Empowerment by Design?: A Case Study of Women Living in New Urbanist Neighborhoods

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Empowerment by Design?:

A Case Study of Women Living in New Urbanist Neighborhoods

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Abstract

Post-World War II suburban developments are often designed with a strict division between the private and public spheres, and are often characterized as placeless, lifeless, and an intellectual void. Since suburbia is often defined as a feminized space, these stereotypes frequently fall on women. New Urbanism, as a design school, is a push-back against placeless suburbs, and attempts to integrate the public and private spheres. This case study examines two New Urbanist developments in the Twin Cities area with the intent of understanding how women interact with their built environment in suburban neighborhoods that are designed differently than traditional subdivisions. The main question my research aims to understand is: are New Urbanist developments better designed for women than traditional suburban subdivisions? I argue that the two New Urbanist developments I analyze, which represent two forms of New Urbanism and two different suburban locations, demonstrate that New Urbanist developments do have the potential to realize feminist design and be empowering for women, but are limited in their ability to do so by their location within the metropolitan region.
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Preface

I, like most Americans, grew up in a suburb. The female role-models in my family have also spent the majority of their lives living in suburbs. My grandmother would tell stories of living in Irvington, a dense first-ring suburb of New York, and talk about looking across the Hudson from her apartment, and how with that view she could never feel alone. She would contrast this description with the next town she moved to, Wilton, Connecticut, a town on the fringe of New York metropolitan sprawl, where she lived at the end of dead end street, on top of a hill. She often associated that home with being isolated and feeling alone.

Similarly, growing up in East Greenwich, Rhode Island, a suburb of Providence, my mother bore many of the personal consequences of living in a suburb. She was the one to spend more time in the town, more time at home, and adjust her employment to have a more flexible work schedule. Growing up, I had all of these female role-models who had “made it” in America – middle-class, home-owners, intellectual, with families - yet they all seem dissatisfied with where they lived. I think it was a combination of factors: making sacrifices in their careers for their children, feeling isolated in suburbia, and not having access to a diverse public.

My thesis is grounded in my own experiences of feminized suburbia, but aims to explore alternatives and differently-designed suburbs to see if they are empowering landscapes for women. If the built environment of suburbia was built in a way that intentionally tried to empower women, would they experience suburbia differently? Would it mean building a more just and equal environment? My thesis looks at alternatively-designed suburban developments to answer these questions.
Introduction to the Female Lived Experience of Suburbia

In 1980, Dolores Hayden asked “What would a non-sexist city look like?” She asked this because she, like many other feminists, believed that the built environment of cities and suburbs was oppressive to women. To these authors (Fainstein 2005; Hayden 1980; McDowell 1999; Saegert 1980; Spain 2005), cities and suburbs were built and designed in a way that perpetuated other forms of oppression such as sexism, racism, and classism. Despite these calls against these oppressive designs, traditional suburban subdivisions continued to be built, with a strict division between the private and public realms. This division adversely affects the lived experience of women because women are more likely to be associated with the private sphere. Compounding this isolation, suburbia is often characterized as placeless, lifeless, and an intellectual void, yet because these spaces are also feminized, these stereotypes disproportionately fall on women.

My research examines women’s experiences in a different kind of suburban environment, one that is intentionally designed to offer a way around the social impasse of conventional suburban developments. I argue that even though these neighborhoods are built in a way that attempts to integrate public and private space, these neighborhoods are not divorced from their context in suburban landscapes. Though this form of neighborhood design may be empowering for women, it is limited in its ability to be considered a feminist design by its position in the metropolitan region. In order to build this argument, I draw on previous scholarly work about feminist design, New Urbanism, public space, and the female lived experience of suburbia.

In order to combat these lifeless stereotypes of suburbia, and as a goal of envisioning a better built environment for women, feminist geographers theorized how to
change the built environment in order to empower women. Many of the design principles of feminism center on mixed-use, high-density developments with a focus on public space and communal facilities. These same design principles also have the potential to provide tools to empower other marginalized groups that are spatially segregated from jobs and commercial establishments and could benefit from public space as a space of self-expression and empowerment. Therefore feminist design, for the purposes of this thesis, focuses specifically on the power of design to empower women, but feminist theory does not separate this from necessary design tools that could empower other marginalized groups across race and class. Feminist theorists see the division of public and private as disempowering to any marginalized group, and thus see the design tools of integrating the public and private as empowering for all marginalized groups.

Many of these same design principles are also esteemed by the Congress for New Urbanism. New Urbanism began as a design ideology in the late 1980s as a reaction to what were considered placeless post-World War II suburban subdivisions (McCann 2009). New Urbanism is a design ideology that attempts to build developments that foster community through intentionally built environments. Both feminism and New Urbanism focus on public space, mixed-use zoning, and diversity in housing types, incomes, and demographics. New Urbanist design can apply to scales as small as a single building to envisioning an entire metropolitan region. At all scales, the overall vision of New Urbanism centers on four tenets. The built environment should be pedestrian friendly and walkable; neighborhoods should have a central node that is focused on public space; neighborhoods should have a variety of uses and functions including homes, stores,
offices, schools, etc.; and, neighborhoods should have a spectrum of housing types such as single-family homes, townhouses, apartments, townhouses, and condos (Rees 2003).

In theory New Urbanism attempts to provide an answer to Dolores Hayden’s question “What would a non-sexist city look like?” As a design agenda, as opposed to a social agenda, it does not aim to dismantle systems of oppression, but instead works on practical solutions that can help empower different groups. By creating a built environment that is dense, mixed-use, and meant to intentionally foster community, it can attempt to address these issues through design, but is limited to anything beyond that.

This case study critically examines the extent to which New Urbanism embodies feminist design principles in the built environment. Feminism seeks to build an environment that does not strictly divide the public and private, and has resources to help women do domestic chores. New Urbanism seeks to create a sense of place through intentionally designing an environment to foster community. These intersect in the practical ways that they serve residents, but because New Urbanism exists within capitalism, it sacrifices many of the less profitable aspects of feminist design.

In my research I examined three different sites: a transit-oriented New Urbanist development in a first ring suburb of Minneapolis – Excelsior and Grand, a neotraditional New Urbanist community on the fringe of metro sprawl – Liberty on the Lake, and a control site, representing typical late 1990s suburban subdivision design – Oak Park, also on the fringe of metro sprawl. My study not only examines two forms of New Urbanism, but also critically examines sites in geographically distinct areas of the metropolitan region of Minneapolis and St Paul, MN. I surveyed and interviewed women at these three sites; in total I collected 152 surveys, and completed 24 interviews. From this quantitative
and qualitative data, I make two comparisons: one between Liberty on the Lake and Excelsior and Grand, as two forms of New Urbanism, and a second comparison between Liberty on the Lake and Oak Park, as two urban fringe developments. Specifically, I examine how women use the built environment to navigate domestic labor, how women use and define public areas in their neighborhood, and, lastly, how women use social networks in their neighborhood.

In my thesis I argue that in order to accurately examine the extent to which New Urbanism realizes feminist design in the lived experience of the women who reside there, we must situate New Urbanist developments within their context in the metropolitan regions. Neither New Urbanism nor suburbs are singular entities, and therefore we must examine each in geographically specific ways. In this study, Excelsior and Grand as a first-ring suburban development is empowering for women in that it provides an intense mixed use-zoning of residential and commercial spaces, which help women to navigate multiple roles and encourages a more even division of domestic labor. As an urban fringe development, the design of Liberty on the Lake helps women combat feelings of isolation by fostering an intense sense of community. These two developments, which represent two forms of New Urbanism and two different suburban locations, demonstrate that New Urbanist developments do have the potential to realize feminist design, but are limited in their ability to do so by their location within the metropolitan region. This argument is in conversation with several debates in scholarly research, which I review in turn.

Over the last few decades as New Urbanism has grown in popularity, it has also garnered considerable criticism, and this thesis contributes to those conversations. Many
criticisms focus on New Urbanism’s implementation, and that developments often do not fulfill New Urbanism’s ideology. Often, diversity of residents across race, class, and age is sacrificed in order for developments to be more profitable (Veninga 2004). Yet other criticisms of New Urbanism ask what type of community New Urbanism is trying to build. Critics claim that New Urbanism tries to foster homogenous communities where members hold the same cultural norms and expectations (Day 2003). Although many criticize New Urbanism, others say it is better than the alternative. For example, Ellis (2002, pg. 268) argues that New Urbanism attempts to “build better, rather than worse urban fabric.” My thesis enters this debate about New Urbanism, by asking what we can learn about New Urbanism from examining the lived experience of the women who live there. Furthermore, my thesis contributes to these debates about New Urbanism’s implementation and the type of community it tries to foster, by critically examining the site and situation of distinct New Urbanist developments.

I also draw on literature about public space, gendered use of public space, and public space in suburbia, in order to critically examine how women use public space as a central element of both New Urbanist and feminist design. Specifically, I apply David Sibley’s (1995) theory about the ‘purification’ of space in order to examine public space in suburban contexts. Sibley posits that suburban space is already purified, because the space is inaccessible to people who cannot afford to live there, and therefore the space is maintained by middle-class values. Residents work to homogenize space, and exclude groups from suburban public spaces. I draw on this literature to examine if women use public space in these developments for democratic self-expression as feminist design
theory desires, if they use the public space for building community as New Urbanism intends, and how purifying public spaces interacts with these competing intentions.

My thesis also enters scholarly debates on the female lived experience of suburbia, and examines whether or not New Urbanism represents a different form of lived experience for women in suburban settings. There has been relatively little research about the lived experience of women in New Urbanist developments. Susana Torre (1999) was the first author to write about comparing feminist design to New Urbanist design, but made overarching comparisons between the two design ideologies, as opposed to grounding her ideas in specific cases. She also discusses extreme examples such as Celebration, a New Urbanist development built by the Disney Corporation. Although her work provides the starting point for this line of research, it left room for more exploration. Julia Markovich and Sue Hendler (2006) then wrote an article called “Beyond ‘Soccer Moms:’ Feminist and New Urbanist Critical Approaches to Suburbs,” which was a case study of a New Urbanist development in the greater Toronto area. They surveyed women in the development with a focus on what aspects of the built environment they utilized, what facilities they wished were there but were not, and about their social networks in the neighborhood. They concluded that most women chose the neighborhood for aesthetic reasons, and that social networks were based around social programming as opposed to the built environment. Markovich and Hendler’s work was the first to survey women living in a New Urbanist community, and to connect the topics of New Urbanism, feminist design, and the female lived experience. However their research was limited in that they only examined one New Urbanist site. Furthermore, they fail to situate their case site within the diversity of forms of New Urbanism, nor do
they address the context of their case site within the metropolitan region. I use this previous work as the starting point for my research, and expand upon this throughout my thesis.

In Chapter 1 I address the relevant literature that pertains to this research: critiques and debates on New Urbanism, the female lived experience of suburbia, suburban public space, and feminist design. In the literature review, I posit this thesis as particularly contributing to two debates in geography – criticisms of New Urbanism, and debates on the feminized landscape of suburbia. Next, in Chapter 2, I explain my methodology of examining the built environment according to feminist design principles, surveys, and interviews. I provide an overview of the data that I collected and my reasoning, and potential response biases that affect the conclusions I am able to draw. In my last chapter, Data Analysis, I examine four themes: the built environment, domestic labor, public space, and social networks. Within these themes I draw comparisons between the two New Urbanist sites, and the two urban fringe sites. Lastly, I end my thesis with a conclusions of how my thesis contributes to debates on New Urbanism, the female experience of suburbia, and suburban public space.
CHAPTER 1: Literature Review

“But here you don't know what's going on. You wouldn't know what is happening in house [next door] - how people are living... You don't know what is going on. Maybe someone is sick or needs some help and like suppose someone is sick in my house - they wouldn't know... I think that that should change, but I don't know to change it.” – Interview at Oak Park

“The sidewalks and the front porches I think were great ideas. It keeps people out and in front. I think the park is a great idea, all the green spaces. The main parks - that's really a gathering spot. If you're lonely or you're bored, if you walk up there generally there are people around. So you're not really lonely anymore, you'll just see people and things going on... It's really conducive to getting out and being together.” – Interview at Liberty on the Lake

The dominant imaginary of American suburban spaces since 1945 has been one of a feminized suburban landscape where soccer moms dominate, and male bread-winners commute to the city. Although this popular image has been challenged and has changed over the last sixty years, the stereotype of the feminized suburban landscape has persisted. Feminist authors have problematized this landscape as isolating for women, as the woman in the first quotation suggests. In this quote, the respondent comments on the unknown of the private homes that surround her, and how she does not know what happens inside these homes. Juxtaposed with the second quote, the contrast is stark. The second woman talks about going to public spaces in order to interact with her neighbors, and how when she is in those spaces “you’re not really lonely anymore.” Why are these experiences so different? There are many factors that contribute to their dissimilar experiences in their neighborhoods, yet one significant difference, and the one that I am interested in discussing, is that the first woman lives in a typical post-World War II subdivision, and the second woman lives in a New Urbanist development. In order to understand the significance of the contrast between these women’s experience, it is
important to contextualize them in four key themes from literature on New Urbanism and on Feminist analyses of the built environment: criticisms of New Urbanism, the female lived experience of suburbia, suburban public space, and feminist design.

