

# Clues Sheet

In the late 1940s, after years of depression and World War II, Americans now had new jobs and money to spend. Soldiers returned from the war, started families, and found that there were few homes for sale or rent. The federal government and private builders tried to solve the problem. New suburban communities such as Park Forest were built on the edges of cities. Many families took advantage of the government incentive programs. Businesses followed people from city centers to new suburban locations. National programs offered tax breaks to businesses that moved. By the late 1950s, growing traffic was causing a crisis in cities. Often the solution chosen was to build expressways through cities. Although designed to get people into the urban areas, these expressways made it easier for those who could afford it to move out to the new suburbs. They also caused hardships for city residents and local businesses displaced by the roads.



#### 4-1 Park Forest ad, 1950s (Courtesy of Park Forest Public Library)

In 1951, advertising for new suburban housing sold a lifestyle as well as a house. Planned communities often controlled who could live there.



#### 4-2 Fred Meyer's Rose City Shopping Center in Portland, Oregon, 1950s (Courtesy of Fred Meyer Stores, Portland, Oregon)

As businesses moved from downtown to the suburbs, they changed their stores to attract motorists. Huge signs and free parking areas helped businesses grow.



#### 4-3 Ford Country Squire station wagon, 1955 (Smithsonian Institution #15765, photograph by Hugh Talman)

In the 1950s, U.S. station wagons rose from less than 3 percent to almost 17 percent of the total number of cars built. The station wagon became the symbol of postwar suburban life. Most suburban families had one car.



#### 4-4 Building the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway, 1950s (Courtesy of MTA Bridges and Tunnels Special Archive)

In the 1950s, expressways were built across the nation to accommodate traffic. Often they tore apart inner-city neighborhoods, cutting them in half and isolating residents and businesses.



#### 4-5 View of Park Forest, 1950s (Courtesy of Chicago Historical Society)

After World War II, suburban housing developments spread across the country. Park Forest, Illinois, was one of the largest privately built communities. These communities were designed for cars, with parking space and curved streets to slow traffic through the residential areas.



#### 4-6 Rush-hour commuters, 1954 (Photograph by Bob Sandberg, courtesy of Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division)

Some commuters from the suburbs used public transportation. Notice most commuters are men. After World War II, women were encouraged to leave their wartime jobs to raise children, allowing men to return to the workforce.

# Oral Histories

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**Teachers: Photocopy and cut up the oral history excerpts for each set of image cards.**

“We held public meetings in the basement of the stores in the shopping center. . . . We formed ourselves into committees to set up the elections, the committee on police protection, the committee on library services, the committee on schools and each committee was working to establish governmental services at the local level.”

– *Memories from Anthony Scariano, reflecting on Park Forest, 1947*

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“We read about the ‘dream city for veterans’ in *Collier’s* magazine. It must have been late 1947. . . . It talked about rolling hills . . . no child would have to cross any major thoroughfares to get to school. . . . Immediately, we made plans to move into a planned community, we liked the idea very much of growing up with it, being a part of it, starting from scratch.”

– *Memories from Anthony Scariano, reflecting on Park Forest, 1947*

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“I’d been out of the army for two years (after World War II) . . . I could have found my way back to my old [Chicago] neighborhood and re-established myself, but the whole neighborhood was earmarked for destruction, because of the various public projects that were planned for the neighborhood.”

– *Memories from Anthony Scariano, reflecting on Park Forest, 1947*

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“[Before the development was completed] the courts were all mud, they were not paved, had no sidewalks . . . and you had no water—you had to boil the water that came out of the tap. . . . The Park Forest Management, the American Community Builders, served bottled water.”

– *Memories from Anthony Scariano, reflecting on Park Forest, 1947*

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“I worked in Chicago. . . . You had to arrange your schedule to make the first bus (or train) in the morning.”

– *Memories from Anthony Scariano, reflecting on Park Forest, 1947*

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“A whole slew [of people] formed car pools to go back and forth, as many as five or six in the car.”

– *Memories from Anthony Scariano, reflecting on Park Forest, 1947*

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“When I was in the sixth grade, I . . . [went] to a hobby shop at the shopping center every Saturday morning for a drawing of names for toys. I remember winning a small toy—a ‘Dinky’ army truck and a shiny white ‘Hopalong’ rifle.”

– *Memories from Robert Flynn, reflecting on Park Forest, 1952–1967*

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## Sources

[http://eli.sls.lib.il.us/30531\\_00/html/ohtranscriptsanthonyscariano.htm](http://eli.sls.lib.il.us/30531_00/html/ohtranscriptsanthonyscariano.htm)

<http://www.lincolnet.net/users/lrpfhs/dietch.html>