meet Harriman's approval," and in 1958 the governor was finally amenable to submitting the proposal to Suffolk County voters for their approval.117 Not only did the document authorize an elected executive, it provided for the creation of a county police department if at least three contiguous townships approved such a change. Like the drafts of 1956 and 1957, it also eliminated township and village health officers, assigning responsibility for public health solely to the county. Moreover, any township or village zoning measure affecting property within five hundred feet of a village or township boundary or a state park or parkway had to be submitted to the county planning commission for approval. Land use planning would remain largely a township and village responsibility, but the county would act as a mediator to review zoning changes in borderland areas.118

Both political parties endorsed these provisions and during fall 1958 opposition to the proposed charter was confined to the eastern townships. A newspaper in the western end of the county praised the creation of "a county police force to replace the many law enforcement agencies that had been tripping over one another's toes for years." Another western newspaper likewise lauded the establishment of a county police department "to simplify and unify the existing 27 law enforcement agencies now extant in the county and confusing to all except the shrewd law breaker."119 Proponents of the charter repeatedly referred to "streamlined government" and "good business sense" when commenting on the reforms.120 The charter would supposedly eliminate waste, duplication, and inefficiency and finally bring Suffolk County's archaic government into the twentieth century.

On election day an overwhelming majority of the Suffolk County electorate agreed with this analysis. The final tally recorded 88,000 votes in favor of the charter and only 33,000 votes against. Support was especially strong in the western half of the county, where voters in densely populated Islip Township approved the document by a five-to-one margin and approximately 80 percent
of the electorate in Babylon Township lined up behind reform. Each of the five more heavily populated western townships supported the charter by substantial margins, but each of the less populous eastern townships rejected it, with four of every five voters in tiny Shelter Island casting a negative ballot. Moreover, all five of the western townships voted to transfer law enforcement duties to a county police force whereas the five eastern townships were to retain their local constabulary.\footnote{121}

Residents of the heavily populated suburban areas of Suffolk County thus opted for change and for increased central authority. But the degree of change was limited, with the county's twenty-seven villages, myriad fire protection districts, and ten townships retaining most of their authority. The Suffolk charter simply adjusted county government to changing realities; it did not overturn the existing structure of rule or violate long-standing suburban ideals. Moreover, the long and difficult conflict between easterners and westerners in Suffolk was indicative of the strength of localism in suburbanizing counties. Even moderate adjustments could raise cries of tyranny in townships fearful of being shortchanged by reform. Townships and villages were alert to the dangers confronting them, and in Suffolk as well as Saint Louis County, proposals for change confronted a wall of suspicion. Moreover, if suburban political leaders seemed to be moving too far in the direction of centralized control, then this wall would become a barricade blocking reform and protecting parochialism.

Whereas Saint Louis and Suffolk Counties followed the example of Nassau and adopted charters outlining a new structure of government, other suburban counties proceeded with piecemeal reforms that likewise centralized authority to achieve some coordination among the many municipalities along the metropolitan fringe. For example, in 1949 Oakland County established a county planning commission, only the second such body to be created in Michigan. The board of supervisors appointed a special committee to consider the formation of a planning commission, and in its report this committee emphasized the need "for a central agency to coordinate and make plans for the future growth and development of the County as a whole." According to a member of the board, this report "further pointed out that many County problems [were] inter-related with problems of other local communities, and that because of the extensive growth of the County the importance of water, sewage, and land use and development would become more acute every day."\footnote{122} In other words, in Oakland as in Saint Louis and Suffolk Counties, officials were recognizing that fast-paced development demanded coordination among the local government units and that the county needed to assume the role of coordinator.

During the following decade, the Oakland County Planning Commission
actively sought to realize the goal of coordinated, planned development. Starting with an annual appropriation of $6,000 in 1950, the commission's budget rose to almost $109,000 by 1962. In the course of that period, it drafted a subdivision guide, prepared reports on the county's water resources, conducted zoning forums to educate township officials about land use planning, compiled parking studies for a number of communities, investigated the potential for retailing development in the county, and issued information bulletins to municipal zoning officials. Thus it did not focus solely on land use but also surveyed the provision of public services and monitored the economic development of the county. By the early 1960s it had clearly convinced local officials of the need for central coordination and countywide planning. In 1962 the chair of the board of supervisors observed: "We have found that master planning is essential. Services and facilities must be provided on an area basis and built with sufficient capacity for future potential use."