These themes of literature, although discrete thematically, intersect in that they all inform the lived experience of women in suburbia. New Urbanism envisions a built environment that mixes public and private spheres through mixed-use zoning, diversity in housing stock, and an emphasis on public spaces. These design elements are reacting against typical post-1945 subdivisions, which are characterized by a strict public/private binary. The public/private binary is a way of theorizing the ways in which genders are assigned to public and private spheres. One of the key ways that the political economic structure of the United States marginalized women is through the strict separation of the ‘productive’ and ‘reproductive’ spheres (Bondi and Rose 2003). Through assigning men the ‘productive’ role as breadwinner, and women the ‘reproductive’ role of house-keeper, women were relegated to the private sphere and seen as unfit or unwelcome in the public sphere. This segregation of spheres has greatly impacted the lived experience for women in suburbia in the United States, and is a key element of understanding that experience. Since New Urbanism attempts to build neighborhoods around public spaces, I investigate the role of public space in suburbia, and how women have traditionally occupied those spaces. Lastly, feminist design intersects with how theorists imagine a built environment that would work to empower groups who have been marginalized by the public/private binary.

I see this thesis as drawing on and contributing to these four themes of scholarship, but it particularly contributes to two key debates: the lived experience of
suburbia and New Urbanism. The debate about the lived experience of suburbia for women centers on questions of whether or not scholars have over-simplified the narrative and agency of women living in suburbs, and if the suburban landscape is necessarily poorly designed for women. Debates about New Urbanism also ask if scholars have over-stated the poor design of post-World War II suburbs, and if New Urbanism presents a better suburban design, or if it perpetuates classist suburban development. The literature I examine speaks specifically to post-World War II suburbs in the United States. Although I contextualize suburbia in its long history in the United States, I am most interested in exploring the lived experience for women in contemporary suburbs. By contextualizing my thesis within these themes of literatures and debates I hope to ultimately contribute to a further understanding of these topics.

**New Urbanism**

After World War II, the type of growth that occurred around metropolitan areas dramatically changed. Although suburbs have been part of metropolitan development for decades, the character of suburbs fundamentally changed after 1945 (Hayden 2004). This change was rooted in three governmental policies and technology advances: single-use zoning, assembly line house production, and the construction of highway networks (Veninga 2004). These three elements coalesced to create post-World War II suburbs such as Levittown, where tracts of identical houses seemingly sprung up over night. Zoning created the opportunity for legally sanctioned areas that could only be developed as single-family homes at low density, and thus could be segregated by class. These zoning laws also segregated reproductive space, residential areas, from productive space,
industrial areas and offices. Innovations in housing technology allowed for assembly line production to decrease the amount of time it took to build a home, and increase the profit for the developer. Lastly, the creation of extensive highway networks allowed for sprawling metropolitan growth since workers could now live further from where they worked. These three circumstances, which were only navigable by automobile, helped to build what is now considered suburbia in American consciousness.

Although these types of suburbs became the norm, it was often criticized as placeless, environmentally harmful, and socially isolating. New Urbanism is a design movement that began in the 1980s as a reaction against these types of suburbs (McCann 2009). New Urbanism, as a movement of architecture and neighborhood design, is an attempt to create a quality sense of place through the intentional design of a neighborhood. New Urbanists believe that an intentionally built environment can encourage interactions between residents and work to create a place-based community (Brain 2005; Day 2003). In 1993 the first Congress for New Urbanism met to create the Charter for New Urbanism, which set forth a list of design principles for New Urbanist developments. New Urbanism functions on three different scales: the metropolitan region, the neighborhood, and the street (Congress for New Urbanism 1996). The Charter reflects different visions at the different scales, and thus the design elements of each scale are different. However, the overall vision of New Urbanism is based on four main themes. First, the built environment should be pedestrian friendly and walkable. Second, neighborhoods should have a center node that is focused on public space. Third, neighborhoods should have a variety of uses and functions including homes, stores,
offices, schools, etc. Lastly, neighborhoods should have a spectrum of housing types such as single-family homes, townhouses, apartments, and condos (Rees 2003).

New Urbanism is meant to function at different scales, but also at different points in the greater metropolitan region and in different community planning styles. New Urbanist developments can be as small as one building in the CBD or as big as a large suburban development on the fringe of a metro region. New Urbanist developments on edges of metro areas can be divided into two categories, and this project studies one of each: transit oriented development and Neotraditional development. As the first implies, transit oriented development is often higher density, and built in conjunction with or built to house new expansions of existing transit infrastructure such as buses, and bike paths. Whereas Neotraditional developments refer to the architectural style of the neighborhood that is meant to conjure a small-town feel. This distinction is important because some critiques of New Urbanism are aimed at only one of these types of developments, and since I study one of each in my research, I want to make sure to distinguish how critiques differ and how my research results for each type of development differ.

As New Urbanism has spread and grown in popularity, it has also been significantly criticized for a myriad of reasons. Criticisms vary from its implementation, to its ideology, to the political economic moment that has made its proliferation possible. Each criticism presents an opportunity to critically examine and reflect on New Urbanism. I aim to posit this thesis within this debate of New Urbanism in order to understand to what extent these critiques are valid, but even more importantly, to understand if New Urbanism presents a better built environment for women than traditional post-World War II suburbs. If New Urbanism is a reaction against those
designs, it is important to understand whether or not the experience is better for those living in New Urbanist communities.

One critique aims at exactly what New Urbanism is reacting against: typical post-World War II suburbs. Amanda Rees (2003) posits that New Urbanism oversimplifies suburbia, and otherizes those who live in “placeless” subdivisions. Furthermore she argues that New Urbanism oversimplifies the narrative of historic suburban development by saying that pre-war suburbs were “organic” outgrowths of the city and thus good, whereas post-war suburbs were “inorganic” growth and therefore bad. This narrative, promoted by New Urbanism, does not speak to the complexities of historic suburban growth, nor does it properly examine the complexities of contemporary suburbia (Rees 2003).

Another geographer, Catherine Veninga, similarly criticizes the root of New Urbanism but for different reasons. She argues that New Urbanism is not necessarily a reaction against traditional subdivisions, but that the contemporary political economic moment has made New Urbanism profitable for developers and attractive to cities (Veninga 2004). She sees the current political economic context as characterized by three interrelated situations: late capitalism, flexible labor, and the shift from social welfare to fiscal welfare. As American society, on the whole, shifts from an industrial to post-industrial economy this manifests itself in many significant ways. She argues that these factors “encourage the emergence of niche market commodities” and places New Urbanism within the realm of niche markets (Veninga 2004, pg. 468). Veninga (2004, pg. 469) ultimately argues “that rather than providing a blueprint for a ‘better way to live,’ New Urban design features simply respond to the contemporary economic
pressures (both global and local) and consumer tastes within a niche market.” Veninga critiques the political and economic moment that makes New Urbanism possible, but other authors critique what New Urbanism tries to foster.

Some of the most salient critiques of New Urbanism question what type of community New Urbanism is trying to build, and who is included in that community. New Urbanism is based on the ideal of community, which implies that people in the community have common consciousness and mutual understanding. This often implies that members share cultural norms, which can deny differences between members of the community (Day 2003). If differences between members are suppressed, at what point does community become surveillance or policing (Day 2003; Rees 2003; Veninga 2004)? If community is based on common cultural norms, some fear that it necessarily implies homogeneity. As Rees (2003, pg. 468) argues, “the very sense of stability and community that neotraditionalism represents is grounded, in part, on the absence of people of color from the landscape.” Critics also question the pros and cons of place-based community, and are quick to point out that there are plenty of forms of communities that are not based on geographic location.

Despite many of these criticisms of New Urbanism, many authors are still hopeful that New Urbanism represents a better design norm than traditional World War II subdivisions. Many critics of New Urbanism focus their attention on developments on the fringe of metro areas as opposed to developments within city limits (Ellis 2002). These critiques tend to personify New Urbanism by using extreme examples such as Celebration or Seaside, Florida, as opposed to addressing the diversity of developments that are contained under the umbrella of New Urbanism. New Urbanism does not claim
to be the solution to wider problems of late capitalism, but instead proposes to “build better rather than worse urban fabric at the present time” (Ellis 2002, pg. 268). This thesis aims to understand if New Urbanism is successful at this in the context of the lived experience of women in suburbia.

The Lived Experience of the Public-Private Binary in Suburbia

One of the prevailing myths about suburbs is that they are a relatively new phenomenon that began after World War II, and that suburban subdivisions such as Levittown were the first types of suburbs in the United States. This popular conception of suburbia erases a large history of suburban development beginning in the 1800s (Hayden 2004). City residents have long sought quieter, rural settings, and an escape from urban life. Although the percentage of the population that partook in the migration from the city to the suburbs increased rapidly after World War II, suburbs have existed on the urban fringe since the 1800s. Of course, what is thought of as the urban fringe has changed significantly over time. Areas that are two miles outside of a downtown may have been considered a suburb during the 1800s, and are now thought of as part of the inner city. Societal ideas of what defines a suburb are constantly evolving. Subsequently, the lived experience of suburbia is as varied as its forms. In this section, I look at the historical development and analysis of the female experience of suburbia beginning in the late 1800s until the contemporary moment.

In the late 1800s there was a key moment in the development of both suburbia and the ideology of domesticity that greatly influenced the future domestic role of women in suburbia. In the late 1800s to early 1900s there was an increasing concern about “the
urban problem” characterized by poverty, increased ethnic and racial diversity, and social change, and this change greatly concerned many middle-class mobile people (Johnson and Johnson 2008). Both men and women “interpreted the ideology of domesticity as a solution to the urban squalor … albeit in different ways” (Johnson and Johnson 2008, pg. 492). The ideology of domesticity was rooted in the idea of women as mothers and wives who “create a domestic environment that offered an alternative to the conflict and competition of the marketplace economy” (Marsh 1990, pg. 8). Although men and women agreed that domesticity was the answer to “the urban problem,” as exemplified by Catherine Beecher, they disagreed on where the solution was located (Johnson and Johnson 2008). Jennifer Johnson and Megan Johnson (2008, pg. 492) summarize this disagreement as one where, “[w]omen wanted to move the institution of the family to the center of public life, [whereas] men wanted to privatize it, and consequently remove women’s labor from public influence. In other words, women rooted their ideology of domesticity in the city, whereas men rooted it in the suburbs.” This of course must also be situated within the political economic moment where women were increasingly participating in suffrage movements, reform movements, and were generally entering the public in diverse ways.

This movement coincided with the advent of the streetcar, which made creating a physical distance between a home in the suburbs and the problems of the urban core increasingly possible for middle class families. However, Marsh (1990) ultimately places the resolution to this tension in men’s willingness, at the time, to become more involved with domestic activities; “the catch was that this new masculinity required a physical location separate from [male wage earner’s] public work to flourish, that is, the suburbs”
Thus, middle-class families began to move to the suburbs, and men commuted to work, while women stayed at home in single-family houses. In many ways this was the genesis of the public-private binary of suburban living. Subsequently, this defined suburbia as private, and also as part of the ideology of domesticity. I will argue later about how this conflation of suburbia and domesticity has continued on the urban fringe to this day, despite women’s increasing participation in paid labor and the public realm. Yet it is important to understand the roots of domesticity and the public-private binary in suburbia before understanding their effects on the lived experience of women.

