Recognition and Rebellion

During the 1980s America discovered post-suburbia. By the close of the decade journalists and scholars were churning out articles and books on this remarkable and supposedly new phenomenon. With its postmodern office towers, its high-tech industries, and its state-of-the-art shopping malls, it seemed the embodiment of American life in the 1980s. It was a region of material success on the cutting edge of American civilization; its sleek, new buildings and well-manicured landscape contrasted sharply with the shabby structures and seedy appearance of many of the older central cities that had dominated the first half of the twentieth century. Post-suburbia had arrived and finally forced its way into the American consciousness. Now it was recognized as a central element of American life and the incarnation of the American future.

Yet during this hour of recognition, many residents along the metropolitan fringe expressed strong doubts about the new world surrounding them. Authors like Joel Garreau and Robert Fishman were proclaiming the onset of a new life style in post-suburbia, but many of the residents of these areas remained devoted to the suburban mindset of the past and bridled at the changes that were engulfing their communities. Since the 1950s residents of Suffolk, Nassau, Oakland, DuPage, Saint Louis, and Orange Counties had sought a balance between the treasured suburban ideal of residential refuge and the necessity for luring jobs, retailers, and industrial taxpayers. They had generally welcomed some degree of commercial development but had remained devoted to preserving the purported advantages of suburban life. Now in the 1980s the high rises, traffic jams, and wall-to-wall humanity appeared to be destroying these advantages and tipping the balance too far in the direction of urbanization. From Long Island to Orange County diehard suburbanites awoke to the fact that they lived in a post-suburban world, and they did not like what they saw.

Rallying around the fashionable slogans of environmentalism, these disgruntled residents of post-suburbia launched controlled-growth or slow-growth campaigns. In their minds, profit-hungry developers were the villains,
and gridlock on the freeways was prime proof of the entrepreneurs' villainy. If left unchecked, the rapacious developers would ravish the small-town havens that had drawn city dwellers to the suburban fringe. At the very moment that the world was finally recognizing the advent of post-suburbia, opponents of breakneck development were, then, reasserting suburban values and repeating standard suburban rhetoric in the hope of halting the drift away from the village life style. The 1980s was a decade not only of recognition but also of rebellion, when angry citizens perceived the pitfalls inherent in post-suburban changes and sought to check those changes.

Moreover, many citizens rose up against the threat of centralized government authority so antithetical to the traditional village ideal. Just as the high rises were monuments to excessive commercial development, the schemes of such post-suburban imperialists as Jack Knuepfer and Gene McNary were manifestations of the governmental giantism so threatening to small-scale suburban rule. And in the 1980s residents of post-suburbia were no more willing to kowtow to big government than to big developers. Reasserting the balance between the county and the smaller local units, residents in DuPage and Saint Louis Counties put Knuepfer and McNary in their place, just as Orange County’s citizenry pulled the reins on their empire-building supervisors.

Thus during the 1980s an increasing number of observers recognized that post-suburbia existed, but at the same time an increasing number of residents in post-suburban areas reasserted the ideals of suburbia. Despite booming businesses, bloated populations, and the other omnipresent signs of urbanization, residents from Suffolk to Orange reaffirmed their suburban identity and rebelled against those who threatened that identity. The balance deemed so desirable in the past was not to be destroyed. Instead, inhabitants of post-suburbia clung to suburban ideals and fought bigness, in the forms of both commercial development and government centralization.

**THE POST-SUBURBAN ASCENDANCY**

By the 1980s post-suburban development was so pronounced that even the most obtuse observer could see that Suffolk, Nassau, Oakland, DuPage, Saint Louis, and Orange Counties no longer conformed to the suburban stereotype. As seen in table 8, by 1990 four of the six counties had populations over one million, and one fell just short of that mark. Moreover, three had a population density of more than two thousand people per square mile, with one other approaching that figure. The census data demonstrated quite plainly that these counties were populous and increasingly crowded.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Suffolk</td>
<td>1,284,231</td>
<td>1,321,864</td>
<td>1,409</td>
<td>1,451</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nassau</td>
<td>1,321,582</td>
<td>1,287,348</td>
<td>4,609</td>
<td>4,489</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oakland</td>
<td>1,011,793</td>
<td>1,083,592</td>
<td>1,159</td>
<td>1,242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DuPage</td>
<td>658,858</td>
<td>781,666</td>
<td>1,970</td>
<td>2,337</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saint Louis</td>
<td>974,180</td>
<td>993,529</td>
<td>1,919</td>
<td>1,957</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orange</td>
<td>1,932,921</td>
<td>2,410,556</td>
<td>2,448</td>
<td>3,053</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Yet the data also demonstrated that four of the six counties were no longer experiencing rapid population growth. Nassau was fully developed and its population had peaked in 1970. The number of residents in Suffolk, Oakland, and Saint Louis Counties rose only slowly after 1970, and even in relatively fast-growing DuPage and Orange Counties the rate of increase was far smaller than in the 1950s and 1960s. Older suburbs in each of these counties were losing population or only inching upward, and in new outlying communities the amount of vacant space available for residential construction was diminishing.

Commercial development continued, however, as each of these counties lured a growing number of office buildings, malls, and factories. In fact, these counties won recognition during the 1980s not because of booming populations but because of their magnetic attraction for business. They were emerging even more clearly than before as business hubs, with the facilities, functions, and services once reserved to central cities. It was this continuing commercial development that earned communities from Suffolk to Orange the titles of *edge city* and *technoburb*.

Further distinguishing these counties was their wealth. Though residential neighborhoods were aging and commerce and industry were engulfing thousands of once-sylvan acres, each of these counties remained far above the average in per capita income. In 1987 Oakland ranked first in per capita money income among the seven counties in the Detroit area; DuPage likewise was number one of the eleven counties in the Chicago-Gary region; Saint Louis County was first among the ten counties in metropolitan Saint Louis; and the per capita income of Orange exceeded that of the four other counties in the Los Angeles area. Though not first in wealth in the New York area, the Nassau-Suffolk region was well above the metropolitan average. Moreover, for the period 1979 to 1987 the rate of per capita income growth in these counties gen-
eraly exceeded that of their neighbors. Oakland, Saint Louis, and Orange each ranked first in their respective regions in rate of per capita income growth, DuPage held second place, and the Nassau-Suffolk area again surpassed the regional average. In other words, these post-suburban counties were still wealthy, and they were growing even wealthier relative to their neighbors. The figures demonstrated that they were indeed achieving the ideal fashioned earlier in Clayton and Oak Brook. They were luring office blocks without losing mansion dwellers. They were continuing to foster a lucrative amalgam of polo fields and corporate headquarters. These counties were realizing the post-suburban dream—a land of affluent corporations and affluent residents.

Exemplifying this material triumph was the commercial growth of Long Island during the 1980s. In 1982 Business Week summed up an emerging consensus in the business world when it concluded, “Long Island’s economic success story may be one of the best kept secrets in the U.S.” Traditionally stereotyped as a wealthy bedroom community, Long Island was now emerging as a recognized business dynamo. Though the population of the Nassau-Suffolk region only inched upward in the early 1980s, the number of jobs rose 16.5 percent from 1980 to 1985. By the latter date over one million people were employed in the two counties, and Newsday concluded that “Long Island’s economic forecast [was] still hot.” Year after year Long Island’s unemployment rate was far below that of New York State or the United States as a whole, with Nassau’s rate dropping from 6.0 percent in 1982 to 2.8 percent in 1988. In fact, during the economic recession of the early 1980s, unemployment figures for Long Island held relatively steady while the number of jobless in the nation rose markedly. Such economic resilience led one business journal to feature an article titled, “How Long Island Beats the Slump.”

Long Island political leaders were not reluctant to boast of their region’s success. In 1985 Nassau County executive Francis Purcell bragged of the county’s “booming” economy and described his domain as a “growing, thriving, bustling center of commerce and industry.” In 1988 the county comptroller reported that “the economy of Nassau County continue[d] to flourish,” and the following year he observed that “vacancies among the County’s 310 shopping centers and fifty million square feet of industrially zoned buildings [were] at all time lows.” By 1987 Suffolk County executive Michael LoGrande feared too much of a good thing and urged appointment of an advisory panel to recommend how to “ease off” economic growth. Private-sector jobs in Suffolk had risen 33 percent between 1979 and 1985, fueling LoGrande’s concern. “The county’s economy is operating on a rubber band that is stretched very tautly,” the executive warned. “We must ease off or the economy may break.”
Meanwhile, an ever-increasing inventory of office space further testified to the commercial triumph of Long Island. By the close of 1984 Nassau-Suffolk already could boast of over 34 million square feet of prime office space, approximately equal that of downtown Los Angeles. Thirty buildings with almost 5 million square feet had been constructed in the previous two years, including the fifteen-story EAB Plaza at the Mitchel Field complex, one of the major office hubs in Nassau County. Approximately 2.5 million square feet were under construction and an additional forty-four buildings with almost 8 million square feet were proposed or projected.9

Employment in the office sector, and in manufacturing and retailing as well, was expanding so rapidly that Nassau and Suffolk leaders worried about a labor shortage. Housing costs on Long Island were skyrocketing, leaving many workers priced out of the market, and exclusionary zoning placed obstacles in the path of builders of moderate-priced homes. Thus Long Island was failing to attract as many additional residents as it needed for its future commercial growth. One expert predicted, “The relatively small increase in Long Island’s population will not be sufficient to provide the labor force necessary to sustain the demands of the growing economy.” Economists projected that by the year 2000 there would be forty-six jobs for every one hundred Long Island residents as compared to the 1982 ratio of forty-one to one hundred. To solve the problem, “non-resident workers from other adjacent areas of the New York region [would] have to be relied upon.”10 Already in 1985 a local newspaper reported that “some labor shortages [had] begun to appear at both ends of the wage scale” and it was difficult “to find either engineers or fast-food restaurant workers.”11

In other words, Long Island seemed to be on the threshold of becoming a net importer of labor, a direct reversal of the traditional image of Nassau and Suffolk as bedrooms for New York City. Moreover, the same prospect faced other post-suburban areas. The post-suburban formula of residential wealth mixed with a desirable number of well-endowed commercial taxpayers did not leave much room for lesser-paid employees of businesses establishing themselves along the fringe. Clerks and secretaries could ill afford the rising housing costs of Nassau and Suffolk Counties or comparable post-suburban areas elsewhere in the country. Consequently, an increasing number of these essential workers were having to commute from beyond the counties’ boundaries. During the first two-thirds of the twentieth century, the less affluent lived closer to their jobs while the wealthy commuted from distant suburbs. In post-suburbia this pattern was being turned on its head, with executives enjoying a short drive to their offices while their underlings footed the bill for a longer commute.
Fueling Long Island's demand for labor was its development as a hub of high technology. "High-tech" business was the symbol of success in the 1980s, and every region sought to attract a share of this post-modern bonanza. Nassau-Suffolk, as well as the other post-suburban counties, was especially successful in luring such business, and this added further luster to the reputation of the newly recognized areas. In 1982 Business Week reported that Long Island was "fast becoming a thriving high-technology center with hundreds of small companies serving the defense industry and other rapidly growing markets such as telecommunications and computers." We could be the new Silicon Valley," predicted the chief economist for the Long Island Regional Planning Board, and advertisements in a 1982 issue of Barron's proclaimed, "Long Island is Tech Island, where it's at in high technology!" The head of a local consulting firm reiterated this view when he boasted, "Name a high technology and you will find it on Long Island."

Long Islanders offered ample data to support their claims of technological triumph. In 1985 a boosterish publication stated that Nassau ranked third among the nation's counties in the manufacture of electronic equipment and fifth in aircraft production. Moreover, Suffolk held sixth place in output of radio and television communication equipment and tenth rank in aircraft manufacturing. Over forty thousand engineers and scientists purportedly lived and worked in the two counties, providing the know-how necessary for its high-tech greatness. In 1988 one student of the island's economy summed up the prevailing belief when he wrote, "The story of Long Island's lasting economic health is specifically attributable to the proliferation and success of its high technology industries."