During the 1950s Oakland County took further action to minimize the adverse consequences of fragmentation. Especially serious in the relatively flat, humid county was the problem of drainage, which no single municipality was competent to solve. Following heavy rains, water filled basements, flooded streets, and caused the existing inadequate sewers to back up. Among the traditional county offices in Michigan was that of Drain Commissioner, but under existing state laws that official could not readily correct the problem in the fast-developing county. Consequently, in 1957 Oakland's board of supervisors pushed a bill through the legislature authorizing a county department of public works. This county agency had the authority to construct and maintain water supply and sewerage systems if requested to do so by county municipalities. Moreover, if a municipality's drainage problems posed a hazard to adjoining communities, the county department of public works could extend sewerage lines into the offending municipality without that community's permission. According to a planning commission report from 1960, the department of public works served "local units of government within the county which [were] unable to solve their sewer and water problems individually" and thus found it "expedient to have this work undertaken by a central organization on a large area basis." Drainage and water supply problems transcended municipal boundaries and required action by a broader countywide agency. The department of public works was intended to serve that regional function.

Within a few years the department was proving its value. By 1960 it was already planning or constructing sewer projects to drain 47 percent of the county's area. Faced with a multitude of separate municipalities unable to shoulder the task, the county had taken charge and coordinated a multimun-
nicipal approach. The first director of the public works department recognized the need for centralization to counter the governmental fragmentation in the county. In 1958 he told county business leaders that “the sanctimonious veil of home rule” had resulted in the “defeat of proposals that could [have led] to the solution of area problems.” Moreover, he claimed that Oakland Countians had had their “heads in the sand for many years insular as planning and developing . . . basic facilities on an area basis [were] concerned.” But now the department of public works seemed to usher in a new era of county coordination. In 1959 a local newspaper observed: “The DPW is a new attempt in county services and county leaders have long talked about it as a model for extension of services into other experiments in area government.”

Like their Michigan counterparts, Orange Countians did not opt for a wholesale reconstruction of their governmental framework. Though California’s constitution permitted counties to fashion their own government structures through home rule charters, Orange County voters chose to retain the noncharter format specified by the general laws of the state. Despite this seeming reluctance to change, Orange County authorities were gradually assuming a broader role during the 1950s to ensure coordinated countywide action. This was evident in the work of the county planning commission. In 1956 the commission formulated a master plan for arterial highways and during the late 1950s county planners worked closely with their municipal counterparts to update the scheme. In 1960 the commission praised the highway program as “a good example of City-County cooperative effort.”

Such cooperative effort was a major theme of the commission’s programs of the late 1950s. In 1957 the county planning director initiated the City-County Planning Directors Group, which held monthly luncheon meetings devoted to bridging the gaps that separated the various governmental units in Orange County. According to the county planning commission report, “These gatherings provide an opportunity for the exchange of ideas, planning procedures and techniques for the mutual benefit of all concerned and promote fellowship and acquaintance on a first name basis in a group having a common interest.” Moreover, the county planning director, county road commissioner, and four representatives of cities selected by the Orange County League of Cities constituted a street-naming committee to achieve some uniformity in the county’s street names. Forty-two of the arterial highways had 129 names, with different municipalities applying different names to the same thoroughfare. Again the goal was to impose some unity and alleviate the confusion arising from governmental fragmentation.

The county planning director also spearheaded the development of a coun-
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tywide park scheme. In May 1960 the planning commission recommended that the county establish a regional park program, and in December the board of supervisors responded by creating the Regional Parks Advisory Committee, chaired by the planning director. Rather than just review subdivision plats submitted by developers or consider zoning variances, Orange County planners were increasingly attempting to assume the role of regional coordinator and ensure a unified countywide approach to recreation and park development as well as highway and street construction.

In Orange County as in Oakland, Suffolk, and Saint Louis Counties, then, the fifteen years following World War II witnessed not only the splintering of suburbia into multiple municipalities but also a concurrent trend toward central coordination to achieve better services and more effective administration. A governmental balance of power was developing in these counties, a balance that was to become characteristic of emerging post-suburban areas. In the minds of many, suburbia may have seemed an irrational crazy quilt of defensive municipal fragments jealous of their authority. But the increasingly durable threads of county coordination were holding these fragments together, and gradually, as the post-suburban polity emerged, the pattern of authority would appear less crazy and more attractive to perceptive eyes. A pragmatic solution to conflicting demands was developing. Residents of Oakland County could indulge their preference for a five-way division of Southfield Township while, courtesy of the county department of public works, still enjoy a system of sewers equal to those in the city of Detroit. Saint Louis Countians could maintain their miniscule municipalities and contract with Saint Louis County’s police department for radio-dispatching service. Along the metropolitan fringe, citizens were negotiating a compromise that might allow them the benefits of both small-scale and large-scale administration.