In an alternative, and not necessarily contradictory, explanation of the root of the public-private binary, McDowell (1999) argues that the spatial segregation of men and women started with the beginning of industrial urbanization. At this time men were sent into the public as workers, and women, who could afford to do so, remained in the private sphere of the home. Capitalism during this era benefited from this separation of ‘productive’ and ‘reproductive’ forces. McDowell (1999) argues that this binary was key to its continuing functionality because domestic labor was uncompensated and therefore exploited, which allowed a male-dominated ‘productive’ force to thrive.

These patterns of spatial segregation defined the city as a male-dominated, public, aggressive space, and the suburb as feminine, passive, and private space (Saegert 1980). Although this presents a narrow dichotomy, it represents the real alienation that women felt during large-scale suburbanization, when there was a widespread migration from the city to the suburb. In her 1980 study, Susan Saegert interviewed both men and women about their experiences in suburbs and cities, with a special focus on women who moved
from urban areas to suburban areas. At the time, her study confirmed that women who
worked outside the home still did the majority of household chores in addition to their
careers, and that the long commutes that men made from the suburbs to the city were
interpreted as justification for why men did not have to do equal parts of domestic chores
(Saegert 1980). Yet, her most important findings were that “suburban residences tend to
isolate women from involvement outside the home, thus unhappily reinforcing the real
and symbolic distinctions between the private, domestic female world and the public,
productive male world” (Saegert 1980, p.107). Thus, her study confirms that the
traditional suburban experience at the time was isolating for women, and alienated them
from participating in the public.

Other authors also argue that the focus on family in suburbia can be an isolating
experience for all family members. Laura Miller (1995, pg. 394) argues that since post-
World War II suburbia has been constructed as “the most promising place for families to
flourish,” it prioritizes the family over other types of social networks, and sets up an
unattainable idealized nuclear family where most personal and emotional needs are
fulfilled by familial relationships. This is compounded by the lack of public space in
post-1945 suburbs because it provides no space to easily interact with non-family
members. Miller (1995) argues that suburbia functions as two types of isolation, one as
being isolated (or insulated) from urban ills, and simultaneously the structure of the
family is isolated from other people due to the privatization of space along family lines.
Miller (1995, pg. 410) ultimately concludes, confirming Marsh (1990) and Johnson and
Johnson’s (2008) arguments, that “the denigration of public space and the bourgeois
attraction to privacy and domesticity are mutually reinforcing processes.”
The maintenance of nuclear families as rooted in the mother of the family, or the ideology of domesticity, persists to this day despite the fact that women are entering the paid work force in ever greater numbers. Studies consistently show that even if both the male and female partners in a family work full-time, the women do the majority of domestic chores (England 1995, Johnson and Johnson 2008, Pratt 2003). This phenomenon is often referred to as the second shift, because once women come home from their paid work, they work a second shift of unpaid labor in the home. The reasons why the second shift persists are rooted in ideas of money, time, and gender ideology (Johnson and Johnson 2008). Money was often the justification in the past, since women earned less than men, as to why they were responsible for domestic chores. Similarly, since women were less likely to work outside the home, they had more time for domestic labor. Yet, even though women are increasingly working outside the home, they are more likely to work as “flexible labor” where jobs are structured in flexible ways meaning they are part-time, done by telecommuting, or (and almost always) un-unionized (Harvey 1989). Flexible labor is cheaper and more expendable for the employer, and for women who were previously not part of the workforce it is preferable because it is more flexible, and thus allows them to fulfill multiple roles as employee and mother. Although the variables of money and time have changed over time, gender ideology seems to be the most stagnant of the three factors effecting domestic labor. In many ways domestic labor is a way of performing gender, and men and women are still likely to perform the domestic chores that they see as most aligning with traditional gender views (Johnson and Johnson 2008).
The maintenance of flexible labor, and the ability of women to fulfill these multiple roles in the public and private spheres, is aided by the design of the urban fringe. Johnson and Johnson (2008, pg. 491) cite a contributing factor to this phenomenon stating that “the modern urban fringe is built to make the second shift as convenient as possible to support and thus continue the social and economic expropriation of women’s labor.” They argue that since suburbs are no longer just residential areas, since they now include employment opportunities and commercial areas, that this design makes consumption much easier. Now women can outsource the labor of domestic chores (childcare, cleaning, cooking, shopping, etc.), or do those same chores, but since they are closer to home it is considered a time-saving mechanism. Now women can complete domestic labor through consumption, thus making it seemingly more convenient, because it takes less time, yet this process is exactly what renders domestic labor invisible to the women performing it. Thus, this system perpetuates women’s disproportionate share of domestic labor. However, the most significant part of their argument is that this ideology of domesticity is inextricable from the ideology of suburbia. It began in the 1800s as women moved to the suburbs to escape urban ills, and has continued to this day as women are still the primary agents in the ideology of domesticity in the contemporary urban fringe.

This account is not meant to absolve women from any agency in this process. Too often suburbia is oversimplified as both a homogenous space devoid of culture, and that the women living there are “innocent, passive victims of a built environment” (England 1993, pg. 24). Since suburbs were not necessarily designed for women working outside the home, women have come up with solutions for issues such as childcare by using
neighborhood networks of other working mothers. Kim England (1993, pg. 39) argues that “suburban women actively alter their sociospatial system in order to integrate their often contradictory multiple roles.” Yet women are still more likely to prioritize their domestic role over their careers, and will pick local jobs in the suburbs, often pink-collar work, in order to complete these multiple tasks. Although women are able to adjust to their environment and work around it, the design of suburbia still perpetuates the idea of women as part of the ideology of domesticity.

Literature about the lived experience of women in suburbia center around a key debate about whether the suburban landscape is oppressive or empowering for women. It is often interpreted as oppressive because its formation and design necessarily preclude a spatial segregation of public and private realms. Women are then relegated to the private sphere in suburbia, and the spatial division of public services makes it difficult for women to complete multiple roles as citizen, employee, (oftentimes) mother, and other roles. Yet, other authors are cautious to interpret the suburban landscape as oppressive because it has been so feminized that it allows women a certain type of ownership over the space. My thesis aims to enter into this debate by looking at the lived experience of women in a differently designed suburban space to see if these same experiences of the public and private realm persist.

**Public Space: Purification of Space and Suburban Publics**

Even though the idea of the public/private binary assigns the city as public, and suburbs as private, this ignores the public spaces that do exist in suburbia. These spaces experience seemingly contradictory roles as a public space, in a context of suburbia that
is often economically exclusionary to much of society. This is further complicated by the feminization of suburbia while it is also considered a private space. Although previous literature has discussed gendered use of public space, it has generally focused its discussion on the shopping mall, and not on park space in suburban neighborhoods. Since public park space is important to the design of New Urbanist neighborhoods, it is important to understand the degree to which these spaces are public in addition to how women experience these spaces. Specifically, I draw on literature that examines public space in post-World War II suburbs, and most recently public space on the urban fringe of metropolitan areas.

Public space as a physical environment exists in various forms, and certain designs, geographies, and contexts are more open, and thus more accessible to a diverse public than others. Not all public space is open and democratic, in the same way that not all private space is equally confining and isolating. In my methodology section I will provide a framework, as theorized by Varna and Tiesdall (2010), for assessing the openness of public space, but I first look at Don Mitchell’s (2005) recent work on SUV citizenship as a way of talking about the assumed right to feel safe in public space. Mitchell is concerned with the increasing right for people to be “left alone” in public space. This concern follows the 2000 U.S. Supreme court case of Hill vs. Colorado that established the precedent that within a hundred foot zone of medical establishments citizens are entitled to an eight foot bubble around them that someone cannot enter without their explicit consent (Mitchell 2005). The case was meant to protect people entering clinics, especially those that perform abortions, from aggressive leaflethers. Yet this case, along with other city ordinances across the country establishing strong anti-
panhandling laws, greatly concern Mitchell because they establish a precedent that citizens are entitled to be left alone while travelling through public spaces as opposed to it being their own responsibility to avoid political protesters, panhandlers, or people who are different from them. This trend also speaks to wider libertarian societal trends about interpretations of freedom and personal responsibility. Mitchell (2005, pg. 88) argues that in this:

new property regime in which common property – public space – is no longer so much in trust for assembly, communicating thoughts, and so forth, but instead parceled out, albeit temporarily, to individual ‘owners’ as they move through it. To the degree that I have a right to be left alone, then to that degree I can exclude you from the space around me (up to eight feet, say).

This trend means that we are all free agents in public space, not accountable to one another but only accountable to ourselves.

These changes in the nature of public space necessarily change the nature of citizenship because public space is the physical landscape for the public sphere. Mitchell (2005, pg. 96) sees these changes in public space as exemplified by a new form of S.U.V. citizenship where “we are, each and every one of us, radically individual, completely ‘free agents’”. Mitchell also draws parallels between this S.U.V. model of citizenship and the common practices of exclusion at malls where the space is advertised as public, yet in practice is not open to those who do not conform to societal norms. Furthermore, this trend points to our desire that “we want – and expect – to feel safe at all times” (Mitchell 2005, pg 96). This is of particular importance is this study because safety is one of the key concerns of the women living in the suburban developments of my case study.
Suburbia as a spatial construction is built on the exclusion of certain groups, mainly by class, because unless you are a home owner, or at least able to own a car to access these areas, these areas are inaccessible. This exclusion of certain groups is part of what creates the feeling of safety in suburbia that people now expect.

Another way to interpret this exclusionary practice is what David Sibley theorizes as the “purification of space.” Purifying space is a practice done by highly organized, normally homogenous groups that work to “maintain conformity … and push non-conforming elements to the margins” (Trudeau and McMorran 2011, pg. 441). This practice establishes borders between those within a group, and all those considered deviant, and the border between the two is maintained by constantly pushing all “non-conforming” groups and people outside the borders. Sibley (1995, pg. 43) argues that:

‘Family,’ ‘suburbs’ and ‘society’ all have the particular connotation of stability and order for the relatively affluent, and attachment to the system which depends for its continued success on the belief in core values is reinforced by the manufacture of… ‘others.’

He posits that the built environment of suburbia is maintained by the hegemonic social values by groups who have the power to maintain those values, and exclude those who do not hold those values. Purifying space is the process by which those who do not hold those values are systematically excluded from that space. The suburban landscape on the contemporary urban fringe, as one dominated by home-owning upper middle-class families, is able to purify space due to their highly organized power, often in the form of enforcing strict municipal codes and zoning, and the general homogeneity of the landscape. So although suburban public space may seem to be ‘open-minded’ space, it
has already been purified and therefore cannot be seen as entirely open, democratic space.

*Public Space in the Context of Suburbia: The Shopping Mall*

Just as Mitchell alluded to, it is difficult to talk about public space in suburbia without addressing what is considered the public arena of many suburban areas: the shopping mall. With large scale suburbanization in post-World War II America, also came a re-envisioning of the town center model of earlier cities. Since many suburban areas had no pre-existing town center, it gave commercial interests the opportunity to shape a central meeting point for towns in the form of shopping malls (Cohen 1996). At first these malls attempted to combine commercial, civic, and educational space by including community meeting rooms as well as auditoriums for community classes, which ultimately brought more consumers into the mall. However, this meant constructing the mall as an open political space, which necessarily put commercial and community interests at odds, since the mall ultimately was privately owned (Cohen 1996). The “first amendment did not guarantee access to shopping malls” (Cohen 1996, p. 1070) since malls “aimed to exclude … unwanted urban groups such as vagrants, prostitutes, racial minorities, and the poor” (Cohen 1996, p.1059). So although shopping malls may have begun as suburbia’s public space, using malls as a space for interaction among diverse members was at odds with commercial interests, and commercial interests eventually won out.

Within this narrative of the suburban mall as public space, it is important to discuss how this space simultaneously feminized suburbia. The shopping mall, as a node
of the suburban landscape, became a distinctly feminized space due to the mainly female clientele. Women entered these places as consumers, but not as producers (Cohen 1996; McDowell 1999). As time progressed, and as women looked for part-time work outside the home, many women became part of a flexible, part-time labor force in suburban malls (Cohen 1996). Yet, what is most significant about the feminization of the mall is that “women entered a well-controlled ‘public’ space that made them feel safe and comfortable … [malls] were created as female worlds” (Cohen 1996, pg. 1072). The mall was seen as a safe and comfortable alternative to downtown shopping, which was contained within the safety of a segregated suburbia. Even when they entered the workforce in malls, they did so as part-time flexible labor, and their capacity as consumers was what qualified them as workers (Cohen 1996). Even though women were using this feminized space, it was not a truly public space, since it was privately owned and operated, which necessarily meant that it could not be an open-minded, democratic public space Walzer (1995).