The economic success of the 1980s seemed to prove once again that Long Island was no longer simply a satellite of New York City but a commercial and industrial hub with a density of its own. In a poll conducted during the second half of the 1980s, 71 percent of Long Islanders disagreed with the statement, "Long Island is merely a bedroom community of New York City," whereas only 16 percent agreed with this claim. A representative of the local electric company was one who would have disputed this statement. "We have evolved from a bedroom community to a more independent economic community," he contended. And with an optimism typical of the decade, he added, "We're all bullish."

In Oakland County local boosters were expressing the same upbeat spirit. With its traditional dependence on the automobile industry, Oakland had suffered greatly from the economic recession of the early 1980s; in 1982 the local unemployment rate had reached a dire 16.3 percent. The county quickly rebounded, however, and became an economic bright spot in Michigan's oth-
erwise gloomy business picture. By 1989 County Executive Daniel Murphy was reporting on “a bright and prosperous present” following “seven years of unprecedented growth.” From 1982 to 1989 the number of people employed in Oakland soared 49 percent, and that county alone accounted for almost 25 percent of all new jobs created in Michigan during the 1980s. “People outside Oakland County often say, ‘Gee, what kind of magic do you have?’” observed the county’s economic development director at the close of the decade. “The answer is, there is no magic . . . we just happen to have the best product around.”

Southfield continued to reign as the edge city par excellence of Oakland County. In 1984 for the first time in the city’s history, the value of new construction topped the $100-million mark. During that year ground was broken for a 28-story office structure that joined existing 32- and 20-story office towers and a 33-story apartment building in the Prudential Insurance Company’s Town Center Development. Moreover, the boom continued. In 1986 the local newspaper reported optimistically, “Southfield’s vibrant office market . . . is destined to keep expanding until all land is gone.” The figures from 1988 proved the accuracy of this prediction, for in the single month of April that year, Southfield approved a record $70.2 million of new construction. With twenty million square feet of office space, the city had meanwhile surpassed downtown Detroit as the office center of southeastern Michigan. Southfield called itself the “office capital of the Midwest” and the 250,000 people who worked in the city far outnumbered the 75,000 residents. “As the hub of southeastern Michigan and the heart of the metropolitan area,” Mayor Donald Fracassi proudly proclaimed, “Southfield has it all.”

Yet in standard suburban fashion, Southfield’s leaders did not see their community as a place primarily to make money. Instead, in their eyes, it retained the suburban virtues of home and family. “Ultimately, Southfield is about families,” Mayor Fracassi insisted. “We are dedicated to families, neighborhoods, shared values, and a wholesome quality of life.” According to the mayor, “We’re a community in the truest and warmest sense of the word.” Southfield planner Tod Kilroy agreed. “Fly over the city and all you see is a sea of greenery,” Kilroy noted. “When you drive through, you tend to see the high-rise buildings and retail complexes. But what we really have here are hundreds of fine neighborhoods.” Thus even in Michigan’s office capital, officials repeated the traditional suburban rhetoric. Southfield was at heart a community of homeowners who benefited from the fact that the city’s many businesses paid 60 percent of the local tax burden.

By the mid 1980s, however, Southfield’s western neighbor Farmington Hills
and the city of Troy to the northeast were assuming the lead in new business development. With eleven million square feet of office space in 1988, Troy boasted of the Golden Corridor, a tax-rich zone of office buildings lining Big Beaver Road. As early as the late 1960s Kmart had located its corporate headquarters along this corridor, and in the 1980s it was to be joined by many others, including the offices of General Motors's Saturn Corporation. So many auto-related businesses located their headquarters in Troy that one executive labeled the city "the nerve center of the automotive industry, worldwide." Describing the extraordinary demand for office space, a vice president of a leading real estate firm remarked, "If someone came in my office right now and asked for 2,000 square feet in Troy, I'd have to tell them 'no.'" Moreover, the Wall Street Journal pronounced Troy "one of the hottest corporate boomtowns in America." Meanwhile, Farmington Hills was also developing at a rate sufficient to stir the admiration of any profit-hungry investor. Between 1986 and 1988 the value of its commercial real estate soared 40 percent and the value of industrial property rose 30 percent. By the latter date both Troy and Farmington Hills had surpassed Southfield in assessed value of real estate.

In Oakland as on Long Island, many local boosters bragged of the county's leadership in high technology. At the heart of the region dubbed "Automation Alley," Oakland County claimed to be the home of 40 percent of America's robotics industry. Shedding its image as the source of hulking Pontiacs, Oakland was now selling itself as a maker of industrial robots and as an area on the very cutting edge of technology. The county's economic development director boasted, "Whereas across the country everybody wanted to become big tech-centers, this place succeeded at it."

The crown jewel of the county's high-tech initiative was the Oakland Technology Park, an eleven-hundred-acre tract in the newly created municipality of Auburn Hills, east of Pontiac. It was to become the site of a number of high-tech concerns, including the Chrysler Technology Center which was expected to employ six thousand people by the early 1990s. The technology park was visible proof that Oakland had an eye on the future, and the enthusiastic Auburn Hills mayor described some of the park's facilities as being "beyond Star Wars." "It will be a center of technology which I don't think is going to be repeated in the Midwest," a county official observed. "It firmly establishes Oakland County as being the technology center of this region."

With high technology, booming office construction, and fine upper-middle-class neighborhoods, Oakland was the embodiment of the post-suburban dream of the 1980s. It was assuming a higher profile in the business world and becoming a dominant player in Michigan, shattering Detroit's pretensions as the
state's preeminent economic hub. By the late 1980s Oakland County had surpassed the Motor City in population and surpassed Detroit’s Wayne County in assessed valuation of property. With some justice a county official could conclude that Oakland was “the business center of southeastern Michigan.”

DuPage Countians, however, would have challenged Oakland's claim to be the technology center of the Midwest. For like other post-suburban areas, the Illinois county was riding a wave of high-tech euphoria. "The aspirations of DuPage County to become the base for a major high-technology complex seem well along toward realization," announced the *Chicago Sun-Times* in 1982. In 1986 the state officially dubbed the chain of research facilities along the East-West Tollway as the Illinois Research and Development Corridor, while others christened the area “Silicon Prairie.” Naperville proved especially attractive to companies seeking to create research and development laboratories in campuslike settings. Referring to the nation’s two preeminent high-tech areas, that city’s mayor Margaret Price asserted without hesitation, “Naperville is in the class with Silicon Valley and Boston.”

Though knowledgeable observers might have accused her honor of hyperbole, there was no denying that DuPage was experiencing a business boom, both high-tech and otherwise. From 1980 to 1988 the number of jobs in the county soared 59.5 percent whereas the population rose only 18.6 percent. By comparison, the number of jobs in Chicago’s Cook County fell 1.5 percent and employment in Illinois as a whole increased only 4.5 percent. The influx of jobs meant that communities once deemed Chicago’s bedrooms were becoming business centers to be reckoned with. “Downers Grove is basically to the point where if you dropped it down in the middle of Kansas it would function as an independent community,” insisted that municipality’s village manager. The boom also sent housing prices soaring, to the consternation of employees seeking a residence near their work. Both Mayor Price and her counterpart in Wheaton said that if they were newcomers, they would not be able to afford a house in the communities they governed.

Yet another index of the boom was the rise in office space. In 1979 there was 6.8 million square feet of such space along the research corridor; nine years later the figure was almost 22 million square feet. In the Lisle-Naperville area the inventory of office space increased almost tenfold between 1980 and 1985. The chief monument to office growth was the thirty-one-story Oakbrook Terrace Tower in the village of Oakbrook Terrace. The tallest building in northeastern Illinois outside of Chicago’s central business district, this tower stood at the eastern gateway of DuPage County, reminding all who passed on the adjacent tollway that DuPage had entered the post-suburban era.
Oakbrook Terrace Tower also marked the beginning of a new phenomenon in DuPage County—the selling of entire residential neighborhoods to commercial developers for a handsome profit. In 1988 forty-six homeowners in the seventeen-acre Ernie Pyle subdivision immediately south of the tower jointly sold their properties to Chicago developers for $16 million. Moreover, in a more ambitious scheme, homeowners sought to cash in on the commercial boom by proposing to sell about 99 percent of the single-family housing in Oakbrook Terrace to developers. Supposedly, they would be able to sell their homes for a price two to four times greater than they could receive on the residential market. The mayor of Oakbrook Terrace extolled the “Mayberry-like” community he governed, but he also recognized that the area was changing. “We’re small, but we walk among the giants now,” he observed. A real estate consultant summed up the situation best when he noted, “When you have a county as attractive as DuPage is for living and working and where the amount of available commercially zoned land has been dwindling, it simply comes down to a matter of reuse and highest and best use of existing land.” In DuPage as elsewhere, the Mayberrys of the suburban past thus seemed to be yielding to the highest and best use of the post-suburban present.

To the south Saint Louis County was also feeling the pressures of change and boasted of the standard indices of the post-suburban boom. Though its population remained steady between 1980 and 1990, the county’s employment figure soared 46 percent. By the beginning of the 1990s, the county accounted for 49 percent of the jobs in the Saint Louis metropolitan area and approximately one-fourth of all employment in the state of Missouri. In 1986 County Executive Gene McNary expressed the prevailing optimism. “St. Louis County is young, strong, prosperous, growing up in the ‘80s,” he remarked in his State of the County address. “St. Louis County is on the move with a burst of construction that is reshaping the local landscape.”

As in Nassau, Suffolk, Oakland, and DuPage Counties, much of this new construction was in the form of office buildings. From 1980 to 1985 office space in the county rose almost 30 percent, from 18 million square feet to over 23 million square feet. By 1992 it was up to 45 million square feet. Some growth occurred in the Clayton business district, but the increase was more dramatic in other areas, especially in the West County. Chesterfield in that region and Earth City in the northwest sector witnessed much of the commercial construction. As a result of this building boom, the county could boast of almost 70 percent more occupied rentable office space than existed in downtown Saint Louis.

Meanwhile, the story was much the same in Orange County. Between 1980
and 1986 the inventory of office space in Orange County grew from 16.1 million square feet to 36.6 million square feet, and in 1987 a real estate expert was still able to say that the county was “in the midst of an unprecedented boom in office construction.”49 Much of the building took place in the vicinity of John Wayne Airport and the giant South Coast Plaza shopping mall, but other office hubs were also developing. For example, the area adjacent to Anaheim Stadium sprouted four eighteen-story office towers as phase one of Stadium Center, which was described by one newspaper as an “integrated business center in a park-like setting.”50

Anaheim was not simply attracting office space, it was also acquiring other big-city adornments. In 1980 the Los Angeles Rams professional football team began playing in Anaheim Stadium, joining the California Angels baseball team, which had been based in the city since the early 1970s. Moreover, Anaheim played in the big leagues of the convention business. “Anaheim competes head-on with Los Angeles for the big convention trade,” the Los Angeles Times reported in 1982, “and has meetings scheduled through 1993.” By 1988 annual convention attendance reached 1,026,728, a figure that placed Anaheim among the top convention cities in the nation.51

Yet in Anaheim, as in other successful post-suburban boomtowns, the leaders and residents did not embrace big-city status without reservation, for they remained devoted to the advantages of suburbia. “As a city, Anaheim can be as small-town and suburban as any of its neighbors,” the Times observed. “And that dual standing has resulted in an ambivalent—some call it schizophrenic—civic posture.” Like Southfield it was, then, a town with a “big-little-city personality,” proud of its supposed neighborliness but the home of two major-league teams and a leading convention center.52

As elsewhere in post-suburbia, an additional element of Orange County’s emergence in the 1980s was its self-proclaimed status as a high-tech hub. Whereas DuPage had pretensions of being “Silicon Prairie,” Orange adopted the sobriquet of “Silicon Valley South.”53 The county had long been known as a center of the aerospace industry, but in the 1980s Orange’s new economic frontier was biomedical technology. In 1984 Orange was reported to have the nation’s largest concentration of cardiovascular product manufacturers, and, according to the Los Angeles Times, the county had “undertaken an ambitious, multimillion-dollar project designed to . . . build a high-technology center of national prominence with a focus on medical technology.”54 A leading manufacturer of medical instruments predicted that “in 15 years (Orange County) will be a national, probably an international, center for bioscience.” A research director at a local university likewise observed, “Orange County is racing to be
the capital of biotechnology research and, given the available resources, it would have to work awful hard to screw things up. The developers of Irvine seconded these prognostications when they included in their plans an Irvine Bioscience Center, with seven million square feet of building space for biomedical pursuits.

