



## **Planning the Suburban City in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex**

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The emergence of suburban cities after World War II marked a significant transformation in the American urban landscape and nowhere was this more apparent than in Texas and the American Southwest. For instance before the war Dallas held 80 percent of the county's population and the largest town outside of Dallas in the county held 2,200 residents. Aggressive annexation policies doubled the city's size immediately after the war, but despite that effort by 2,000 its percentage of the county population dropped to 50 percent. The same pattern held true for nearby Fort Worth. At the time of World War II 79 percent of Tarrant County residents lived in Fort Worth. By 2,000, this number had dropped to 37 percent as another Tarrant County municipality, Arlington, became the 50th largest city in the United States.

Much has been written about the transformation of cityscapes in America and Europe after World War II. Historians and social scientists have examined the causes and consequences of suburbanization since at least the end of the 1950s while other historians have focused on the new town movements in both America and Europe. But there has been little attention directed toward a new breed of urban booster (and their efforts at a different type of city building) who appeared after World War II, the developers of the suburban city. These boosters shared much with earlier boosters in 19th century American history. But unlike the 19th century town promoter who focused on the rural hinterland surrounding their cities, the post war suburban city urban booster saw the metropolitan region as the hinterland and sought to take advantage of the opportunities that existed within that region. These urban boosters often employed city planning for their agendas and used it quite effectively to meet their needs.

Although the historical literature on the role of the federal government in its encouragement of suburbanization decentralization is great, little has been written on how its planning grants for cities under 25,000 under the 701 Program of the Housing Act of 1954 often encouraged decentralization and fragmentation. This paper will examine the rise of the suburban city in North Texas and explore the role of planning in this undertaking. It will provide special attention to one of the region's greatest success stories, Arlington, Texas, now the 49th largest city in the United States, as well as other suburban cities including Garland and Grand Prairie, Texas, part of today's Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex. Special attention will be paid not only to the civic leaders who promoted this new type of city, but to the plans and the planners and their role in the suburban city building process.

Such a topic should fit nicely with one of the conferences themes, urban transformation, since the paper uses the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex as the case to study the emergence of the suburban city and shows how the planning policies of the federal government contributed to this important development and the changing appearance of the metropolitan landscape.

**KEY WORDS:** Suburban City, Planning, Dallas Fort Worth Metroplex.