This discussion of public space is important within the context of this study for two reasons. First, it is important to contextualize theories of public space because both New Urbanism and feminist design theory call for public space as the central node of their neighborhoods. Second, my research surveys and interviews focused on asking women at the sites about their interactions with public space in their neighborhoods. Although previous literature has discussed gendered use of public space, it has generally focused its discussion on the shopping mall, and not on park space in suburban neighborhoods. Since public park space is important to the design of New Urbanist
neighborhoods, it is important to understand how public that space is, and how women experience that space.

**Feminist Design**

Now that I have explained the various ideas and theories problematizing post WWII suburban neighborhood design for women, what would happen if neighborhoods were designed according to feminist principles? Feminist design theory calls for a myriad of changes in the way that suburbs and cities are designed. Authors, such as Dolores Hayden (1980), explicitly state that we must first change how we compensate unpaid domestic labor, and the social relations that reproduce gender stratification in domestic work, before changing the built environment. The built environment is limited in its ability to dismantle uneven social relations if it is not also accompanied by other social changes (Day 2003). Many of the elements of feminist design – public space, diversity in housing types, high density, mixed-use zoning, access to childcare and public transit, diversity of race and class, and communal facilities – are rooted in the idea that women do a disproportionate load of domestic work. In response to this uneven division of labor, feminist geographers theorize how to build an environment that facilitates these domestic chores. These theories not only work to help empower women, but also work to empower other marginalized groups that are also burdened by the traditional division of public and private which make accessing private facilities – jobs, commercial establishments, services – difficult. The following table synthesizes various feminist design elements that feminist authors have addressed, and explains why these design elements are important for a feminist-designed neighborhood.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feminist Design Principle</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Public Space</strong></td>
<td>Reichl (2004) sites public space as a key part of democracy because groups can self-identify how to represent themselves to larger society. He argues that “efforts to control public space [is a] desire to limit forms of political expression.” Thus sites will be evaluated on the openness (in a democratic, not physical sense) of their public space and if it allows for self-expression.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Diversity in Housing Type</strong></td>
<td>As the demographics of American society change, a male/female couple headed household is increasingly less common. Thus communities need to have a variety of housing types that accommodate single parents, single people, and families with multiple generations living in one house. Housing developments that only have living arrangements for dual-headed families are limiting who can live there (Hayden 1980; Spain 2005).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>High-Density Development</strong></td>
<td>Although women are increasingly entering the workforce (and the public), women are still more likely to be in charge of most domestic chores in the private sphere including childcare, shopping, cooking, cleaning, etc. Sprawl has contributed to the spatial dispersion of many of these services, which disproportionately burden women (Fainstein 2005). Thus high-density development helps to maintain vital services within closer distance of both home and work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Access to Childcare</strong></td>
<td>As previously stated, women are more likely to be in charge of finding childcare and bringing children to childcare, thus spatial access to childcare is a key concern in feminist design of communities (Fainstein 2005; Hayden 1980).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Access to Public Transit</strong></td>
<td>Given women’s role transporting children, buying food, and other trips, access to public transit is incredibly important (Hayden 1980; Spain 2005). Furthermore, women are also less likely to work typical 9-5 jobs which is when public transit is most reliable, so evaluating that transit is also available at other hours is also key (Sandercock and Forsyth 2005).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Multi-Use Zoning</strong></td>
<td>Single-use zoning prevents childcare, groceries, work, etc. to be within close proximity of the home. The separation of these ‘public’ services from the private sphere has often been cited as difficult for women (Hayden 1980; Torre 1999).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Integration of Different Races and Classes in the Neighborhood</strong></td>
<td>Since feminist theories study structures of marginality, it is integral to feminist design to have a truly integrated community across race, class, and gender (Hayden 1980; Spain 2005). Since poverty tends to be a racialized and feminized phenomenon, it is important to have mixed-income housing that is integrated into the neighborhood.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communal Facilities</strong></td>
<td>Over the past seventy years of expansive urban growth, the tendency in planning has been to privatize facilities so that each home has increasing private space for each function, yet this marginalizes those who are unable to afford this private space (Hayden 1980). Thus feminist design would include communal facilities, for example laundry facilities, so that people in the community who are unable to afford private laundry facilities will still have access to communal ones.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Although feminist design does not separate tools for the empowerment of women from tools for empowerment of other marginalized groups, certain gender roles for women are prioritized over others. Feminist design theorizes about how to build an environment for women by largely defining women as mothers. For example, feminist design places a strong emphasis on women’s role as mothers by emphasizing the need for access to childcare. This perpetuates gendered stereotypes that women are seen as mothers regardless of whether or not they have children. Although this is clearly problematic, I propose that these feminist theorists would agree that this is problematic, but reiterate that those who are most marginalized by restricted access to childcare are poor women of color, and thus to ignore this practical struggle would further marginalize women of color and perpetuate the many systems of oppression that they face. Furthermore, access to childcare, and other familial resources that mothers need, would result in the breakdown of the public/private binary thus empowering female autonomy, regardless of whether or not they are mothers.

Feminist design is rooted in how to build an environment that works to empower marginalized groups, whereas New Urbanism is focused on how to use the built environment to foster community, which I will explore in greater depth in the next section. Both focus on public space, integration of public and private spaces, the integration of different races and classes within a community, and a variety of housing types. Yet the motivations for changing the design of neighborhoods are very different. New Urbanism as an actual existing phenomena works within a capitalist system and therefore simultaneously works to change neighborhood design, but developers still have to be able to sell New Urbanist developments in an open market. However, since
explicitly feminist designed communities do not exist in practice (Torre 1999), in theory feminist design only focuses on the design of a neighborhood without concerning itself with having to be sold on the market.

**Summarizing Literature**

This project is driven by the central question: Are New Urbanist communities better designed for women than other post-World War II suburbs? This question necessarily precludes other questions about New Urbanism, post-World War II suburbs, and what “better designed” means. In order to answer those questions I ground my project in four themes of geographic literature: the lived experience of women in suburbia, the gendered use of suburban public space, theories of feminist design, and analysis and critiques of New Urbanism. I build on these themes of literature as a way to analyze the lived experience of women in Liberty on the Lake, Excelsior and Grand, and Oak Park. In particular, I draw on critiques of New Urbanism to examine what type of community women are building in their neighborhoods, and how they use their social networks. I also analyze how women use, interact, and define public spaces. Furthermore, I look at how women divide up domestic chores with their partners, and how the built environment can help facilitate domestic labor according to feminist design principles. In the next chapter, Methods, I elaborate how I approach analyzing this question.
CHAPTER 2: Methodology

My thesis is a case study of two New Urbanist developments in the Twin Cities Metro area, along with one control community, which represents a traditional urban fringe subdivision. I use these sites as a way of studying my research questions in specific New Urbanist neighborhoods that are representative of larger trends in New Urbanist neighborhood design, and thus can speak to the lived experience of women in these suburban environments. The two New Urbanist sites are quite different, and are meant to represent (in part) the breadth and diversity of New Urbanism, along with providing different examples of New Urbanism that I can compare to each other. Liberty on the Lake, as I have previously depicted, is a low-density, largely single-family home development, whereas Excelsior and Grand is a high-density neighborhood, consisting of entirely condos and apartments with intense commercial and retail development. My control site, Oak Park, is also a low density, single-family home neighborhood, and is meant as a neighborhood to compare with Liberty on the Lake. These developments characterize different phases of suburban development, and therefore are representative of an array of lived experiences. In order to examine these developments I use a mixture of three methodologies: examining the built environment of each neighborhood as compared to feminist design principles, surveys, and interviews with women living in each case site. These three methods provide a mixture of both quantitative and qualitative data with which to answer my research questions, which are introduced later in this chapter.
**Case Site Selection and Distribution**

In order to answer these research questions, I chose three cases in distinct suburban towns in the Twin Cities metropolitan region so that my research could reflect on a variety of suburban experiences. These three cases are located in three suburban towns in the Twin Cities metro region. Liberty on the Lake is located in Stillwater, twenty miles from downtown St Paul, and developed as a separate municipality than the Twin Cities. Stillwater has only become part of the Twin Cities suburbs during relatively recent phases of sprawl. Liberty on the Lake was built by Contractor Property Developer’s Company (CPDC), a local developer in Stillwater, who had no prior experience with New Urbanism (Bjelland et al. 2006). The planners for the town of Stillwater had stipulated that they would only annex the land where Liberty on the Lake was built, if the development conformed to “a more traditional design in keeping with the city’s historical character” (Bjelland et al. 2006, p.258). Building began in 1999 and the development is continuing to expand, but the average year built is 2002, and in 2011 the average value of a home in Liberty on the Lake is $439,305.

Excelsior and Grand is located in St. Louis Park, a first-ring suburb directly west of Minneapolis. In fact, the development is only a little more than a mile from the border with Minneapolis. As a first-ring suburb, St. Louis Park has an older, denser housing stock than the other sites. Excelsior and Grand was developed by TOLD a large, national development firm (Metropolitan Council 2011). On TOLD’s website they boast of having “in-depth knowledge of real estate markets across the nation and a thorough understanding of the complex nature of retail real estate development” (TOLD 2011). TOLD was picked as the second developer for Excelsior and Grand when the first
developer fell through, and once they signed onto the project they “determined [the project] not to be financially feasible,” and redesigned parts of the project in order to meet financial needs (TOLD 2011). TOLD started building in 2005, and the last building was completed in 2010, and the average year built of the condominium units is 2006. An average condo unit at Excelsior and Grand, in 2011, was assessed at $278,180.

The control site, Oak Park, is in Eden Prairie, a suburb to the southwest of Minneapolis, about eighteen miles from downtown. Oak Park represents a typical suburban fringe development, in which every house looks fairly similar, there are winding streets with cul-de-sacs, very few sidewalks, and garages dominate the landscape. It is similar to Liberty on the Lake in the sense that they are both on the edge of sprawl in the Twin Cities, and the average home was constructed in 2002. In 2011, the average home at Oak Park cost approximately $18,000 more than Liberty on the Lake, with an average assessed value of $457,106.

Methodological Approaches

My analysis of the lived experience of women in New Urbanist developments takes three different methodological approaches: analyzing the built environment, survey data, and interviews. I used these three approaches in order to gather a nuanced picture of what the lived experience is like for women in these neighborhoods. The first approach is to understand the ways in which each neighborhood does and does not fulfill feminist design criteria. The surveys provide a quantitative understanding as to how women interact with the built environment of their neighborhoods, how they use public space, and how they interact with their neighbors. Lastly, the interviews provide a better
understanding as to the motivations behind these interactions. I present my approaches in chronological order from first to last because they build on each other. My analysis of the built environment informed the questions I asked on my survey. In turn, the survey responses shaped the questions I asked my interview participants. The combination of these three methods provided me with a breadth of both quantitative and qualitative data with which to ultimately answer the question – are New Urbanist communities better designed for women than traditional post-World War II suburbs?

Figure 2.1 Case Site Locations

Analyzing the Built Environment

In each of my three sites, I analyzed the extent to which each development fulfills feminist design principles. I mainly relied on visual observations, along with online
resources such as transportation and public school information. When looking at the built environment, I was focused on understanding to what extent New Urbanism represents feminist design principles, to provide a foundation for understanding if these communities could be considered feminist neighborhoods. I evaluate the degree to which each site demonstrates the eight feminist design principles identified in Table 1. The principles are synthesized from common themes across different feminist design authors (Fainstein 2005; Hayden 1980; Reichl 2004; Spain 2005; Sandercock and Forsyth 2005; Torre 1999; Varna and Tiesdell 2010).