Biomedical research and big-league sports were certainly prominent manifestations of Orange County's post-suburban ascendancy. But another sign of change was the construction of cultural facilities such as the $72.8 million Orange County Performing Arts Center, which opened in 1986. In 1973 the Los Angeles Times had reported disparagingly: "An accepted barometer of an area's cultural status is its commitment to the live performing arts. . . . In Orange County, the reading is definitely low." Fourteen years later, however, according to one national magazine, "the stunning new Orange County Performing Arts Center in Costa Mesa dramatically symbolize[d] Orange County's coming of age." One observer after another said much the same thing, referring to the opening of the center as a "civic rite of passage" or a declaration of "cultural independence" for Orange County. "In population, commerce, education and technological creativity, Orange County shed its role as a suburb of Los Angeles years ago," editorialized the newly respectful Times. Now the county had "shed its role as a cultural suburb as well." With big-time culture, sports, and convention business, Orange County had everything any aspiring American metropolis could desire. All this announced to the world that Orange was indeed no longer a child of Los Angeles but had grown up.

The performing arts center was, then, not only a monument to the arts but a granite-clad landmark of post-suburban ascendancy. At its opening, former U.S. Attorney General William French Smith remarked, "I think [this] could really be classified as an historic occasion." Smith was more accurate in his judgment than he perhaps realized. For this opening concert marked the final recognition of an independent Orange County. The principal newspaper in the nearby metropolis of Los Angeles recognized the end of suburbia, and few could fail to second the Times' observation. Orange, as well as Saint Louis, DuPage, Oakland, Nassau, and Suffolk Counties, had won acknowledgment as a post-suburban powerhouse. In Anaheim, as in Naperville and Southfield, the suburban age most definitely appeared to have come to an end.

**Rebelling Against Post-Suburbia**

Not everyone applauded as the curtain descended on the suburban age. For many who embraced the traditional village ideal, Oakbrook Center Tower and
the Golden Corridor of Troy were hardly happy finales. In fact, during the 1980s these malcontents joined together to rewrite the plot. They believed that the promise of suburbia could be fulfilled if disenchanted citizens rose up to halt the forces of growth and development. Through concerted effort they could ensure that Oakbrook Center Tower was the last skyscraper to mar the DuPage horizon and that the flow of traffic through their once placid neighborhoods was stanch. For decades, suburbanites had welcomed a certain degree of commerce, which bolstered the local economic base and thereby reduced the tax bills of homeowners. But by the 1980s a growing number of residents were ready to call a halt. Urbanization had proceeded too far and it was time to rebel.

Nowhere were the forces of rebellion so active and fervent as in Southern California. Orange Countians had long been proud of their perfect climate, beautiful beaches, and fine residential communities. Their county was the embodiment of the good life. Yet breakneck development seemed to threaten the quality of living along this American Riviera, and with increasing frequency disillusioned residents described their county as paradise lost. When asked what he liked about Orange County, one wealthy homeowner responded: “The openness. The orange trees. The feeling that there is room for everybody. The quiet.” But then he added, “All the things we like best are disappearing.” This was an attitude many Orange Countians shared. The best of Orange was being destroyed.

In the 1970s slow-growth advocates had exerted pressure on Orange County planners and politicians, but during the following decade growth limits became a local obsession and few communities were spared bitter battles over proposed commercial development. Exacerbating the situation were mounting traffic problems, which advocates of limited growth blamed on excessive development. In Tustin’s municipal election of 1982, the principal issues were traffic and a projected office and retail complex that included two five-story buildings and one four-story structure. According to one newspaper account, this project was deemed “a threat to Tustin’s low-key, hometown atmosphere” and “would bring traffic to a standstill” along an already congested thoroughfare. That same year candidates were arguing over what height limits should be imposed on downtown buildings in Huntington Beach, and in Newport Beach the fight was over a proposal for industrial, commercial, and residential structures on a seventy-five-acre tract on the city’s western edge. The chief foe of this project described the clash as “overgrowth versus regulated growth.”

Though often castigated as prodevelopment, the members of the county board of supervisors were catching the spirit of restrained growth as well. In
his 1983 State of the County address, Supervisor Bruce Nestande urged Orange Countians to accept “sensible densities” and “avoid the fiction that high densities and high rises enhance a community’s image.” “What’s wrong with quaintness?” the supervisor asked.

Many Orange Countians would have answered, “Nothing.” The quaint fake adobe of Orange County suburbia had attracted thousands of urban refugees, and Tustin was not the only community in the county that treasured its “low-key hometown atmosphere.” Orange County was facing an increasingly common post-suburban dilemma—opt for the quaint suburban past or embrace slick, high-rise post-suburbia. This dilemma would lie at the heart of the decade’s battles over growth.

During the following few years these battles became more frequent and more bitter. In the wealthy seaside community of Newport Beach slow-growth advocates were especially formidable, and in 1986 they clashed with the Irvine Company over its plans for three new office towers in the Newport Center complex. Acting through such grass-roots organizations as SPON (Stop Polluting Our Newport) and Gridlock, foes of the office towers claimed that the new structures would add forty thousand automobile trips each day to the clogged thoroughfares around Newport Center and “further transform picturesque Newport Beach into a crowded urban center.” “The bay is polluted—the air is polluted. Forty thousand plus cars means 40,000 plus tailpipes,” complained one irate Newport Beach resident. “This is the St. Tropez of the United States,” he added. “There is no replacing it.”

In a November 1986 referendum Newport Beach residents voted on whether to permit the Irvine project and handed the giant developer a stunning defeat. Though the Irvine Company had spent half a million dollars to convince voters to accept the expansion scheme and Gridlock’s campaign fund amounted to only about $10,000, 58 percent of those casting ballots sided with the slow-growth forces. “The developers who have been cleaning the place out will go look someplace else for their quick profits,” commented one of the elated founders of Gridlock. And a slow-growth city councilman observed, “The fundamental message of Tuesday’s election is that citizens want to slow down the pace of development and avoid overdevelopment.”

Encouraged by this and other victories, slow-growth forces laid plans for a countywide measure to curb development. In June 1987 Orange County Tomorrow, a citizens group dedicated to considering growth issues in the county, announced the Citizens’ Sensible Growth and Traffic Control Initiative, which it intended to place before countywide voters in the June 1988 election. By February 1988 slow-growth advocates had collected petitions bearing 96,000
signatures, 30,000 more than were necessary to ensure a place on the June ballot. The stage was set for a dramatic clash between the county's powerful developers and citizens who wanted to preserve what was supposedly most desirable about Orange County.

The initiative, known as Measure A, set "minimum acceptable standards" for traffic flow, parks, flood control, and county fire, paramedic, and sheriff services. If the measure passed, the county would not permit any new construction that might cause traffic conditions or county services to fall below these standards. For example, Measure A required that rush-hour delays at intersections not exceed forty seconds and that rush-hour traffic on new arterial highways move at an average of at least twenty-two miles per hour. Police, fire, and paramedic squads would have to respond to emergencies in no more than five minutes. If the Irvine Company or any other developer sought to construct high rises or housing that threatened to extend the response time to six minutes, then the county would deny the developer a building permit. Measure A's standards applied only to unincorporated areas of Orange County, but that was where most of the future construction would be taking place.

The proponents of Measure A were a motley band, including figures from every part of the political spectrum. Leading the campaign was Tom Rogers, a former chairman of the Orange County Republican party who was described by one newspaper as a "craggy-faced . . . rancher." Rogers himself had profited from the transformation of his family's land into shopping centers, and he was certainly no foe of private enterprise. Among Roger's allies, however, was Irvine mayor Larry Agran, an arch-liberal Democrat who was acquiring a national reputation for his radical stands on such issues as nuclear weaponry and Central American politics. Agran was the type of left-winger who would not hesitate to attack "a greedy development community, working in league with a county Board of Supervisors who act like lap dogs." Somewhere between the right-wing rancher and the left-wing mayor were a large number of people who were simply fed up with the traffic and disturbed by the destruction of Orange County's suburban environment. For example, a Garden Grove councilman argued, "Without Measure A, we can expect to spend more and more time at a standstill on our roads." Another Orange Countian remarked: "It's just too crowded. I returned from a trip to Ohio, and it took two weeks just to adjust to the roads again." And still another complained, "If things keep going the way they are, we'll all be locked in concrete." An Anaheim attorney whose neighborhood was threatened by growth and "progress" deplored the demolition of "single-family homes, to allow the development of a multi-story, high density apartment project, in a residential neighborhood." "My wife's bugging me to
move,” explained another slow-growth advocate. “She says there’s [already] too many people over here and that she can’t get out of her driveway. She talks about Southern Utah. Southern Utah doesn’t have any people.”

These complaints, however, did not go unanswered. During the campaign developers spent $1.6 million to defeat Measure A whereas Rogers and his allies could only scrape together $48,000. In their sales pitch to Orange County voters, the developers presented themselves not as post-suburban devotees of commercial growth but as defenders of the suburban way of life, and more specifically the affordable single-family home. Repeatedly they claimed that the curbs on new construction would drive home prices even higher and destroy all hope of home ownership for many Orange Countians and their children. According to the Irvine Company and its ilk, Measure A would not undo the damage wreaked by post-suburban development but instead would endanger one essential element of the quality of life in suburbia.

The Santa Margarita Company, the developer of a large-scale community in southern Orange County, presented this argument in full-page advertisements. “Keep Housing in Orange County Available and Within Reach,” exhorted the Santa Margarita ads in boldface lettering. The Orange County Register made this same point in its editorial columns when it contended that Measure A would “make new housing harder to find, and . . . all housing, new and old, more expensive.” According to the Register, “just the anticipation of Measure A’s approval ha[d] an effect on Orange County housing prices,” driving the county’s mean price up 18 percent in a single month. “The growth-control door first closes on new residents and first-time homebuyers,” the newspaper explained. “But it also closes on current residents, who find they cannot afford to move up, and on their children, who find they cannot afford to live in the communities in which they were raised.”

Moreover, if Orange County workers could not afford housing within the county, then they would have to find shelter in nearby Riverside County and commute long distances each day on the freeways. The result would be even more traffic, as the arteries leading to Riverside County became clogged with the victims of Measure A. “In my opinion, more people will be forced to commute from outside the county, adding to the traffic problem,” argued the Orange County sheriff. Likewise, the Register observed, “The ironic thing is that the more people we force to live in Riverside County, the more overloaded becomes our own transportation system as they commute back here to work.” Basic to these arguments was the proposition that Measure A would not preserve the good life of Orange County but only bar worthy people from enjoying that good life. “The middle classes of people, who want to grow and gather
for the future, who want their children’s lives to be more abundant than their own, have always found a welcome environment in Orange County,” remarked one foe of Measure A. But according to this Orange Countian, if that measure passed, the environment would sour for homeseekers and their offspring.

Indicative of the strength of the rebellion against post-suburbia was the fact that both sides of the debate wrapped themselves in the suburban ideal and presented themselves as saviors of the suburban way of life. Foes of Measure A portrayed developers of twenty-story high rises as providers of the traditional American home, and slow-growth advocates appealed to the voters’ yearning for the semirural environment of the past, when concrete and asphalt had been the exception and not the rule. Orange County was home to 2.4 million people and could boast of the busiest shopping malls in California as well as booming office and industrial parks. But these realities of the post-suburban age were now anathema. The slow-growth rebellion of 1988 sought to correct the imbalance in development and reassert the suburban way of life. No one seeking to win a referendum was willing to buck this trend and forthrightly embrace post-suburbia.

During the months leading up to the June 1988 referendum, the campaign strategy of Measure A foes reaped the desired rewards. Whereas in December 1987 a poll showed that supporters of the measure outnumbered opponents by a four-to-one margin, by the end of May only 49 percent of those polled favored passage, with 26 percent undecided. Especially in the largely developed northern half of the county, opponents made strong inroads. Rapid growth was not a problem in much of this area, and north county residents feared that attempts to bring county services up to the standards mandated by Measure A might inflate their already bloated tax bills. Recognizing this, the council of the north county city of Fullerton passed a resolution opposing Measure A, and Fullerton’s mayor argued that “the county would be forced to spend between $300 million and $1 billion just in the unincorporated areas” to meet the initiative’s requirements. The mayor pro tem of the north county hub of Anaheim likewise opposed the reform, as did that city’s daily newspaper. The Anaheim Bulletin contended that “Measure A promised to be all things to all people, while the only thing it really did was attempt to formalize the mentality of ‘we got ours, the rest of you go somewhere else.’”