**Table 2.1 Defining Feminist Design Principles**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feminist Design Principle</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Public Space</em></td>
<td>I evaluated the publicness of the public areas to assess the extent to which spaces are open, publicly accessible, integrated into wider neighborhood design, and allow for a variety of passive and active uses. I draw on Varna and Tiesdell (2010) Star Model of Public Space, which I will elaborate on in Table 2.2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Diversity in Housing Type</em></td>
<td>The cases were evaluated according to if they contain both rental and owner-occupied units, along with a diversity in size and prices of the units.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>High-Density Development</em></td>
<td>This design principle was evaluated according to if the development is more densely built than a traditional suburban development, which I gathered from the zoning information from the website of each town.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Access to Childcare</em></td>
<td>I analyzed this design principle according to whether or not the development has access to full day Pre-K care.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Access to Public Transit</em></td>
<td>I gathered this information from the MetroTransit website.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Multi-Use Zoning</em></td>
<td>I determined whether the developments have multi-use zoning by looking up addresses in the development on the zoning page of the Stillwater and St. Louis Park town websites.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Integration of Different Races and Classes in the Neighborhood</em></td>
<td>In order to evaluate an integration of classes I looked at whether or not the development has units that are accessible to distinct economic classes. To analyze racial diversity I looked at the racial composition of the census tracts that contained each development. Although this is imperfect, because the developments are smaller than the tract and therefore is an ecological fallacy, it is the only indirect method available.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Communal Facilities</em></td>
<td>While visiting the cases I looked for communal facilities, and afterwards looked at the websites of each development to see what they advertised as communal facilities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Building on these feminist design principles, I utilized the Star Model proposed by Varna and Tiesdell (2010) in order to evaluate the ‘publicness’ of the public space at each site. Feminist literature stresses the importance of public space, but does not provide a cohesive framework for evaluating the “publicness” of public space. For the purposes of this paper it is pivotal to understand how to evaluate the publicness of spaces in order to evaluate the extent to which these cases have democratic public spaces. Varna and Tiesdell argue that there are five dimensions to public space: ownership, control, civility, physical configuration, and animation. Each dimension includes a spectrum of “most public” to “least public” attributes. The dimensions are synthesized in Table 2.2. Varna and Tiesdell use these dimensions to create a model to evaluate the ‘publicness’ of spaces, which I interpret as a way to assess how accessible and inclusive spaces are to diverse publics. Although this is a model, and therefore cannot include all of the characteristics that determine the publicness of a space, it is useful for observation-based research. The model does not attempt to account for the lived experience of occupying that space, but focuses on the design of the space.

Using the characteristics of feminist design, and the Star Model of public space, I evaluated my three cases to examine how New Urbanism and feminism intersect. These tables present a very structured approach to evaluating my cases, and this helps in being consistent in how I compare my cases to each other. This framework for analyzing the built environment of each neighborhood provides an important lens with which to analyze the survey and interview data, because it gave me a sense of what aspects of the neighborhood I should pay extra attention to when talking to the women in the neighborhood. Furthermore, it acted as a way to see to what extent each neighborhood
represented feminist design in the built environment, which I was then able to evaluate if feminist design in the built environment had an impact on the lived experience of women.

Table 2.2 Assessing Public Space.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Most Public</th>
<th>Moderately Public</th>
<th>Least Public</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ownership – refers to who legally owns the space.</td>
<td>Public ownership</td>
<td>Public-private partnership</td>
<td>Private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control – how people are allowed to use a space are defined.</td>
<td>Free use of a space, or rules that are meant to protect the freedom and liberty of the users.</td>
<td>Some rules that inhibit particular uses, but generally free use of space.</td>
<td>Explicit rules that inhibit certain groups from being able to use the space in the manner they want.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civility – the maintenance and infrastructure of a facility.</td>
<td>Well maintained, basic infrastructure (lights, bathrooms, seating)</td>
<td>Occasional maintenance, and some basic infrastructure.</td>
<td>Almost never maintained, and lacks basic infrastructure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Configuration – examines how spatially connected and accessible a space is to the wider community, if it is visually connected and accessible, and if there are explicit entry and gateway points.</td>
<td>-Centrally located within the area. -Well connected to community. It multiplies basic movement patterns. -Easily seen from other spaces -No physical gateways or explicit entry points into the space.</td>
<td>-Located centrally within a neighborhood, but not the wider community -Main transit routes lead to the space but not through it -View of space is slightly obscured -There is a passive entry point (such as a gate you must walk through)</td>
<td>-Poorly located -Not connected to the movement patterns of the area -Space has few visual connections to surrounding area -Has active entry points or active thresholds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animation – This last point refers to how people use the space once they are there, and if there are opportunities for both active and passive engagement.</td>
<td>-Opportunities for passive engagement to observe area (seating) -Events or programs (both planned and spontaneous) for active involvement - Includes unrestricted space that is flexible</td>
<td>-Limited space for passive engagement -Limited space for active engagement -Limited unrestricted space</td>
<td>- Few reasons to engage in passive participation - High density space that makes active use difficult - Few events or programs in space - The space is organized in a rigid way that doesn’t allow for flexible space</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This table was adapted from Varna and Tiesdell 2010, p.582-590.
Survey Methodology

In order to understand the lived experiences of women in New Urbanism neighborhoods and how these may vary across type of New Urbanism, I surveyed female residents at all three of the study sites. The questions of my survey centered on a few key themes that were most pertinent to understanding the lived experience of the women in these neighborhoods. The main themes were what factors had been important in women’s decision to buy or rent a home in that neighborhood, their connections to people in their neighborhood, how often they used the public areas of their neighborhood and how they felt when they were in the public areas, how they divided up domestic chores in their household, and, lastly, demographic questions about race, income, education, and occupation.

The survey was structured into three different types of questions. Many of the questions, which are available in a complete copy of the survey in Appendix A, were asked as ranked multiple-choice questions where participants could rank, for example, how important price was in their decision to buy a home on a scale from not at all important to very important. In other parts of the survey participants were asked to rank their reactions to statements on a scale of strongly disagree to strongly agree. The second type of questions involved participants quantifying how often they thought they did a certain activity in a week, and quantifying how many hours they thought they and the members of their household spent doing household chores. Lastly, there were two open-ended questions where residents could write in what they liked best and least about their neighborhood.
In order to collect the surveys I used two different strategies across the three sites. I chose to mail out surveys to Excelsior and Grand because the buildings there are all locked on the outside, and going through the halls as a non-resident is considered trespassing. I gathered the names and addresses of residents in the buildings there from county tax records, which are publicly available. Since I was able to access the doors of residences at Liberty on the Lake and Oak Park I went from door to door in all parts of the neighborhood. Due to the paucity of responses in Oak Park, I knocked on every door to try to gather more responses. In contrast, I had enough responses in Liberty on the Lake that I just focused on making sure I had responses from every block. I went to each neighborhood during the day, during the evening, and on weekends, in order to get participants who both worked from home and outside the home. In total I gathered 52 surveys from Liberty on the Lake, 69 surveys from Excelsior and Grand, and 31 from Oak Park. Table 3 summarizes the number of surveys collected, and the response rate for each neighborhood. In the neighborhoods where I went door-knocking, I calculated my response rate by how many people took the survey out of all the people that I was able to contact. In Excelsior and Grand I calculated the response rate by how many women mailed back the survey out of all the surveys I sent out, excluding the surveys that were undeliverable.

**Table 2.3. Surveys Collected and Response Rate**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total Number of Surveys Collected</th>
<th>Response Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excelsior and Grand</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberty on the Lake</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oak Park</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Noticeably, I was unable to get as many women to participate in Oak Park as I was able to in the other neighborhoods. Despite knocking on every door of the development both during the day and at night or on a weekend, very few people answered their door, and those who did were not as inclined to answer the survey as in Liberty on the Lake. Furthermore, there were very few people outside, which had been the opposite case in Liberty on the Lake, which made it more difficult to find participants since the interactions almost always took place on the doorstep. Lastly, Oak Park was a much more diverse neighborhood than the other two, and had many first-generation immigrants. There was a significant number of homes where I was unable to communicate with whomever answered the door. This meant that I have significantly less data from Oak Park than the other neighborhoods, but the experience taught me a lot about the character of the neighborhood simply from the lack of presence of people outside, and the fact that people were less likely to answer my survey than in the other neighborhoods.

This response bias in Oak Park limits the conclusions I am able to draw about the neighborhood, in the same way that the number of responses in Liberty on the Lake and Excelsior and Grand present a different response bias. In Oak Park the paucity of respondents limited the number of women I could interview, and it is difficult to generalize both the survey responses and the interviews to overarching conclusions about the lived experience for women in that neighborhood. The large number of responses for Liberty on the Lake and Excelsior and Grand mean that I have a wider sample of each development, yet the information from these surveys are skewed in that the women may represent the more social and active women in the neighborhood since they were willing to fill out a survey from a stranger. The response bias in all three neighborhoods impacts
the type of conclusions I am able to make, and the scale at which they are applicable.

Figures 2.2, 2.3, and 2.4, and Tables 2.4, 2.5, and 2.6 summarize the demographic data of
the participants from each neighborhood, which highlights the similarities and differences
between the makeup of the residents of each neighborhood.

I analyzed these survey data using a statistical analysis program. For the survey
data I focused on comparing Liberty on the Lake and Oak Park, since they represent
similar types of suburban living (namely single family homes on the urban fringe), and
on comparing Liberty on the lake and Excelsior and Grand as two forms of New
Urbanism. Since the bulk of my survey questions were in the form of ranked multiple-
choice questions, I used a non-parametric difference of means test to compare if the
distribution of how residents ranked their answers was significantly different in different
neighborhoods. The test sees if the distributions of rankings are different according to a
certain variable, in this case location, and then gives a chi-square value for whether to
accept the hypothesis that there is no relationship between where the respondent lives and
their answer to the question. Thus if the significance level of the chi-square is less than
.010, it means that there is a less than 10% chance of being wrong if we reject the
hypothesis. I used this test to see what ways the survey responses were different in each
neighborhood, and therefore whether the women interpreted their lived experience in that
place differently.

With the other non-ranked questions on my survey, I either summarized or coded
the responses to make more general comparisons. For example, there was a question on
the survey asking women to write how many times a week they went out walking in their
neighborhood. I was then able to get the mean answer for each neighborhood, and then
compare those means. Likewise, I coded the responses to the questions “What do you like best about where you live?” and “What do you like least about where you live?” into general categories, and then tallied how many responses fit into each of those categories. These findings, along with the findings from the non-parametric difference of means test, provided a concrete way to compare answers from the participants in different neighborhoods, and created a base of knowledge about each place as a source of information for further interview questions.

**Figure 2.2.** Racial Composition of Survey Respondents at Liberty on the Lake

![Pie chart showing racial composition at Liberty on the Lake]

**Figure 2.3.** Racial Composition of Survey Respondents at Oak Park
Figure 2.4. Racial Composition of Survey Respondents at Excelsior and Grand

Table 2.4. Occupation of Survey Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Work from home full-time (compensated)</th>
<th>Work from home part-time (compensated)</th>
<th>Work from home full-time (uncompensated)</th>
<th>Work outside home full-time</th>
<th>Work outside home part-time</th>
<th>Retired</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excelsior and Grand</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberty on the Lake</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oak Park</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2.5. Household Income of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Under $30,000</th>
<th>$40,000-$50,000</th>
<th>$50,000-$60,000</th>
<th>$60,000-$70,000</th>
<th>$70,000-$80,000</th>
<th>$80,000-$90,000</th>
<th>$90,000-$100,000</th>
<th>More than $100,000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excelsior and Grand</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberty on the Lake</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oak Park</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.6. Last Year of School Completed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>12</th>
<th>13</th>
<th>14</th>
<th>15</th>
<th>16</th>
<th>17</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excelsior and Grand</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberty on the Lake</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oak Park</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interview Analysis

When I conducted the surveys, I also invited respondents to participate in an in-depth interview. I then contacted willing participants by phone and email to set up interview times. Interviews generally lasted from thirty minutes to an hour. I asked participants to choose a location to be interviewed so that they would feel most comfortable, and as an acknowledgement of my position as a researcher (Elmwood and Martin 2000). Interviews took place in their homes, coffee shops, restaurants, and parks. I conducted nine interviews with participants at Liberty on the Lake, nine at Excelsior and Grand, and four at Oak Park.
I used the interviews to gain a deeper understanding of women’s’ lived experience in each place. I wanted to understand what living there was like for them, what their interactions with neighbors were like, how they interacted with their environment, and how they felt while interacting with the neighborhood. In order to accomplish this I coded the interviews with both descriptive and analytic codes. Coding is the process of looking through transcriptions of interviews and grouping blocks of text as relating to certain themes and research questions. It works as a way to analyze the text of interviews, and to organize evidence and examples of complicated ideas and concepts. The descriptive codes describe basic characteristics such as where the interview took place and the age and marital status of the participant. The analytic codes serve as a way to organize parts of the interview around themes that are important in answering broader research questions. As opposed to simply describing characteristics, analytic codes go beyond the surface and speak to causes and motivations of processes (Cope 2005). Tables 2.7 and 2.8 catalogue my descriptive and analytic codes.

When I conducted the interviews, I also asked participants to draw a mental map of where they lived. I left it open to their own interpretation to consider how small or large of a scale to draw. The mental maps provided a way to connect what participants were saying to specific physical environments, and as a way to understand what landmarks and places were important to them. These maps are another source of qualitative data since they provide further insight into the participants interactions with where they live. Mental maps are “place-based representations stored in memory and acquired through experience [which] can be so divergent from reality [which] makes studying this knowledge compelling” (Bell 2009, pg. 70). The maps are equally
interesting for what is drawn, and what is not drawn. The combination of the interviews and mental maps provide a depth of qualitative data with which to analyze and understand the lived experience of women in suburban developments.

The conclusions I was able to draw from these questions was impacted by the response bias of the women that I interviewed, despite efforts to interview women with differing experiences across age, employment, marital status, and family structure. The response rates from the surveys impacted the scope and type of information that I was able to gather in the interviews. Since I had fewer survey participants from Oak Park, I was only able to interview four women from that neighborhood, whereas I was able to interview nine women at both Excelsior and Grand and Liberty on the Lake. I tried to interview women who were representative of different experiences, in that they represented different ages, different household make-ups, and different work experiences in and outside the home. In Excelsior and Grand I paid particular attention to interviewing women of different ages because that represented a key difference in their experiences. In Liberty on the Lake, I tried to interview women who worked both in their home and outside their home to have a variety of perspectives. At Oak Park I was less successful with this due to the low number of participants, but I was able to interview someone who is a first-generation immigrant as to her experience in the neighborhood.
### Table 2.7. Descriptive Codes

| 1. Location of Interview | a. Home of participant  
| b. Coffee Shop  
| c. Park  |
| 2. Age of Participant | a. Age 25-35  
| b. Age 35-55  
| c. Age 55-85  |
| 3. Marital Status | a. Married  
| b. Single  |
| b. Have children but they do not live at home  
| c. No children  |
| 5. Occupation | a. Work from home (compensated)  
| b. Work from home (uncompensated)  
| c. Work outside the home  
| d. Retired  |

### Table 2.8. Analytic Codes

| 1. Division of Labor | a. Feelings about division of labor  
| b. Process of how it ended up that way  |
| 2. Public space in neighborhood | a. Feeling while in public space  
| b. Safety while in public space  
| c. Public space at night  
| d. Activities in public spaces  
| e. Public space in current neighborhood compared to other places you have lived  |
| 3. Social Connections | a. Location of interactions with friends  
| b. Frequency of interaction with neighbors  
| c. Recognize neighbors  
| d. Spatial distribution of acquaintances within neighborhood  
| e. Relying on neighbors for help  |
| 4. Built environment | a. Aspects of built environment that help/inhibit household chores  
| b. Design of public space that foster feelings of safety  
| c. Physical quality of neighborhood that encourages neighborly interactions  |
Table 2.9. Describing Interview Locations and Participant Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptive Codes</th>
<th>Excelsior and Grand N = 9</th>
<th>Liberty on the Lake N=9</th>
<th>Oak Park N=4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Location of Interview:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coffee Shop</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Park</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age of Participant:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 25-35</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 35-55</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 55-85</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Marital Status:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Children:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lives with children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have children, but do not live at home</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No children</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Occupation:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work from home (compensated)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work from home (uncompensated)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work outside the home</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The interviews provided information about the motivations behind how women interacted with their neighborhood, and helped to answer the research question – how is the experience of living in a New Urbanist community different than living in a post-World War II community? How is the experience of living in a transit-oriented New Urbanist development different than living in a neo-traditional New Urbanist development? This qualitative data helps to draw conclusions beyond the quantitative data from the surveys.
Feminist Framework

Now that I have outlined my data and methods, I want to emphasize my overarching theoretical framework. I root my study within the third-wave feminist movement. Third-wave feminism grounds its understanding of society in the ways in which sexism, classism, and racism intersect. Instead of esteeming equality with men as the ultimate goal of feminism, third-wave feminism instead asks “since men are not equals in a white supremacist, capitalist, patriarchal class structure, which men do women want to be equal to?” (hooks 1984 p. 17). This question speaks to the importance of dismantling all systems of oppression, and sees sexism, classism, and racism as inextricably intertwined. Thus, feminism as an ideology sees all forms of oppression as linked, and consequently all forms of liberation as connected as well. Although I explicitly focus on women in this study, it is still grounded in the belief that what is empowering for women would be similarly empowering for other marginalized groups. I chose to study women since they are a group that are so pervasive in suburban developments, and thus provide a representative sample of people living in suburbia who have traditionally been considered marginalized by that environment. I ultimately aim to analyze my findings with a third wave feminist lens, and therefore connect those findings to wider issues of marginalization and empowerment in the suburban landscape.
CHAPTER 3: Data Analysis

My analysis is predicated on research by other scholars that established that the strict division of public and private spaces in suburbia has often left women feeling isolated, and this division has assigned urban spaces as public and male and suburban spaces as private and feminized. To understand whether or not different form of suburban design could aid in transforming that experience for women, I used a mixed methods approach of analyzing the built environment, surveys, and interviews. I examined two different types of New Urbanism neighborhoods, a neotraditional development and a transit oriented-development, as well as looking at a control community. I also looked at three developments located in different places in the greater metropolitan regions of the Twin Cities; one New Urbanist site in a first-ring suburb, one New Urbanist site on the urban fringe, and a control community on the urban fringe.

From this analysis, I ultimately conclude that in order to accurately understand the lived experience of New Urbanist developments, they must be analyzed within their context in the metropolitan region. I arrive at this overall finding by analyzing four different themes that emerged from my survey and interview data. I first analyze the built environment divorced from the context of lived experience, and find that none of the communities fulfill all feminist design principles, but that the New Urbanist sites were more consistent with feminist design than my control site. Then, I examine what aspects of the built environment women in each neighborhood felt was important in their decision to move there, and conclude, as other authors have also suggested (Markovich and Hendler 2006) that aesthetics play a large role in women’s decision to move to New Urbanist communities. In the next analysis section, domestic labor, I confirm that women
in these communities do more domestic labor than their partners in their homes, and analyze how women use the built environment and place-based social networks to navigate that work. Women who had intentional conversations with their partners were more likely to divide chores evenly, and women at Excelsior and Grand felt that the neighborhood design helped them to divide domestic labor evenly with their partners. In my third analysis section, public space, I look at how women use the public spaces in their neighborhood, how the sense of community can be used as a policing force, and analyze how women define public space where they live. In this section I am particularly interested at examining the context of the metropolitan area, and how a homogenous or heterogeneous surrounding community can either confine or expand what women define as public space. Lastly, I look at social networks in each neighborhood and how women use social networks for help, and emotional support. Women at Liberty on the Lake felt that there was a very strong sense of community that they used as a resource, whereas women at Excelsior and Grand felt that the social networks existed, but did not always feel a need to partake in them. These examples contrasted with the control site where the sense of community varied by block – some blocks experienced a high sense of place-based community, whereas on other blocks neighbors did not call on each other for favors.

3.1 The Built Environment and Feminist Design Principles

A. Case 1: Liberty on the Lake

Liberty on the Lake is an impressive site and clearly stands out from the surrounding suburban developments, and includes over half the elements of feminist
design. As you enter Liberty on the Lake, you see unique homes, densely built, and situated close to the street. There are sidewalks on both sides of the street, and people walking around. Narrow roads wind between diverse housing types, and connect to picturesque town squares with gazebos and playgrounds. The residential parts of Liberty on the Lake then lead to a commercial area that surrounds one of the large town squares where there is a gas station with a convenience store, a post office, a liquor store, a restaurant, a yoga and dance studio, and a few offices. Near the commercial area there is also a public elementary school, Rutherford Elementary, that is connected to the neighborhood by sidewalks and paths.

Figure 3.1. A view of the neighborhood Green at Liberty on the Lake
Despite this picturesque description, there are parts of the design of the development that are problematic according to feminist design theory. First, the townhomes and attached residential units are all segregated to one part of the
development that is closest to the busy county road, which insulates the single-family homes from traffic. These homes are also closest to the commercial area, which is next to the county road and therefore not ideally integrated into the neighborhood. Therefore, although the development as a whole can be considered mixed use, each type of zoning is separated from the others. These zoning uses are normally only separated by a street, for example the attached townhomes section of the neighborhood is divided by a road from the single-family homes part of the neighborhood. Overall, none of the zoning uses are far from each other, but they are sectioned off into distinct parts.

The following table, Table 3.1, summarizes how the design elements of Liberty on the Lake fulfill or fail to fulfill the feminist design criteria as previously stated. The bolded criteria on the left are the feminist criteria that Liberty on the Lake fulfills. The second table, Table 3.2, represents my evaluation of the public space at Liberty on the Lake according to Varna and Tiesdell’s criteria. The public space of Liberty on the Lake is owned by the town of Stillwater, however the spaces are integrated into the neighborhoods in such a way that would make it unlikely that people who were not residents would use it. Nonetheless the fact that the town owns it is still significant.
Table 3.1. Assessing Feminist Design Principles at Liberty on the Lake

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feminist Design Principle</th>
<th>Case: Liberty on the Lake</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Public Space</strong></td>
<td>Liberty on the Lake contains many small public areas and two larger public parks. They are publicly owned by the town of Stillwater and allow for passive and active use of the space. Refer to Table 3.2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Diversity in Housing Type</strong></td>
<td>Liberty on the Lake has a diversity in size and styled single family homes, as well as some townhouses, but does not have any apartments or rental units.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. High Density Development</strong></td>
<td>Although there are no apartment buildings, and therefore the density of the development is relatively low, the houses are all close to the streets and densely built, allowing for large open spaces in the neighborhood.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4. Access to Childcare</strong></td>
<td>Rutherford Elementary School, a Stillwater public school, is located within the development. Rutherford has classes from preschool through 6th grade (Rutherford Elementary 2011). Yet Rutherford does not provide full day Pre-K services and therefore does not fulfill this design principle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5. Access to Public Transit</strong></td>
<td>There are no public transit lines within walking distance of Liberty on the Lake.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6. Multi-Use Zoning</strong></td>
<td>Liberty on the Lake is zoned to include “traditional residential” (single family homes), “cottage residential” (townhomes), and “village commercial spaces” (Stillwater “Zoning and FIRM Information” 2011).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>7. Integration of Different Races and Classes of People</strong></td>
<td>Due to the prices of the homes at Liberty on the Lake, and that there are no rental units, there is likely to be little class diversity in the development. Current homes for sale are listed from $220,00 for a two-bedroom townhouse to $725,000 for a four-bedroom house (Movoto 2011). Ninety-eight percent of the participants in my survey identified as white, indicating a racially homogenous community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>8. Communal Facilities</strong></td>
<td>Liberty on the Lake has ample park space with playgrounds, picnic facilities, and gazebos. Besides park space, each block has a small structure which contains all the mailboxes for the block along with a bulletin board for community announcements.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Table 3.2. Assessing Public Space at Liberty on the Lake.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meta Dimension</th>
<th>Most Public</th>
<th>Moderately Public</th>
<th>Least Public</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ownership</strong></td>
<td>Public – Owned by Stillwater</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Control</strong></td>
<td>No explicit rules posted about how to use the space.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Civility</strong></td>
<td>Well maintained, and includes infrastructure such as benches, playgrounds, and picnic structures.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Physical Configuration</strong></td>
<td>-The largest spaces have no entry point or gateways to the space. The borders of the space are open grass, and are not fenced in.</td>
<td>-Centrally located within the neighborhood, but not the wider community. -Transit routes in the neighborhood lead to the space. -Can only view spaces from homes in the neighborhood.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Animation</strong></td>
<td>-Benches for passive engagement -Picnic structures for active engagement, and programmed events to use the space -Plenty of un-restricted space</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From tables 3.1 and 3.2, we can see how Liberty on the Lake has incorporated these public areas as part of the fabric of the neighborhood. These areas have no restrictions to access, and allow for passive, active, and flexible use, which speaks to their publicness. These spaces are not the “most public” because they are not well integrated into the wider town of Stillwater, as it could be if the parks were closer to the main roads or if signs designated the parks as public, but are instead most beneficial to the residents of the development. The development does include other public facilities such as a public
school. Public schools are also host to other public facilities such as fields, basketball courts, and public meeting areas, which may help to integrate the development into the fabric of the wider community.