By June the momentum of public opinion had clearly turned against Measure A, and on election day it won approval from only 44 percent of the voters. It carried the south county but a large north-county vote against the proposal doomed it to defeat. Yet both friends and foes of Measure A realized that this was not the end of the slow-growth movement, for Tom Rogers and his al-
lies had forced county officials and developers to proceed more carefully in the future. "Notwithstanding the failure of Measure A, the slow-growth message has been heard loud and clear," observed one county supervisor. The executive director of the local chapter of the Building Industry Association agreed: "The way the county views development and how it relates to public facilities is changed forever as a result of this initiative." And a slow-growth activist from Huntington Beach told reporters, "I think the Board of Supervisors, the city councils, are going to have to wake up and deal with the problems we brought up by beating the pavement."82

This slow-growth proponent had good reason to believe that her cause would not be ignored. The same day Measure A was defeated countywide, the south county city of San Clemente approved its own slow-growth initiative, and the north county city of Seal Beach defeated a similar local measure by only one vote, with 5,004 opposed and 5,003 in favor.83 The following November the Orange County municipalities of Costa Mesa, San Juan Capistrano, Huntington Beach, and Newport Beach all had slow-growth initiatives on their ballots; in the first two cities voters approved the measures whereas in Huntington Beach the initiative failed by a small margin. Moreover, Costa Mesa voters refused to approve a 3.1-million-square-foot office development that would have included a twenty-story structure and the regional headquarters of IBM.84

Meanwhile, in Seal Beach residents battled over development plans for the last major parcel of vacant land in the city. According to one foe of the proposed development, if it were built, Seal Beach would "lose its charm." "It’s going to lose its character," she argued. "It’s going to be just like everything else along the coast. Just a big mess of condos." Similarly, in Cypress plans to develop a former golf course stirred opposition. One dissenting council member expressed a typical view when he observed: "I feel cheated at the fact that this place is now going commercial. I think we’ve lost a great deal of green space. Something has been taken away from me and the people of Cypress."85 And in Laguna Beach the dominant bloc of council members was associated with Village Laguna, a citizens organization "dedicated to preserving and promoting the village atmosphere" of the community. In the election of November 1988 one of these council members listed first among his goals the desire "to preserve [the] small-scale village" and "to protect the rural nature of [the] neighborhoods."86

Moreover, the county board of supervisors also took action to placate slow-growth advocates. In March 1989 they approved a growth management plan intended to achieve the same ends as Measure A.87 Later that year they promoted Ernie Schneider, the director of the county’s Environmental Manage-
ment Agency, to the post of county administrative officer. Because of his background in environmental regulation, Schneider seemed to offer new hope to slow-growth advocates, one of whom commented, “I hope he can teach the board to say no [to development].”88 With large campaign funds handsomely endowed by major developers, the county supervisors were still objects of suspicion. But even they had felt the impact of Measure A and responded accordingly.

Thus at the same time commentators were finally recognizing that Orange County had come of age and declared its independence from Los Angeles, Orange Countians themselves were rebelling against what they deemed the adverse effects of post-suburban maturity. The village ideal remained powerful in Laguna Beach and the residents of San Juan Capistrano still wanted to pretend that they lived in a small mission town. Tustin also wished to preserve its supposed small-town atmosphere, and everywhere “charm,” “character,” and “quaintness” were valued but endangered commodities. The happy median between polo fields and corporate headquarters that post-suburbanites sought to maintain was being threatened as high rises and the traffic they generated seemed to be pushing post-suburbia too far toward the urban end of the spectrum and away from the suburban ideal. Retaining their devotion to the suburban dream and their abhorrence for the big city, Orange Countians were doing their best to reestablish a balanced environment.

Similar signs of rebellion were evident elsewhere in the country. For example, Long Islanders were also questioning the impact of continued growth on their quality of life. In New York, as in California, the benefits of suburban life and of green open spaces seemed endangered by the onslaught of development, and residents were rejecting the notion that bigger was better. “Many residents are fearful that encouraging others to work, settle or even visit their immediate area will strain existing resources, accelerate problems such as road congestion, and hamper their own good quality of life,” wrote one observer of Long Island in the late 1980s.89 As in Orange County, many in Nassau and Suffolk deemed further development antithetical to the good life.

Throughout Long Island communities attempted to apply the brakes to development through zoning changes that raised minimum lot size requirements, thereby precluding dense development. In the once-tranquil estate village of North Hills this was a major issue in the 1980s. During the 1970s developers began subdividing North Hills estates, causing the population to jump sixfold from 300 to 1,800 in a fifteen-year period. Reacting to fears of overbuilding, in 1980 the village council raised minimum lot requirements, and in 1985 another upzoning was proposed to deal with what one newspaper called “the on-
slaught of condominium developments in the area.” The minimum lot size for several large tracts was to be raised from 1 acre to 2.5 acres. The former estate community of Brookville was engaged in much the same fight. In 1989 the first contested mayoral election in more than twenty years divided the community, and at the heart of the conflict was the desire to increase the minimum lot size from two acres to at least three acres. Significantly, both candidates favored larger lot sizes, but the challenger to the mayoral incumbent argued that the upzoning should have occurred earlier. Moreover, horse owners in this Nassau County community were concerned that developers threatened to destroy the village’s informal riding trails and endangered Brookville’s status as an equestrian refuge. “When people come into our area, they should be allowed to ride on the horse trails we have in the village, and any future subdivisions that are allowed should have adequate provisions for the preservation of the horse trails,” insisted the mayoral candidate endorsed by the Brookville Horseman’s Association. Meanwhile, the Suffolk County townships of Southampton, East Hampton, Riverhead, and Brookhaven all joined in the movement to upzone vacant land, thereby ensuring that each new house would be surrounded by a mini-estate of two, five, or ten acres.

Even in the largely built-up Nassau township of Hempstead, public officials were imposing limits to prevent excessive development. For example, in 1989 county Republican boss and presiding supervisor Joseph Mondello introduced a proposal to restrict the size and height of future buildings, arguing: “We are not going to be overdeveloped. . . . At this point, we’re just saying, ‘You’re just not able to build as much on a piece of property as you were able to build before.’” “What we’re talking about here is controlled growth, not no growth,” observed the president of a Garden City property owners’ association who supported the Mondello proposal. “Uncontrolled growth will put undue strain on traffic circulation, air and water quality and on solid-waste disposal.” Moreover, according to this homeowner, “the overdevelopment would stymie and stagnate nearby residential areas.”

Foes of supposed overdevelopment also called for building moratoria to check the further erosion of the quality of life on Long Island. In 1985 the planning board of Huntington township in Suffolk County proposed such a moratorium on commercial construction along the booming Route 110 corridor. During the 1970s there was slightly more than one million square feet of office and industrial space along the corridor, but by 1985 this figure had risen to six million square feet. Moreover, between 1980 and 1985 the rush-hour traffic flow on Route 110 doubled. The chair of Huntington’s planning board concluded: “The infrastructure cannot withstand that kind of development. Hunt-
ington has to stop and make some serious decisions about its future.”94 That same year another moratorium advocate engineered a successful revolution in the Nassau County municipality of Mineola. For fifty years the Citizens Party commanded a majority in Mineola, but in 1985 Ann Galante of the Hometown Party defeated the incumbent mayor, running on a platform that called for “a building moratorium and a study of the impact that development had on traffic, air pollution, sewage disposal and the water supply.” “It’s time for a change,” Galante announced, for she believed it was time to combat what Newsday referred to as the “erosion of the village’s suburban character.”95

On Long Island, as in Orange County, traffic congestion was among the curses of post-suburban life, and a local newspaper characterized the Long Island Expressway as “a metaphor for commuter gridlock.” Designed to carry 85,000 vehicles past a given point each day, the expressway had reached the 135,000-mark by 1985. In August of that year a truck accident caused a fourteen-hour jam on the expressway, closing all six lanes. “There was no movement whatsoever,” complained one Long Island motorist. “People were pulling to the side, fanning themselves and relieving themselves.”96

In their arguments against further development, slow-growth advocates, however, most frequently cited the endangered water supply. Nassau and Suffolk residents depended on groundwater sources, but the paving over of large portions of the island, the construction of sewers to divert rainwater to the sea, and growing consumer demands threatened the existing underground aquifer. Moreover, further development might also pollute existing supplies, rendering them unusable. By 1987 the state had already mandated water consumption caps on forty-one suppliers in Nassau County, leading the Newsday voter’s guide to identify water as “the biggest issue facing the next county executive.”97

In both counties, the Long Island aquifer had to be preserved and protected, and proponents of controlled growth claimed that limits on construction were the best means for achieving this end.

Controversy in Suffolk focused on the pine barrens, an expansive wooded tract in the center of the county under which lay the island’s largest groundwater reservoir. To halt development of this area, Suffolk residents in 1987 overwhelmingly supported a $570 million county program to purchase more than thirty-one thousand acres of pine barrens. But by 1989 many were criticizing the cost and pace of the acquisitions.98 Believing the program was inadequate, the Long Island Pine Barrens Society brought suit to halt construction on one hundred thousand acres of the central county, delaying development projects valued at $11.2 billion.99

Yet the clash over the pine barrens entailed more than a pragmatic concern
Post-Suburbia

for water supply. As in Southern California, slow-growth advocates lashed out at developers not only because of the danger they posed to water resources but also because of their impact on the general quality of life. One leader of an “environmental” group expressed a common sentiment when he claimed to be fighting for “a place where families [could] enjoy a high quality of life, including pure drinking water, magnificent vistas, splendid recreational opportunities—a chance to preserve a little of what Suffolk County once was.” Developers and their allies appeared dedicated to vandalizing all that was good about the county. “They want to build and Long Islanders be damned,” the director of the Pine Barrens Society said of the local construction industry. And the builders’ supposed friends in county government were attacked as “a group . . . that want[ed] to blacktop Long Island.”

Farther west, in DuPage County, slow-growth sentiment was also widespread, though not of the magnitude of Measure A or the pine barrens conflict. Instead, in one community after another DuPage residents repeated the oft-heard complaint that new development was destroying the quality of life. For example, a group of Downers Grove residents organized START (Save Trees and Residents Today) to oppose plans for two office-hotel projects which would generate not only tax revenues but traffic and congestion as well. Oak Brook residents likewise were irate about the traffic spawned by the construction of Oakbrook Terrace Tower just north of their municipal limits. In this case the municipality of Oakbrook Terrace reaped the tax benefits whereas neighboring Oak Brook was forced to absorb most of the flood of additional automobiles. Foes of the tower were so bitter that they spread a false rumor, printed in the Chicago Tribune, that the thirty-one-story behemoth was tilting. Yet widened roads were not deemed a satisfactory solution to Oak Brook’s problem. When the county proposed to broaden a thoroughfare in the congested community, the entire village board showed up at a hearing to protest the action and others carried signs saying “No Growth.” One commentator accurately concluded, “Oakbrook Terrace Tower symbolizes the mess that can happen, in planning and in politics, when neighboring suburbs look out for their pocketbooks—and don’t play a regulatory role.” Even in tax-rich Oakbrook Terrace some residents were unhappy with plans for further commercial development, organizing the Save Our City Committee. “We have always been a friendly neighborhood, where we worked together to get things done, but I don’t want to see the whole city go commercial,” explained one dissatisfied Oakbrook Terrace resident.

In 1986 plans to build a new stadium for the White Sox baseball team brought the issue of growth control before the residents of the village of Addi-
son. Faced with the prospect of a stadium in their backyard and thousands of additional automobiles on their streets, the homeowners in nearby residential subdivisions mobilized to halt the project. Tom Zver, president of the Kings Point Homeowners Association, explained that he moved to Addison so that he could "roll up the sidewalks at 6 o'clock and settle in for a quiet night in front of the VCR. I've always loved the suburban life, the quiet." Looking out his window, Zver continued: "And now I'm gonna look out at an 11-story monstrosity. It's gonna tear my heart out." Other foes of the scheme claimed that the stadium site was an invaluable wetland that had to be preserved in its natural state. The DuPage County board voted against spending any public funds for the stadium, and in a November referendum a slender majority of Addison voters sided with Zver and opposed construction of a new home for the White Sox in their community. Though the owners of the baseball team had conducted a high-powered, well-financed campaign to convince Addison residents, the president of the homeowners association was vindicated, and by the close of the year the baseball team had abandoned plans for the DuPage County site. "All we have is our love of the land and our lifestyle. We don't want them," said Zver, speaking bitterly of the White Sox.

As in other post-suburban areas, many DuPage leaders boasted of the county's economic success while they harbored doubts about excessive growth. Though a proponent of the White Sox stadium and virtually every other development that would bolster the DuPage economy, County Board Chairman Jack Knuepfer also mouthed concern about rapid growth and the dangers it posed. For example, in the 1990 election he listed "reduced growth" as first among his top five priorities. "We need a countywide growth plan, agreed on by all governmental entities and enforceable," argued the county chair. The president of the DuPage Mayors and Managers Conference, Mayor Betty Cheever of Downers Grove, justifiably complained: "We're not being consistent. If we really are concerned about all this growth, we shouldn't be out promoting a convention center, a high-tech corridor." In true post-suburban fashion, DuPage Countians welcomed the jobs and tax revenues that high-tech development generated, but they also clung to the life style of suburbia, the quiet neighborhoods, and the small-town charm that contrasted so sharply with the big city. The problem facing Cheever, Knuepfer, and Zver, as well as their counterparts on Long Island or in Orange County, was to maintain a balance that would not endanger the best of the past.

Consequently, DuPage County communities pursued a schizoid existence similar to that of the "big-little-city" of Anaheim. In one community after another reaffirmations of village life were as commonplace as the opening of high-
Post-Suburbia
tech headquarters. Naperville was one of the nation's fastest growing high-tech
cities, yet throughout the 1980s community leaders sought to emphasize its
quaint past through the preservation of its small-town business district and the
creation of a living history museum known as Naper Settlement, in the heart
of the city. In her campaign literature, Mayor Margaret Price insisted: "One of
Naperville's most valuable assets is our heritage. I believe it is important to
shape the future, but never lose sight of the past." Moreover, one commentator
perceptively noted that the sponsors of Naper Settlement had "attained their
measure of public approbation because they ha[d] successfully created some
semblance of small-town intimacy in a community otherwise known as a cen-
ter of phenomenal growth." Downtown preservation efforts yielded similar
results, and a visitor to the center of Naperville at the close of the 1980s would
find a pristine, small-town Main Street, a century removed from the Bell Labs
campus on the edge of the city. Meanwhile, Downers Grove, a municipality of
43,000 residents, retained a village form of government under Illinois law, and
locals consistently referred to it as "the village." Despite the controversial office-
hotel complexes, Mayor Cheever insisted, "We see ourselves as primarily, and
fundamentally, a residential community." Similarly, Glen Ellyn, a community of
24,000 inhabitants, refused to relinquish its past image, retaining a volunteer
fire department. A song written for the town's 1984 sesquicentennial expressed
a sentiment appealing to many residents: "No matter where I go, Glen Ellyn is
my home town." With their fingernails dug firmly into the past, residents of
Glen Ellyn, Downers Grove, and Naperville tenaciously held on to the home-
town qualities of their communities while simultaneously being lured by the
tax dollars of developers.

The residents of Oakland and Saint Louis Counties shared these feelings,
though the sentiments perhaps were less pervasive in political rhetoric. In the
Oakland community of Birmingham, for example, candidates for public office
vowed to maintain "the delicate balance between . . . residential and commer-
cial areas" and to "monitor growth to maintain a healthy downtown business
area which complimented rather than compete[d] with the residential area." In
nearby Bloomfield Hills, the Woodward Corridor Protection Group battled
against office developers who seemed to threaten the tranquillity of the com-
munity's millionaire homeowners. "We're going to keep the whole city as res-
idential as possible," promised the group's president. Likewise, some residents
of Novi in southwestern Oakland County organized Citizens for Responsible
Development to halt construction of a shopping center that "would serve as a
magnet, drawing people and development into [the] area." Oakland's West
Bloomfield and Commerce townships sought to purchase open spaces and
thereby limit development. “There is a lot of community pressure to be more aggressive about acquiring land that could go to development,” reported West Bloomfield’s director of parks and recreation. In 1988 residents of the Oakland city of Wixom voted on a similar land purchase scheme. “The last person who moved to Wixom wants to be the last person to move into Wixom,” explained the city manager. 

Saint Louis Countians were likewise concerned about the paving over of their domain. “Increased urban development in St. Louis County has resulted in rapidly disappearing private open spaces,” warned a planning report from 1985. Residents of fast-growing Chesterfield in the western half of the county were well aware of this onslaught of urbanization. Repeatedly they attended planning commission meetings to protest commercial projects that would generate traffic and threaten the suburban way of life. For example, in March 1988 about seventy Chesterfield residents attended a public hearing to complain about a giant Toys-R-Us store proposed for an intersection in their neighborhood. Increased traffic was the chief concern, but one new resident raised an aesthetic objection. “We’re from Middletown, N.J., and Toys-R-Us [stores] are prevalent there,” she said. “They are the worst buildings you’ve ever seen.” Six months later a proposed shopping center was the object of the residents’ wrath. Two hundred protesters attended a public hearing and, according to a city councilman, “certainly made their wishes known.”

Even in the pioneering post-suburban city of Clayton, citizens would turn out to oppose development. In 1988 the board of aldermen received petitions signed by 102 residents who opposed the construction of a 334-room Hilton Hotel and parking garage, whereas petitions in favor of the project contained only 49 names. Opponents raised the standard objection that the hotel would create “extraordinary traffic jams,” and condominium owners in the adjacent Old Town area did not want the parking garage in their neighborhood. “I’m very much opposed to the garage,” complained one senior citizen. “The Old Town of Clayton was very attractive to a couple of old goats who wanted to get into the condominium life. [The garage] wasn’t what I bargained for.”

But Saint Louis Countians, like other post-suburbanites, not only sought to preserve greenery and residential property values, they also remained devoted to the village ideal of suburbia. Amid the growing number of office complexes, the rhetoric of neighborliness and small-town life survived. In a history written to commemorate the municipality of Glendale’s seventy-fifth birthday, a devotee of the community extolled the residents’ endeavors “to keep and maintain Glendale” in its existing state with “neighbor helping neighbor; ... a City Administration concerned about the well-being of all the citizens; [and] civic
and private organizations and clubs dedicated to keep up the city's garden aspects." Despite the economic changes in the surrounding county, Glendale remained true to the village ideal, a bastion of suburban virtue in a post-suburban world.

In the minds of too many Americans, however, the ideals and advantages of communities like Glendale seemed endangered. In Orange County this threat ignited a bitter fight over Measure A, and on Long Island it produced a wave of upzoning ordinances and a clash over the pine barrens. Residents of DuPage were also waving "No Growth" placards at public hearings, and in Wixom foes of further development were dedicated to retiring the community's welcome wagon. By the late 1980s the post-suburban counties had gained much-deserved recognition as business hubs. But their economic victories bore a price tag in terms of quality of life which a growing number of residents were unwilling to pay.

**REASSERTING THE GOVERNMENTAL BALANCE**

Just as devotees of the suburban way of life were attempting to curb the power of developers, so they were also endeavoring to check the ambitions of post-suburban imperialists in county government. During the 1970s and early 1980s leaders like Lawrence Roos, Gene McNary, and Jack Knuepfer seemed bent on expanding the county's role as coordinator of local governmental services. Governmental fragmentation had fallen from favor, and these chieftains believed a new era of county hegemony was dawning. Their schemes for asserting this hegemony had stirred opposition in the 1970s, but during the following decade resistance mounted, and McNary, Knuepfer, and others were to discover the enduring strength of the village ideal. Though the outward appearance of DuPage, Saint Louis, and Orange Counties was post-suburban, the prevailing governmental ideology remained firmly suburban. Residents of such hometown communities as Glen Ellyn and Tustin were no fonder of big government than of big development and they were as suspicious of centralized rule as they were of high-rise office parks. During the 1980s this persistent devotion to small-scale government was to prove the undoing of the post-suburban imperialists.

Nowhere was the clash between the small-scale municipalities and the county authorities so pronounced as in Saint Louis County. During the 1960s and 1970s, the county government had gained the upper hand, expanding its role as a provider and coordinator of municipal services. County executives Roos and McNary had used the Graeler decision of 1963 to block major annexation
attempts and had thereby eliminated defensive incorporation initiatives. Consequently, a growing portion of the population lived in unincorporated areas, depending on the county for services and looking to Gene McNary as their virtual mayor. In fact, by the 1980s forty percent of Saint Louis Countians resided in unincorporated territory and the other sixty percent were the target of the county’s continuing efforts to compensate for fragmentation through countywide coordination of services.

In 1983, however, the Missouri Supreme Court handed down a decision that upset the existing balance of power between the county and the municipalities. The litigation arose from a 1977 attempt by the city of Town and Country to double its size and triple its tax base through annexation of rich commercial territory. The zone to be annexed included a shopping center, two office parks, and the lucrative facilities of Western Electric and McGraw-Hill. According to county officials, the annexation would garner an additional $2 million in sales taxes alone for Town and Country, $1.2 million of which would otherwise go to the county. Understandably, McNary and his subordinates viewed this as a tax grab detrimental to the interests of the county as a whole and challenged its validity. The trial court upheld the annexation, but in 1982 the Missouri Court of Appeals applied the Graeler decision and ruled in favor of the county.119

The Missouri Supreme Court thought otherwise, and the following year it reversed the appeals court judgment, overruled Graeler, and upheld the annexation. The supreme court emphasized the right of the voters in the area to be annexed to decide their own fate. When Graeler was handed down, Missouri law did not give residents in unincorporated areas any voice in the annexation procedure, and consequently, the supreme court believed that it had fallen “to the judiciary to safeguard the interests of the ‘community’ of residents of unincorporated county areas through its scrutiny of proposed annexations.” But following the Graeler decision, Missouri’s legislature had granted residents of unincorporated areas a veto over boundary changes, so the 1983 court believed that there was no longer any need for such heightened judicial scrutiny. Moreover, in its Town and Country ruling the Missouri Supreme Court asserted that the annexation laws were intended to protect the interests of the residents in areas to be annexed and not the interests of governments, which might be adversely affected by boundary changes. Referring to the self-serving arguments of the Saint Louis County government, the court noted that the state legislature sought to provide for the needs of the citizenry and “not the needs of government in a continuing quest to serve itself.”120

Observers immediately recognized the potential impact of this holding. "As
I see it, any municipality now will be able to look along its boundaries and annex any commercial establishment close by just for the sake of their tax money,” Gene McNary complained, adding, “We are going to look for legislation to correct this.” Likewise, the county counselor remarked, “With these facts it’s going to be tough to oppose any annexation.” Moreover, the mayor of Bellefontaine Neighbors concluded that under the new rules of the game, “you’ve got to grab all the money you can while the pot’s hot.” An attorney for the Missouri Municipal League, which intervened in the case on the side of Town and Country, viewed the decision more favorably. “We said people should determine which bureaucracy they want to serve them. It’s called democracy,” explained this counselor. “St. Louis [County] has no interest in perpetuating its bureaucracy if people don’t want it.” The attorney representing Town and Country summed up the impact of the ruling best: “This decision removes the club the county has been able to wield in barring annexation. It simply takes the county out of that role and puts the decision more meaningfully in the hands of residents.”

McNary had good reason to fear the loss of this club, for annexation deprived the county of both sales and utility tax revenues. The county levied a property tax on both incorporated and unincorporated areas, but it could impose sales and utility taxes, which provided 29 percent of county operating revenues, only on unincorporated territory. Moreover, Town and Country was not the only community with a pending annexation proposal. In 1979 voters had approved the annexation of the tax-rich Six Flags amusement park to Eureka, and with Graeler overruled, court approval of that boundary change also appeared inevitable.