Even though the development does contain these public spaces and institutions, it lacks diversity in class and race. Through only providing a narrow range of owner-occupied houses, it is difficult for Liberty on the Lake to be seen as an economically inclusive community, because anyone who is unable to afford a home is barred from living there. Furthermore, the development is inaccessible by public transit. Although the proximity of the commercial establishments makes them more accessible, they are not integrated into the neighborhoods, because the commercial establishments are clustered in one part of the neighborhood that is in the northwest corner of the development. Thus, we see that Liberty on the Lake presents a mixture of achieving feminist design principles, but the most significant way in which the development fails to fulfill feminist design is the lack of racial and class diversity. Although Liberty on the Lake and Excelsior and Grand are both New Urbanist communities, Excelsior and Grand represents a very different form of New Urbanism.

B. Case 2: Excelsior and Grand

As a transit-oriented New Urbanist development, Excelsior and Grand represents a different type of built environment than Liberty on the Lake. Located in St. Louis Park, adjacent to Minneapolis, Excelsior and Grand is a high-density development that consists of a few large apartment buildings and two rows of townhouses. Since there are no single-family homes the development has a very different feel than Liberty on the Lake.
Excelsior and Grand has intense commercial development on the first floor of most of the residential buildings that includes a grocery store, a variety of restaurants, and many other retail and service establishments. Along the streets of the neighborhood there is a public walking area with seating, and the back of the development is connected to Wolf Park, owned by St. Louis Park.

**Figure 3.4.** The Town Green that runs down the middle of the development at Excelsior and Grand
Figure 3.5. A view of Wolf Park from Excelsior and Grand.

Figure 3.6. A photo of one of condo buildings from the central traffic circle.
The high density of the development and the proximity of key services would seem to speak to a design that better reflects feminist prescriptions. Similarly to Liberty on the Lake, the high prices of condo units represent a significant hurdle to being an economically inclusive community. In April of 2011, the asking price for condominiums in Excelsior and Grand ranged from $145,000 for a one bedroom loft, to $550,000 for a two bedroom apartment, and rent ranges from $905 a month for a one-bedroom loft to $3685 a month for a penthouse (Minneapolis Lofts and Condos 2010; Excelsior and Grand “Apartments” 2011). Excelsior and Grand does contain 18 units of section 8 housing, meaning that 5.3% of rental units are affordable, but 0% of owner-occupied units are affordable (Trudeau and Malloy 2011). Due to this type of pricing, Excelsior and Grand is inaccessible to many people. Therefore, the density and mixed use does not automatically speak to a more inclusive design. Table 3.3 outlines how the development compares to feminist design principles, with bolded text referring to the feminist criteria that Excelsior and Grand fulfills.

From table 3.3 we can see that many of the key services in Excelsior and Grand are private. The childcare is accessible, but private, as are public areas (which I will elaborate on in table 3.4) because the developer owns them. The development is served well by public transit with access to a variety of locations: downtown Minneapolis, and the surrounding suburban centers in Hopkins, Wayzata, and Minnetonka. This makes using public transit as a viable option. Therefore we see a mix in how Excelsior and Grand interacts with feminist design principles.
Table 3.3. Assessing Feminist Design Principles at Excelsior and Grand.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feminist Design Principle</th>
<th>Case: Excelsior and Grand</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Public Space</strong></td>
<td>Excelsior and Grand has limited public space within the development, which is privately owned, and is highly landscaped which prevents free and flexible use of the space. However, Excelsior and Grand is next to Wolf Park, a large public park that includes a variety of facilities. Refer to Table 3.4.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Diversity in Housing Type</strong></td>
<td>Excelsior and Grand contains studios, one and two bedroom apartments, two bedroom townhomes, one bedroom lofts, one-bedroom dens, and penthouses (Excelsior and Grand “Apartments” 2011).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. High Density Development</strong></td>
<td>The development only contains high-density apartment and townhouse buildings. There are no single-family homes, and the entire development is compact.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4. Access to Childcare</strong></td>
<td>In Excelsior and Grand there is a for-profit childcare provider called KinderCare Learning Center which provides full day childcare for children to age 5, before and after school enrichment programs for children up until age 12, and summer camps (KinderCare 2011).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5. Access to Public Transit</strong></td>
<td>From Excelsior and Grand there are three accessible bus routes, the 12, 604, and 615 (Metro Transit “Interactive Map” 2011). The 12 services downtown Minneapolis, St. Louis Park, and Hopkins. The 604 starts at Excelsior and Grand and goes through St. Louis Park to Wayzata. Lastly, the 615 services St. Louis Park, Hopkins, and Minnetonka.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6. Multi-Use Zoning</strong></td>
<td>Excelsior and Grand is zoned for parks and open space, mixed use, and high density multi-family residential (City of St. Louis Park “Zoning Map” 2011).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>7. Integration of Different Races and Classes of People</strong></td>
<td>Due to the high pricing of the Excelsior and Grand apartments, rent ranging from $905 for a one-bedroom apartment to $3685 for a penthouse, there is a very low probability of a diversity of classes in the development (Excelsior and Grand “Apartments” 2011). Although Excelsior and Grand does contain 18 section 8 housing units, it is not enough for the overall development to be considered inclusive across class. Of the women who participated in my survey, 94% identified as white, indicating low diversity across race.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>8. Communal Facilities</strong></td>
<td>Excelsior and Grand has many additional “residential amenities,” almost all of which are located inside the buildings or within locked courtyards. Services include: climate-controlled underground parking, pool, hot tub, courtyards with grills, exercise rooms, community room with fireplace, bar, and flatscreen TV (have to make a prior reservation to use the room), a business center with computers, internet, and fax machines, and a guest suite that residents can rent out when they have guests in town (Excelsior and Grand “Resident Amenities” 2011).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The following table critically evaluates the public space at Excelsior and Grand. I chose to evaluate both Wolf Park and the Town Green, since residents identified both of these spaces as public space in the development. I mark them as TG and WP to distinguish between the two.

**Table 3.4. Evaluating Public Space at Excelsior and Grand**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meta Dimension</th>
<th>Most Public</th>
<th>Moderately Public</th>
<th>Least Public</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ownership</strong></td>
<td>WP – publicly owned</td>
<td>TG – Private – Owned by Developer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Control</strong></td>
<td>WP and TG – No posted rules about how to use outdoor areas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Civility</strong></td>
<td>WP – Has walking paths, recreation center, pool, playground, lake, benches, and open spaces.</td>
<td>TG – Well maintained, but only infrastructure is benches.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Physical Configuration</strong></td>
<td>WP – The park is visually accessible from many points in St Louis Park, not just from Excelsior and Grand. The park also contains a recreation center with a pool and an ice rink, and is a polling center for elections, thus connecting it to the greater St Louis Park community. WP – no gateways or borders to enter the park.</td>
<td>TG – Centrally located within the development TG – Main transit route of the development goes around the space</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Animation</strong></td>
<td>WP – The park has spaces for passive and active engagement, and has park programming for further engagement. WP – Plenty of flexible spaces for unrestricted use of space.</td>
<td>TG – Limited space for passive engagement (limited seating)</td>
<td>TG – No space for active engagement, or flexible space because the space is so heavily landscaped</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These observations are only about outdoor public areas. At Excelsior and Grand there are many indoor spaces that are meant for the residents, however these spaces are so constricted in access that they cannot be considered public. Therefore the analysis of public space is limited to the Town Green and Wolf Park. The Town Green has a few benches and tables, but is heavily landscaped which prevents more flexible use of the space. The area is visibly accessible from the commercial establishments, and the establishments encourage customers to use the space to consume (mostly food). Thus, the space can be interpreted as a semi-public consumer space. In contrast, Wolf Park, which neighbors the development, fulfills all of the most public criteria for a public space. It is publicly owned, integrated within the larger community, and the space allows for a multiplicity of passive and active uses.

Thus, Excelsior and Grand presents a hybrid of public and private facilities. Although it has excellent public transit options, the majority of services are private. Each building has a slew of private amenities for residents, but all contained within the building or in locked outside patios. There is access to full day pre-K childcare, but it is for-profit and expensive and thus inaccessible to working class parents. The focus of the development is on a variety of commercial establishments, which are also tightly linked with the privately owned public areas that surround the commercial promenade. As a high density development, Excelsior and Grand is distinct from both Liberty on the Lake and Oak Park, because it consists entirely of condos, attached townhouses, and apartments as opposed to single-family homes.
C. Case 3: Oak Park

As my control site, Oak Park represents a conventional suburban fringe development. Most houses are one of a few designs for the whole neighborhood, and all of the houses are painted a similar shade of beige. Three and four car garages dominate the landscape, creating what one interview participant called “the parade of garages.” The homes are fairly spaced out, and the neighborhood is zoned by the minimum amount of square feet that houses must be per lot. As I discussed in the previous section, Oak Park is the most racially diverse of the three neighborhoods, and was populated with many first-generation immigrants. Oak Park was also adjacent to two public parks: one a recreational park with playground equipment and tennis courts, and the other a nature preserve with hiking trails. Below are pictures that give a sense of the neighborhood. The following table, (table 3.5) assesses the built environment of Oak Park according to feminist design principles.

Figure 3.7. A typical street in Oak Park
Figure 3.8. The “parade of garages” at Oak Park.

Figure 3.9. The attached townhomes at Oak Park.
Table 3.5. Assessing Feminist Design Principles at Oak Park.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feminist Design Principle</th>
<th>Case: Oak Park</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Public Space</strong></td>
<td>Adjacent to Oak Park are two publicly owned parks. Christine Park, across the street from Oak Park, has recreation facilities, and Riley Creek Conservation Area abuts Oak Park on one side (City of Eden Prairie “Park Map” 2011). Refer to Table 3.6.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Diversity in Housing Type</strong></td>
<td>Oak Park contains single-family homes and attached townhouses. The single family homes are mainly of two different styles and sizes, divided by Dell Rd.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. High Density Development</strong></td>
<td>The development is low density. The single-family homes and the townhouses are spread apart, and there are no high density housing in the neighborhood.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4. Access to Childcare</strong></td>
<td>There are no schools or day-care’s within walking distance of the development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5. Access to Public Transit</strong></td>
<td>The closest Metro Transit bus stop to Oak Park is over three miles away (Metro Transit 2011).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6. Multi-Use Zoning</strong></td>
<td>All of Oak Park is zoned as one of three land use types: R 1 – 9.5 – One Family minimum 9,500 square feet, R 1 13.5 – One family minimum 13,500 square feet, and RM 6.5 Multi-family 6.7 U.P.A. maximum (City of Eden Prairie “Zoning Map” 2011). Therefore, there is no multi-use zoning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>7. Integration of Different Races and Classes of People</strong></td>
<td>Although due to high housing prices, Oak Park is not diverse across different classes, Oak Park is the most racially diverse of the three developments. Of the 31 women who participated in my survey, 74% were white, which was significantly more diverse than the other developments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>8. Communal Facilities</strong></td>
<td>There are no communal facilities in Oak Park.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From this table, it is evident that Oak Park fails to fulfill most of the feminist design principles. The one design quality that Oak Park does satisfy is “Public Space,” which I examine in Table 3.6.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meta Dimension</th>
<th>Most Public</th>
<th>Moderately Public</th>
<th>Least Public</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ownership</strong></td>
<td>Public – Owned by Eden Prairie</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Control</strong></td>
<td>- CP - there were no explicit rules posted about how to use the space.</td>
<td>- In the conservation area there were rules posted about staying on the trails to preserve the wildlife.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Civility</strong></td>
<td>- CP had infrastructure such as benches, playgrounds, and picnic structures.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Physical Configuration</strong></td>
<td>- CP had no fences or explicit entry points, and could be accessed from a variety of points. - CP is located along a main road in Eden Prairie, Dell Rd, and therefore is connected to the larger community.</td>
<td>- Riley Creek Conservation Area’s only access point is within the Oak Park development, and is not visibly accessible outside the neighborhood.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Animation</strong></td>
<td>- CP - there were benches for passive engagement. There were also picnic structures, tennis courts, basketball courts, and a recreation building for programmed events, and unrestricted, open space as well.</td>
<td>- Riley Creek, by nature of being a conservation site, only allows for one type of use – walking the trails.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The parks adjacent to Oak Park are constructed in ways that fulfill the “most public” criteria, despite the fact that the overall character of the neighborhood does not follow feminist design prescriptions. Even though the parks represent a public space, this is only important if people are using that space. From walking around Oak Park, I hardly
ever saw anyone in those park spaces, and, as I will discuss later, residents were shy to use those spaces, and instead preferred their own backyard.