The Eureka and Town and Country forays were only the beginning of the attack on the county’s tax resources. Within two months after the Town and Country decision, more than ten cities presented proposals to annex extensive tracts. “A range war is on for the unincorporated areas of St. Louis County,” reported one local journal. Among the warriors was Creve Coeur, which coveted twenty-one square miles, including both Chesterfield Mall and West Port Plaza shopping centers. Likewise, Overland’s board of aldermen voted unanimously to proceed with plans for the annexation of almost seven square miles with a valuation of $70 million. The St. Louis Business Journal attacked this “last land grab” as “an example of government at its worst.” But the mayor of Jennings was more sympathetic, remarking: “If I were in Creve Coeur or Overland, I would do it (annex) You would be some kind of damn fool if you didn’t.”

Gene McNary, however, was not willing to stand by and preside over the dissolution of his empire. Instead, he arranged a series of meetings with munici-
pal officials, and in December 1983 several agreed to impose a moratorium on their annexation plans until a commission could study the issue. Some municipalities did proceed with annexation elections, but voters rejected most boundary changes. In the election of April 1984 only two of the seven annexation proposals in the county won voter approval, and one of the successful boundary changes involved only thirty acres. A relieved McNary commented: “We’re pleased that voters in unincorporated areas are satisfied with county government services. It may settle the entire annexation situation down.”

But the possibility of further land grabs was also stirring renewed interest in defensive incorporation. Residents of unincorporated Maryland Heights especially felt threatened by neighboring municipalities eager to snatch their richest properties. Bridgeton sought to absorb the Riverport and Earth City commercial areas in Maryland Heights, and Overland and Creve Coeur wanted West Port Plaza shopping center. Consequently, Maryland Heights residents petitioned to incorporate, a move opposed not only by neighboring Overland but also by the county authorities who feared a further loss of revenue. Maryland Heights residents, however, opted for autonomy, and in November 1984 they voted to become a municipality. Encompassing over twenty square miles and 26,000 inhabitants, Maryland Heights was a major loss to McNary’s empire and planners estimated the incorporation would cost the county $2 million annually in tax receipts.

Meanwhile, residents in booming Chesterfield in the western county were making plans to incorporate as well. According to the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, “some county officials worry that as Chesterfield goes, so will go many of the other remaining areas of unincorporated county.” By 1985 county leaders were clearly on the defensive. “We’re massing troops here,” joked one county official, pointing on the map to Chesterfield. “We’re putting in bunkers here and we have some fortifications across the river.” Yet it was no joking matter to McNary, who referred to the “governmental chaos,” “jurisdictional jungle,” and “fragmented conglomeration of local governments.” Fearful that the county would be left with only the poorest fragments that no municipality wanted, the county executive sadly warned, “Our tax base is being devoured.”

McNary was not the only one to worry. The renewal of annexation and incorporation battles also spurred action by Confluence St. Louis, a metropolitan citizens group founded in 1983 to address the major issues confronting the region. For decades civic invigoration had been close to an obsession among Saint Louis area leaders, and Confluence was just the latest in a long line of organizations that sought to arouse local interest in metropolitan problems. In 1985 this organization established a task force “to study governmental multi-
licity," and over the next year this investigatory body held twenty-four open meetings to consider whether the area had too many governmental units. Not surprisingly, in 1986 the task force seconded the findings of every other good-government group that had studied the same issue and concluded that the Saint Louis area did indeed suffer from an excess of governments. Moreover, by 1987 the task force had prepared a series of recommendations to remedy the problem. Among these was a proposal to eliminate unincorporated territory in the county by ensuring that all land fell within the boundaries of some municipality. The county government would no longer have to provide municipal services for unincorporated areas but could concentrate on countywide responsibilities and serve as a regional government handling regional problems. The task force also recommended that each municipality ideally have a population between 25,000 and 75,000. Thus many of the smaller municipalities would have to merge to form larger, and supposedly more efficient, units. The bottom line was that the majority of villages and cities within the county would disappear from the map and larger cities and a regional county government would provide public services.

The Confluence St. Louis proposal appealed to McNary, and in fall 1986 he initiated his own crusade for the radical reform of local government. To aid in the effort, he asked the county planning department to draw up a scheme for reorganization. The resulting plan closely resembled the Confluence proposal. The "cornerstone" of the planners' proposal was "the full incorporation of St. Louis County into a limited number of larger municipalities." As compared to the ninety existing municipalities, there would be only twenty-one cities, each with an ultimate population of at least 25,000 (see figure 4). Freed of responsibility for providing municipal services to unincorporated areas, the county government would perform traditional county functions as well as those "services best provided on a regional basis" that required "a high level of countywide coordination or technical expertise." Actually neither the plan of the Confluence task force nor that of the county planners was very new or original. Both schemes were strikingly similar to the "county-municipal partnership" envisioned in the 1960s by the father of postsuburban imperialism, Lawrence Roos. In 1964 Roos told a planning workshop that his partnership scheme would entail "the eventual incorporation of all of the heavily populated areas of the County into municipalities large enough to be capable of providing municipal services efficiently" and would "involve consolidation of many . . . smaller towns and villages into entities sufficiently large to function efficiently." According to Roos, "the County, in turn, would be responsible for providing those services which can best be performed on an
area-wide basis regardless of municipal boundaries." The proposals of the 1980s were, then, simply a restatement of the long-standing aims of county leaders. In the 1960s Roos had dreamed of municipal consolidation and county coordination. Now Confluence St. Louis and Gene McNary were mounting a campaign to realize that dream.

In accord with the provisions of the Missouri constitution, proponents of reorganization called for the creation of a board of freeholders to consider a plan
for restructuring the local government, and in fall 1987 such a board convened. At the board's hearings municipal officials predictably denounced the proposals for consolidation. The St. Louis County Municipal League, which represented seventy-seven cities and villages, contended that "an existing municipality should not be eliminated without an affirmative vote of . . . the residents of the municipality" and claimed that "the desirable goal of universal incorporation of St. Louis County [could] be achieved without the dismantling of existing municipal government." It proposed a "phased process" of universal incorporation under the supervision of a commission similar to California's LAFCOs. This commission would draft a general plan for incorporation and render judgments on the merit of incorporation and annexation proposals. It proposed a "phased process" of universal incorporation under the supervision of a commission similar to California's LAFCOs. This commission would draft a general plan for incorporation and render judgments on the merit of incorporation and annexation proposals.133

The mayors of the county's larger cities also jointly objected to the McNary-backed proposal of the county planning department, arguing that "a majority of the residents in St. Louis County ha[d] strong emotional ties to their communities" and that "smaller governments appeal[ed] to citizens because they consider them more responsive and accessible." The mayors could only conclude that "any attempt to change municipal boundaries through forced consolidation or merger of existing cities would be divisive and would jeopardize acceptance of any plan by the voters."134

Individual city officials reiterated these points in the documents they submitted to the board of freeholders. The mayor of Crestwood objected to her city of 12,800 residents "being swallowed up into a new community of 60,000 persons" and thereby losing its identity. The city of Creve Coeur transmitted a similar complaint, remarking that "citizens of municipalities in St. Louis County like[d] strong emotional ties to their communities" and which provided "responsive local government . . . concerned with the needs of its citizens." Lottie Mae Williams, mayor of Velda Village, complained that the county's reorganization plan would deprive African Americans of political power by destroying the many small, increasingly black municipalities, such as her own, in the northeastern part of the county. "One look at the Reorganization map as presented by St. Louis County shows that all black elected officials in St. Louis County would be eliminated," Mayor Williams protested. She concluded, "I raise my voice in harmony with the other mayors and elected officials who loudly say 'LEAVE US ALONE.'"135

Repeatedly, Saint Louis Countians expressed the typical suburban desire for self-determination and small-scale government that could respond to the needs of the fragment and that reflected each fragment's ethnic or class interests. Perhaps no one expressed the persistent village ideal so well as a resident of Calverton Park. "We are small (1800 residents, no businesses, by choice) and
feel that large is not necessarily better," she informed the board of freeholders. "Our police officers know the area and residents well, respond to calls quickly, and on patrol, recognize anything out of the ordinary. Our Board of Trustees are readily available if there are concerns or problems." Government in Calverton Park was, then, on a human scale, devoid of the bureaucracy associated with the big city or the county—and this resident and many of her fellow citizens wanted to keep it that way.136

The board of freeholders, however, thought differently, and in September 1988 it completed drafting a reorganization proposal that would reduce the number of municipalities from ninety to thirty-seven. Under the freeholders' plan, the county would continue to have charge of health clinics, arterial road maintenance, major parks, specialized police services, and the county jail and courts. But the county would exercise new powers as well. It would have the authority to draft a land-use master plan and veto any municipal zoning changes that did not conform to that plan. Moreover, the county would be able to impose a minimum housing code on all areas within its boundaries and would be responsible for building inspection countywide. Thus county authorities, and not municipalities, would have ultimate authority over development and construction. Each municipality would no longer be able to use zoning powers to serve its parochial purposes, regardless of the welfare of the county as a whole. A county commission would also oversee fire and emergency services, thereby ensuring uniform standards. In its report the board of freeholders estimated that these proposed reforms would increase the cost of government and recommended a new 1-percent earnings tax.137

If anything, the freeholders' plan aroused even greater furor than the McNary-backed planning department scheme. A group called Countians Against High Taxes and Loss of Local Control, chaired by a former Florissant city council member, was organized to lead the opposition to the forced merger of existing municipalities. According to the group's treasurer, "the freeholders have totally disregarded the basic American right of self-determination. St. Louis County communities and their residents have the right to join with one another or to remain as they are. It is their choice."138 Mayor Shirley Sweet of Des Peres attacked the proposed merger of her city with neighboring Kirkwood, calling it a "shotgun wedding," and another Des Peres official described the freeholders' proposal as "a cynical attempt to erode democracy."139 Kirkwood's city council was no happier with the plan, denouncing it as a "misguided, expensive and potentially destructive overreaction to the problems of St. Louis County."140 Other municipal officials labeled the scheme "vindictive" and "out of touch with the real world." A Maplewood city councilman compared the board of
freeholders to "Big Brother" in George Orwell's 1984. "George Orwell was only four years off in St. Louis County," the councilman bitterly remarked.\textsuperscript{141}

Especially controversial were the proposals for a new tax levy and for county control of zoning and building. Repeatedly, municipal officials complained that "city zoning would be subservient to the county government land use plans," and one report issued by opponents claimed, "[The] proposed uniform building code in St. Louis County . . . seeks to impose sameness on all county municipalities, prohibiting innovation or standards of excellence."\textsuperscript{142} Moreover, consolidation had been sold as a means of reducing taxes, not raising them, and now an angry public rebelled. "Why . . . does the Freeholder plan call for the elimination of Cool Valley, whose mayor makes $1.00 per year and is in touch with her community, yet makes no provision for reducing the $75,000 salary of the County Executive, who probably doesn't even know where Cool Valley is," asked one irate taxpayer.\textsuperscript{143} But even the county executive was troubled by the proposal for a new tax and blamed it on the refusal of the board to eliminate many wasteful municipalities. "I went in with a plan of 21 cities, and I believed 21 was even too many," McNary commented. In fact, he claimed that he was "unsure" about whether he would support the freeholders' proposal. "Just like everyone else, I'll study it and then make up my mind."\textsuperscript{144} The St. Louis County Municipal League, however, had no problem making up its mind. Its members voted unanimously to reject the board of freeholders' scheme. "We were promised efficiency and reduced costs," complained the league's president. "Instead we have a plan, which when the final bill is tallied, may result in at least a 15 percent tax increase."\textsuperscript{145}

Bolstering the Municipal League's position was a report issued in September 1988 by the Washington-based Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations. This scholarly survey rejected the traditional academic bias in favor of consolidation and found much to admire in the fragmented pattern prevailing in Saint Louis County. "Today, propositions linking the fragmentation of jurisdictions with disorganization and ineffectiveness can no longer be accepted as self-evident," the report asserted. Moreover, it claimed that "the experience of the St. Louis area in metropolitan organization had much to teach the rest of metropolitan America."\textsuperscript{146} The researchers discovered that Saint Louis County's many small municipalities had coped imaginatively with fragmentation through cooperative arrangements, sharing the burden of services while maintaining local autonomy. Thus, just when consolidationists seemed most threatening, the report added scholarly imprimatur to the arguments of devotees of localism.

In a special election scheduled for June 20, 1989, Saint Louis County voters
were to cast their ballots for or against the adoption of the freeholders' plan. Just five days before that date, however, the United States Supreme Court scuttled the controversial proposal when it decided a case brought by opponents of the scheme. Missouri's constitution restricted membership on the board of freeholders to real property owners, and the federal Supreme Court held this to be a denial of equal protection of the laws in violation of the Fourteenth Amendment.\textsuperscript{147} Thus the process whereby the plan was developed was invalid; the freeholders had had no legal authority to draw up any proposal.

Meanwhile, the fortunes of the imperial county had continued to decline during the long debate over governmental reorganization. In spring 1988 Chesterfield became a municipality, withdrawing twenty-six square miles and 33,000 people from McNary's unincorporated domain and adding one more unit of government to the scores already existing. The county planning department warned that Chesterfield's incorporation would have a "substantial negative fiscal impact" on the county government, but residents of the area sought incorporation to ensure greater control over local zoning. Rejecting county rule for further fragmentation, the cochair of the pro-incorporation campaign declared that "the citizens in Chesterfield wanted to govern themselves." A concerned McNary, however, announced plans to call a "Budget Summit" to deal with the revenue loss resulting from Chesterfield's new independence.\textsuperscript{148}

The following year McNary's budget woes mounted when voters overwhelmingly rejected a 1/2 percent county sales tax hike to fund a long list of capital improvements. Again fears of big government seem to have doomed a McNary-backed proposal. Opponents of McNary's reorganization scheme viewed the proposed tax increase as part of a pattern of government from the top down. A lack of public participation in determining which projects should be included in the improvement plan only added to suspicions of a county government out of kilter with the suburban ideal of grass-roots rule. The mayor of Saint John accused McNary of "a power and money grab," and the bulk of the electorate appeared to agree.\textsuperscript{149}

With the reorganization plan stymied and his tax scheme defeated, McNary had little hope of realizing his long-term goals. Fortunately for the embattled executive, the Bush administration intervened and offered him the federal post of Commissioner of Immigration and Naturalization. In fall 1989 McNary accepted the Washington position and resigned as executive, leaving behind a legacy of confrontation and ill will between the county and the municipalities.

One major reform, however, did result from the reorganization debate of the late 1980s. The Missouri legislature approved the municipal league's proposal for a county boundary commission to review and vote on incorporation, an-
nexation, and consolidation proposals. If the commission approved a proposal, it would then submit it to the voters of the area affected, who thereby retained their voice in the process of boundary change. Beginning in January 1990, this boundary commission set to work to end the chaotic border wars of the previous decade and within the next two years received thirty-two proposals for adjustments of municipal limits. Rather than accepting a wholesale remapping of the region as proposed by McNary, Saint Louis Countians thus followed a course of gradual change coordinated by a county commission.

Such a pragmatic compromise was typical of post-suburban governmental development. True to their devotion to small-scale, grass-roots government, Saint Louis Countians had rebelled against a gargantuan plan of consolidation and opted instead for countywide coordination that promised more efficient and effective rule without destroying the multiple municipalities so dear to the suburban ideal. The imperialist county executive had retired in defeat whereas the county municipal league’s compromise proposal had prevailed. Once again post-suburbanites had demonstrated a devotion to their suburban ideological roots and an aversion for the centralization associated with the big city.

Meanwhile, in DuPage County Jack Knuepfer was facing obstacles in his long-standing struggle to create a county supergovernment. Though Knuepfer dominated DuPage County politics during the 1980s, he eventually overreached himself and suffered the voters’ rebuke. Moreover, as Knuepfer attempted to expand the county’s realm, he aroused an increasingly powerful countervailing force in the form of the DuPage Mayors and Managers Conference. This association of municipal officials was to wield new clout in county politics and offer an alternative to centralization of authority in the hands of county officials.

The battle over Lake Michigan water played a key role in the new militancy of municipal officials. Since the 1950s DuPage mayors had investigated the possibility of constructing a water pipeline system that would link the inland municipalities with the Chicago system and thus draw on the lake’s vast water supply. In the early 1980s concerned municipalities organized a water commission, which drafted plans for financing the pipeline and negotiated contracts with Chicago to purchase this water. But in 1984 the Illinois legislature shifted control of the pipeline project to the county-dominated DuPage Water Commission, a body consisting of six members appointed by county board chair Jack Knuepfer and five members chosen by the mayors of municipalities purchasing the water. Characteristically, Knuepfer believed that water supply was a countywide problem requiring a countywide solution. And Knuepfer and his allies won this round of the battle with the municipalities.
Yet the cities and villages did not accept defeat quietly. The Chicago Tribune correctly observed that “mayors feared that the 1984 law ... was the first step in a power play by Jack T. Knuepfer ... to take over local mains, pumping stations, water towers and wells, giving the county a monopoly on an important source of local revenue.” Consequently, the municipalities brought suit to overturn the legislation, and withdrew their court challenge only when the county agreed that the commission would act solely as a wholesaler of water, purchasing it from Chicago and selling it to the individual municipalities. Each city or village would retain control of local mains and of the retail sale of water to households and businesses. But this agreement did not lull municipal officials into a state of complacency. Instead, the water dispute activated the Mayors and Managers Conference, and conference president Mayor Betty Cheever of Downers Grove later viewed this conflict as “the real turning point” for her organization. Henceforth, the mayors and managers were on the alert and prepared to repel Knuepfer-led forays against municipal power.

This was evident in later struggles over storm water drainage. DuPage County suffered severe flooding in August 1987, and both the county and municipalities recognized the need for joint action to prevent a recurrence of this natural disaster. The Stormwater Management Committee, consisting of equal numbers of municipal and county appointees, prepared a budget for flood control improvements, but in November 1988 the county board’s finance committee approved a marked revision in the budget, reallocating the lion’s share of the funds to communities along the flood-prone Salt Creek. The Mayors and Managers Conference erupted in protest at this high-handed county maneuver. “I think we, as municipalities, have been short-changed. We have been shot down,” complained Roselle village board member Joseph Devlin. Mayor A. Eugene Rennels of West Chicago saw the county board’s action as an attempt to drive a wedge between the Salt Creek municipalities and the other villages and cities in DuPage. He claimed the county’s policy was “to divide and conquer.” Moreover, Rennels warned ominously, “if they divide us, we are lost.”

Despite such setbacks the Mayors and Managers Conference continued to grow in significance in DuPage policymaking. According to Betty Cheever, the conference made a “concerted effort to join forces” with the county to seek solutions to regional problems. And Cheever’s successor as conference president, Sonya Crawshaw of Hanover Park, reiterated this stance when she emphasized the need to keep “lines of communication open” between the municipalities and the county to ensure an equal voice in the discussion and resolution of area
concerns. In the minds of both Cheever and Crawshaw, the municipalities were to be partners with the county in regional governance, not subordinates goose-stepping to the orders of Jack Knuepfer.

Yet Knuepfer's grandiose visions of county rule continued to unnerve municipal officials and other devotees of traditional grass-roots suburban rule. By the late 1980s the ambitious county chair was not only seeking to build stadiums for the Chicago Bears and White Sox, he was also campaigning for the construction of a convention center, the founding of a state university in DuPage, and the $100 million expansion of the county's airport. Major-league sports teams, convention complexes, giant universities, and busy airports all were signs that an urban area had come of age. Knuepfer realized this and wished to advertise to the world that DuPage was, in fact, a major metropolis, a post-suburban hub that had emerged from the shadow of Chicago. But to the many DuPage residents who clung to a suburban vision, Knuepfer's plans seemed to connote only higher taxes, more traffic, and greater congestion.

Moreover, Knuepfer continued to push for the centralization of authority in the hands of the county, thus threatening one more tenet of the traditional suburban creed. Speaking before a business group in 1988, the imperial county chair observed, "DuPage is really one large municipality, but it doesn't have the municipal government, and that is part of the problem." Repeatedly the chair seemed to advocate one supergovernment for divided DuPage, and he continued to target governmental fragmentation as the source of many evils. In 1988 he told a journalist, "Municipalities will not deal responsibly with something like solid-waste disposal, because they keep trying to dump it off on someone else." Centralized coordination was Knuepfer's answer to such problems, but this was an answer that made the mayors and managers squirm.

The discomfort of municipal officials, however, did not deter Knuepfer and his supporters from formulating plans for the restructuring of DuPage government. In 1987 the county board chair appointed a task force to submit a scheme for reforming county rule, and this committee's report was exactly what Knuepfer desired. It proposed the creation of an elected county executive with broad administrative authority and recommended that the county board be reduced from twenty-five to sixteen members. DuPage would be ruled, in effect, by a mayor-council form of government appropriate to a large urban area. Supporting the recommendations, Knuepfer commented, "You need some unit of government that is larger than a municipality. If you grant the need for certain county services, then, to have any efficiency at all, you need some sort of chief executive officer." In other words, Knuepfer envisioned an enhanced county government that required a strong executive at the helm.
Predictably, the task force's report raised fears of a total takeover by Jack Knuepfer. A member of a conservative Republican organization said of the proposed county executive, "You would be giving far too much power and veto to that person." Moreover, she complained that the reformed county board would become "a paper tiger." A smaller board and county manager is part of a move to the centralized government Knuepfer favors," warned another DuPage resident. When a local newspaper asked voters for their opinions, a Naperville resident replied, "I am in favor of anything that would end the dictatorship of Knuepfer," and a respondent from Glen Ellyn answered, "No single individual should have the control and power that Knuepfer has enjoyed." Meanwhile, a majority of the county board opposed any change that would deny nine of them positions. Faced with such opposition, the reform plan was soon tabled. Later Knuepfer concluded that the scheme failed because "there was no constituency to make the change. By and large, the average citizen does not know what county government is and does not have much interest unless he/she gets a ticket or tax bill."

By 1989 and early 1990, however, more DuPage residents were showing an interest in county government, an interest that Knuepfer would regret. Antagonism to the ambitious county chair was mounting, as county board members organized to challenge his authority and ordinary citizens blamed his grand dreams for their burdensome tax bills. In April 1989 Knuepfer's opponents on the board sought a change in the body's procedure, so that a simple majority, rather than two-thirds, would be able to overturn a ruling of the county chair. One newspaper reported on the "bitter debate, . . . filled with name-calling and insinuation." For the moment Knuepfer's forces triumphed, but one board member said of the conflict: "It was a total fiasco. It brought county government to a new low."

The following year Knuepfer confronted a Republican primary challenge. He had won his position in 1978, 1982, and 1986 without facing a Republican opponent, but now lawyer Aldo Botti and county board member Judith Crane Ross both entered the race against the post-suburban imperialist. Botti especially sought to exploit antitax sentiment, promising lower levies for burdened DuPage citizens. And both Botti and Ross attacked Knuepfer's potentially expensive schemes for providing DuPage with the accoutrements of a metropolis. Speaking of possible county expenditures for a convention center, Botti complained, "If [the county leaders] have the money, . . . use it to educate little kids about alcohol and drug problems." Referring to Chicago's successful convention center, Knuepfer replied, "Can you imagine how many people in Chicago would be out of business if they closed down McCormick Place?"
In the midst of the campaign, Knuepfer further fueled the opposition by asserting that DuPage was indeed a home rule county and thus could impose a broad range of taxes without the approval of the state legislature. Despite the defeat of home rule in 1972, Knuepfer claimed that the county chair was a county executive, and under Illinois law any county electing an executive automatically enjoyed home rule status. "The thing that scares people about a home rule county is the taxes," Knuepfer correctly observed, and his bold assertion of home rule status did nothing to allay the fears of rising taxes and dictatorial, centralized rule by a power-grabbing executive. During debates over the home rule question, Botti supporters picketed the DuPage County Government Center with signs saying, "East Germany had the Berlin Wall—We have Jack Knuepfer" and "Give Jack the Boot."

The courts were not to uphold Knuepfer's home rule argument and DuPage voters were not to award him a fourth term. In the March 1990 primary, DuPage Republicans chose the antitax Aldo Botti as their candidate for county chair. Botti won 44,000 votes, Ross 29,500, and Knuepfer ran a humiliating third, with only 23,000 votes, or less than a quarter of the total ballots cast. Knuepfer's campaign had outspent both Botti and Ross by a large margin, but all the handbills, advertisements, and yard signs had not overcome DuPage Countians' aversion to big government as represented by the incumbent county chair. The Naperville Sun correctly concluded that "the voters rejected Jack Knuepfer in favor of Aldo Botti's siren song of lower taxes and a lower profile county government." Botti himself recognized that the vote was less an endorsement of himself and more a stinging rebuke of Knuepfer. "Flattery would say the voters wanted me in there," Botti remarked. "But I don't think that's the full case." Some lamented the loss of the visionary architect of post-suburban DuPage. "I think the county is going to lose a man of great vision," announced one Knuepfer backer. "Say what you want about Jack Knuepfer, but he has done marvelous things for the county. He brought DuPage forward."

In the minds of most DuPage Countians, however, Knuepfer had been pushing the county too far forward. Whereas the county chair viewed DuPage as the emerging metropolis of the future, the majority of his constituents clung to the suburban past. Their vision of DuPage remained focused on well-maintained homes, top-notch schools, and homogeneous neighborhoods, characteristics increasingly alien to the big city. A big-time convention center and multi-million-dollar airport expansion program were not part of their dreams for the county.

Thus in DuPage, as in Saint Louis County, the 1980s ended with defeat for the forces of post-suburban imperialism. Advocates of centralized county rule
such as Gene McNary and Jack Knuepfer lost ground, whereas the municipal leagues assumed greater responsibility for coordinating local government services. The balance between the fragment and the whole was maintained and the Knuepfers and McNarys who had threatened that balance fell from power. The traditional suburban ideal of small-scale, grass-roots government survived, even though the municipal leagues in both counties were increasingly aware that the many miniature polities could no longer act as isolated islands of authority.

The late 1980s also witnessed the dissolution of much of the empire of the Orange County Board of Supervisors. Centralization of authority and county coordination were not the hallmarks of these years, but instead a new wave of municipal incorporation engulfed the county, resulting in border wars reminiscent of the 1950s. The forces of fragmentation again prevailed, and the number of municipalities mounted. The future of Orange seemed to rest increasingly with its municipal officials, who would curb the authority of the county.

This resurgence in municipal incorporation was in part a result of changing California law. No new municipalities were created in Orange between 1971 and 1987, but in 1978 the passage of Proposition 13 was to increase the appeal of incorporation. Proposition 13 was a state constitutional amendment that capped property tax rates. One of the chief arguments against incorporation proposals had been that they would result in higher property taxes. After 1978, however, property levies could not rise above a fixed limit; hence previous fears of a mounting tax burden were dissipated. Moreover, the property tax limit forced local governments to rely more heavily on sales, hotel, and other miscellaneous taxes. Thus communities could benefit from incorporation if they included within their boundaries lucrative shopping malls. And incorporation would ensure that sales or hotel tax revenues funded services in the immediate community rather than contributing toward countywide functions. Throughout California, then, municipal independence appeared increasingly attractive. Before the passage of Proposition 13, approximately two new municipalities incorporated in California per year; during the eight years following its adoption, the rate increased to five per year.167

The traditional suburban desire for enhanced local control, however, also spurred incorporation advocates. A 1985 public opinion poll found that 63 percent of Orange County respondents opposed any merger of city and county governments, and when asked whether the municipalities or county should have more responsibility, 58 percent chose the cities and only 28 percent opted for the county.168 Repeatedly in the incorporation campaigns of the late 1980s, Orange Countians expressed their exasperation with distant county authority
and their opposition to the creation of mammoth municipalities unresponsive to the individual voter. "The people are very frustrated with dealing with [the county] bureaucracy and the size of it," commented one advocate of incorporation. Another, who opposed the abortive incorporation of sprawling Saddleback Valley and preferred a smaller municipality including only Laguna Hills, expressed his contempt for bigness when he told a reporter: "I do not buy the idea that bigger is better. We want the smallest city that is fiscally viable. We need local government that is truly local."169

These sentiments produced five new incorporations between 1987 and 1991, beginning with the creation of the city of Mission Viejo. In November 1987, 57 percent of those casting ballots in the planned community opted for municipal status. Cries of home rule were frequently heard in the Mission Viejo campaign for cityhood. Following the election, a satisfied advocate of incorporation announced: "Now the residents have access to local leadership for local problems, such as transportation safety, public safety, and waste. They will have a greater voice."170

More turbulent was the struggle to incorporate nearby Dana Point. An overwhelming majority of the coastal community's residents favored incorporation, but conflict arose over whether the new city should include the coastal section of adjoining Laguna Niguel, a community also seeking municipal status. In an advisory referendum, 61 percent of the residents of the disputed coastal subdivisions favored union with swank Dana Point. "We believe we'll get local control along the coast with a coastal city, as opposed to in a sprawling inland city of Laguna Niguel where they're more concerned about an eight-screen movie house or a bus station," commented one proponent of union with Dana Point.171 But homeowners in the remainder of Laguna Niguel protested vigorously the loss of the coastline. Laguna Niguel's developers had used the slogan "sea country" to market the area's homes, but if the coastal strip joined Dana Point, the remainder of Laguna Niguel would be landlocked and unable to sell itself as an oceanfront community. Moreover, the coastal strip boasted of the posh Ritz-Carlton Hotel, and additional expensive hostelries were planned. Together they were expected to produce $4.4 million annually in hotel taxes.172 The prospective municipality of Laguna Niguel did not want to lose that revenue source to neighboring Dana Point.

Orange County's LAFCO was caught in the crossfire between Laguna Niguel and Dana Point. At one hectic LAFCO meeting, nearly four hundred Laguna Niguel residents packed the hearing room, many dressed in red, white, and blue and carrying signs and balloons. Before the hearing, an ardent foe of the coastal land grab led his neighbors in cheers. "Give me an L!" he shouted as the
protesters spelled out "Laguna Niguel," and they ended their cheers with chants of "sea country, sea country." Sheriff's deputies had to be called to control the crowd, and a county supervisor serving on LAFCO threatened to have the sheriff remove the rowdiest Laguna Niguel residents.173

The cheers and chants, however, were to no avail. In June 1988 Dana Point became Orange County's twenty-eighth municipality, including within its boundaries the coastal section of Laguna Niguel. Planners on the LAFCO staff originally recommended that the remainder of Laguna Niguel join with Laguna Hills to form a large municipality. But protests from the two communities forced a change in the recommendation. LAFCO acceded to traditional suburban localism and allowed Laguna Niguel and Laguna Hills to incorporate as two separate municipalities. "Although LAFCO staff continues to harbor grave concerns over the formation of several relatively small cities," wrote the LAFCO executive officer, "it is also recognized the south county residents may prefer smaller cities."174 A leader of the Laguna Hills incorporation drive welcomed the opportunity to pursue a separate existence. Rejecting "the mega-city concept," she claimed voters wanted "the smallest city possible that's feasible."175 Local control was the campaign slogan in both Laguna Hills and Laguna Niguel, and following the incorporation of the latter community, one resident happily concluded: "It's going to be easier to have a voice. Hopefully, we will have control over our own community now." In words that summed up the suburban creed of the past half century, another Laguna Niguel enthusiast proclaimed, "We want a place to call home and to a lot of people, 'city[hood]' means community and local control."176

In 1991 El Toro became the fifth new municipality created in Orange County since 1987. Again the desire for local control prompted the adoption of city status. "Without cityhood, we have to wait to see what happens," said the vice chair of the Community Coalition for Incorporation. "With cityhood, we can make it happen."177

Big county government had not, then, superseded the suburban tradition of localism. In Orange County, as in DuPage and Saint Louis Counties, municipal rule was alive and well and the units of local government were actually proliferating. County planners had to yield to demands for smaller units, and Dana Point and Laguna Niguel engaged in border conflicts similar to those of the more chaotic 1950s. Angry residents still demanded self-determination and fought neighbors for revenue-rich territory. Despite the changing outward appearance of the post-suburban region, with its high-rises, mammoth malls, and performing arts centers, the rhetoric of local leaders remained remarkably unchanged. Local control was still an unquestioned virtue and dictation by dis-
tant county authorities a danger to be avoided. The Orange County edition of the Los Angeles Times may have observed that "the splintering off of cities" seemed "to encourage a parochial view of government at a time when common problems increasingly transcended boundaries." But for most Orange Countians, centralization of authority outweighed parochialism as an evil.

By the early 1990s the wave of incorporations had so weakened county authority that Orange residents apparently had little to fear from county imperialists. Rather than appearing to be the government of the future, the county seemed a relic of the past and some questioned its continued utility. The county administrative officer estimated that the five recent incorporations had cost the county $21 million in property and sales taxes. Such tax losses contributed to the county's mounting financial woes, and, according to the Los Angeles Times, those figures made "it clear why county administrators shudder at the word 'cityhood.'" One editorial announced, "Thoughtful citizens, not only in Orange County but throughout the state, are wondering aloud whether county government has outlived its usefulness." And Orange County supervisor Roger Stanton likewise felt compelled to respond to the question of whether "county government [had] outlived its usefulness." The supervisor dismissed as "specious" arguments positing a future diminished role for county government, but even he would have admitted that the county no longer wielded as much authority over the charting of the post-suburban future. Stanton and others mentioned the future coordinating function of the county, as more governmental fragments cluttered the map of Southern California. Yet in Orange, as in Saint Louis and DuPage Counties, the post-suburban imperialists had lost ground to the persistent localism basic to the suburban ideal.

On post-suburban Long Island the multitude of local governments also survived with powers intact. At the close of 1989 Congressman Thomas Downey proposed a special commission to "streamline" Long Island's local government and thereby relieve the heavy tax burden. "We have more units of government than any of us can name, let alone describe," complained Downey. Three years later Downey had lost his seat in Congress, but scores of supposedly unknown governmental units had not lost their powers. Moreover, in the early 1990s the unifying grasp of the Nassau County Republican organization slackened notably, producing an unwonted fragmentation of political power. Shattering GOP hegemony, two of the county's three townships elected Democratic supervisors, an occurrence unknown in the glory days of Russel Sprague. The office of county executive remained in Republican hands, but with the townships of North Hempstead and Oyster Bay in the enemy camp, the executive and Republican party leader wielded less clout than in past years. At the same
time, Suffolk's townships remained fiercely jealous of their authority, perpetuating that county's chaotic political tradition. Despite budgetary problems in both Nassau and Suffolk, the counties continued to exercise broad powers, but the townships and villages appeared no nearer to extinction than they had three decades earlier.

Meanwhile, in Oakland County Daniel Murphy stayed at the county's helm until the beginning of 1993. Though the newspapers labeled Murphy, the mayor of Detroit, and the leaders of Wayne and Macomb Counties as the "Big Four" of southeastern Michigan, the Oakland executive did not use his powerful position to upset the balance of power between the county and the municipalities.\(^{183}\) Never a crusader for consolidation in the mold of Gene McNary or Jack Knuepfer, Daniel Murphy survived eighteen years as county executive and, unlike his DuPage counterpart, retired voluntarily. He accommodated himself to the persistent localism of his domain rather than combating it. Like Russel Sprague before him, he recognized that suburbanites would accept pragmatic initiatives aimed at coordinating services, but most did not wish to move beyond that. Thus in the early 1990s exclusive Franklin, "the town time forgot," and elegantly aloof Bloomfield Hills maintained their independence, free from the forces of social and political homogenization.

The legacy of the 1980s was, then, a perpetuation of the governmental balance in post-suburban America. Just as most post-suburban residents did not choose to abandon their villages and towns to the mercies of profit-hungry commercial developers, so they refused to sell out to post-suburban imperialists who equated consolidation with efficiency and good government. By 1990 few cows grazed the pastures of Saint Louis and DuPage Counties and the citrus groves of Orange had largely disappeared, but residents of these areas still sought to ensure that their hometowns as closely resembled the suburban dream as possible. Big development and big government were for big cities and both were at best necessary evils in the post-suburban counties. For the sake of efficiency, employment, convenience, or lower taxes, they might be tolerated. But unless centralized rule and high rises in some way enhanced the suburban way of life, they were unwelcome.