It is clear that Oak Park is not consistent with feminist design. The only design principle that it does fulfill is public space, which was not a highly trafficked areas. It also partially fulfills “Integration of Different Races and Classes of People,” but because the development is only diverse across race, as opposed to class, it does not entirely fulfill that requirement either. What is most striking about Oak Park is its sprawling landscape and how isolated the neighborhood is from any services or commercial areas. The only way to access anything commercial, is to get on a highway. The reason why I chose Oak Park was because it represented the typical suburban fringe development, and since these feminist design principles are a reaction against these types of developments, it was to be expected that it would not fulfill these design principles.

3.2 The Built Environment: Attractions and Reactions

Assessing these neighborhoods according to feminist design is helpful in examining the built environment, but does not help in understanding how women interact with their neighborhood design. Due to this gap between theory to practice, the next step in my research was to transition from analyzing the built environment, to asking the women who lived in each neighborhood about how they interacted with their neighborhoods. I achieved this research objective through surveying and interviewing women in each neighborhood, as I elaborated on in the previous Methods chapter. The first part of the survey asked participants about what factors had been important in their decision to buy that particular home in that neighborhood. The list included a variety of
factors, and participants were asked to rank the importance of each factor in their
decision to select their home. Respondents indicated the relative weight of each factor on
a scale of “Not at All Important” to “Extremely Important.” In many ways, these
questions alluded to the differences in what the women in each development valued in
their neighborhood. Some valued certain qualities in the built environment over others,
and therefore chose to buy a home in a neighborhood that fulfilled those values. Since
this set of questions asked participants about factors that had been important in their
decision to buy that home, as opposed to how they felt about those factors now that they
lived there, the questions differentiate the type of people who would buy in each
development.

The following series of figures illustrate the differences between the
developments in how women ranked certain factors. I chose to highlight six factors that
show statistically significant differences in the distribution of answers between the
developments, meaning a chi-square test with an alpha value of less than .1. The six
factors were the architectural style of the neighborhood, the layout and size of
neighborhood streets, having sidewalks in the neighborhood, having a school within
walking distance, having stores within walking distance, and, lastly, having a restaurant
within walking distance. On all the graphs, except one, the distribution of answers of all
three developments is displayed, in order to be able to compare the factors across the
developments.
Figure 3.10. Importance of Architectural Style of Neighborhood

Importance of Architectural Style of Neighborhood

*Chi-square of Liberty on the Lake/Oak Park = .006, Liberty on the Lake/Excelsior and Grand = .009

Figure 3.11. Importance of the Layout and Size of Neighborhood Streets

Importance of the Layout and Size of Neighborhood Streets

*Chi-square of Liberty on the Lake/Oak Park = .070
Women in each neighborhood had differing views as to the importance of the aesthetics of the neighborhood. Figures 3.10, 3.11, and 3.12 demonstrate the distribution of responses to the architectural style of each neighborhood and its design. Women at Liberty on the Lake were more likely to rank the architectural style as “Important” or “Extremely Important” than women at either Oak Park or Excelsior and Grand. However, women at both New Urbanist communities were more likely to rank the layout and size of streets along with sidewalks as more important in their decision to move there than Oak Park. From this, it is clear that the aesthetics of the New Urbanist neighborhoods were more important to the women who moved there than to the women in the control community.
**Figure 3.13.** Importance of having a school within walking distance

![Bar Chart: Importance of having a School within Walking Distance](chart1.png)

*Chi-square of Liberty on the Lake/Oak Park = .000*

**Figure 3.14.** Importance of having stores within walking distance

![Bar Chart: Importance of Having Stores within Walking Distance](chart2.png)

*Chi-square of Liberty on the Lake/Oak Park = .000, Liberty on the Lake/Excelsior and Grand = .000*
Figure 3.15. Importance of having a restaurant within walking distance

Similarly to the question of aesthetics, women in the New Urbanist communities placed a greater importance on walkability than women in the control community. Figures 3.13, 3.14, and 3.15 focuses on the walkability of the three developments, because walkability is a central tenant of both New Urbanist design and feminist design. There was a statistically significant difference in how women at Liberty on the Lake ranked walkability to amenities than women in Oak Park, in that it was more important in their decision to buy their home. In turn, women at Excelsior and Grand ranked walkability as more important than women at Liberty on the Lake did. This speaks directly to the built environment of each neighborhood, as Oak Park is the least walkable,
with only parks within walking distance, and Excelsior and Grand is the most walkable with most commercial and transportation needs within a five minute walk.

From these survey results, it is clear that women in these developments were looking for fundamentally different things in selecting a home. For example, women I interviewed at Excelsior and Grand repeatedly emphasized how walkability and convenience had been the most important factors in their decision to buy there. As one single mother put it, “I wanted to have a more urban living setting. And I wanted easier living. I'm a single parent and I didn't want to manage a house… I like that I can walk to work. I like that it's more urban and a more diverse population… I like the convenience of the things right nearby.” Another resident commented that “when we relocated here we had a few things our criteria with our realtor - we needed to be able to walk to everything. Everything. And then also be on a bus line.” Most women emphasized these characteristics of Excelsior and Grand as the selling points for them. Given that St Louis Park is directly west of Minneapolis, the urban feel of the neighborhood was another important factor. The development is less than a mile from Chain of Lakes Regional Park, an important recreational attraction in Minneapolis with public beach access and extensive trails, and a mile and a half from Uptown, a vibrant commercial district in Minneapolis. This was different than what women at Liberty on the Lake cited as the aspects of the built environment that influenced their decision to move there.

Women at Liberty on the Lake talked less about the access to commercial facilities, although many cited it as important, and more about the sidewalks, front porches, and parks. Many said that the ‘look’ of the neighborhood is what drew them there. For example, when I asked one woman what she had liked about Liberty when she
first visited, she responded, “well I loved the architectural style of the homes.... The design being - well you know the sidewalks, the front porch - and making sure you knew your neighbors, and the public park space. It was just perfect.” Although many women also emphasized proximity to Stillwater, a historic town on the St. Croix river northeast of downtown St Paul, they were more interested in the style of the neighborhood, and specifically aspects of the built environment such as the sidewalks, porches, unique designs of each home, and the parks.

Both of these reasons differ from what women at Oak Park described as important in their decision to move there. Instead of talking about the specifics of the Oak Park development, the women were more likely to talk about wanting to move to the town of Eden Prairie and specifically wanting their kids to enter the Eden Prairie school system. For example, when I asked one interview participant why they moved to Oak Park, she interpreted Oak Park as Eden Prairie and replied, “We picked Eden Prairie because they had a good school system.” This was a common response in the interviews for why families had chosen to move there. Many women also said that getting the most space for their money had been important in their purchase. However, one mother was somewhat disappointed and said, “I'm not horrendously pleased with the quality of the home. It's been fraught with problems and things we had to fix, we've had to sink a ton of money into this home after having it built new.” So although many women talked about Eden Prairie, and how that had been one of the main reasons that had brought them to Oak Park, they were not overly enthusiastic about the actual built environment of Oak Park itself.
3.3 Domestic Labor

Another focus of the surveys and interviews was on the division of domestic labor in the household. I was particularly interested in understanding how women in each community viewed the division of labor in their home, and how they thought the built environment helped or inhibited their ability to do domestic work. Since one of the main focuses of feminist design literature centers on the uneven distribution of domestic labor in a household, I first needed to evaluate whether women in these communities were doing more household chores than their partners.

In the survey I asked participants to rank how much they did chores such as cleaning, cooking, childcare, shopping, and paying bills in relation to other members of their household. They could rank how much they did on a scale of hardly, slightly less, equal, slightly more, majority, and not applicable. The results, as shown in the charts below, is that women still do the majority of chores in all three sites. Responses at Liberty on the Lake and Oak Park were very similar in relation to the division of chores. Excelsior and Grand was slightly different for a couple of reasons. First, very few of the participants at Excelsior and Grand had children, and a few indicated that they responded to the childcare question in relation to their grandchildren instead of their children, which is accounted for in Figure 3.18. Second, since so many participants at Excelsior and Grand lived alone, there were a much higher percentage of responses that indicated “Not Applicable” to all chores. The following figures (Figure 3.16, 3.17, 3.18, 3.19, and 3.20) indicate these trends.
Figure 3.16. Proportion of Cleaning

![Proportion of Cleaning](chart1.png)

Figure 3.17. Proportion of Cooking Meals

![Proportion of Cooking Meals](chart2.png)
Figure 3.18. Proportion of Childcare

Figure 3.19. Proportion of Grocery Shopping
When I interviewed the women at each site, my interviews centered around three main questions when it came to the division of domestic labor. First, I asked them to explain how they divided up the chores in their house among other household members. Second, I inquired as to how the division of chores had ended up that way – specifically if it had been the result of a conscious conversation or not. Lastly, I asked about how the built environment of the neighborhood helped or inhibited the women’s ability to do domestic chores.

One trend, across all three neighborhoods, that developed over the course of the interviews, is that when women said that the division of domestic labor was the result of a conscious conversation, the labor was more likely to be divided more evenly than if
they did not have a conversation. For example one woman at Excelsior and Grand when asked if she had a conversation with her husband about chores said,

BE: Oh yea. I said here are all the things you [her spouse] are going to do, and here are the things I am going to do.
Charlotte Fagan (CF): Do you feel like it’s split pretty evenly? Or do you think you do more or less?
BE: I think it's probably pretty even.
CF: Do you think it’s even because you guys did have an explicit conversation about it?
BE: Oh yea.

This was a common narrative, yet the exception to this trend was when women talked about the decision to stop working and stay at home, especially after having kids. When they had discussions with their partners about chores because they were staying home, it normally ended with the women doing a much greater proportion of domestic chores.

For example, one stay-at-home mom at Liberty on the Lake answered,

CF: Did how you and your husband divide up chores change when you decided to stay home?
AH: Yes. He used to do more laundry, and helped out more with the cooking. He definitely did the yard work then. But that was about [it].

Other women also talked about how their decision to stay home resulted in a second set of conversations with their partners that often led to them doing more domestic labor than before.

In every interview where the participant said that chores had just “ended up that way,” chores were unevenly distributed in the household. For example one stay-at-home mom at Liberty on the Lake described how the lack of a conversation had affected the division of chores.

It just ended up that way. When we first got married we did everything half and half. My idea of cooking and his idea are different. He does spaghetti and frozen pizza, and I did other things, but still we did about everything half and half. When [my daughter] came along I stayed home
for a year, but then went back to work part time, so I ended up doing more of the household chores because I was home more… When I went back to work he wasn't taking anything on - so we had some serious discussions and arguments about stuff and begrudgingly took some of those things back. But when we moved and I quit my job, we didn't really even have a discussion. It just sort of ended up that way, and I get upset with it sometimes especially like at night when he gets off work and he's like wanting to know where dinner is, and then I'm like it's not my turn for dinner tonight - it's your turn. And he'll say I've been working all day, and I'll just look at him and say I'm on call 24/7.

Other women described similar situations, as another mother at Liberty on the Lake said,

CF: Would you say that how you and your husband have divided up things - is that the result of you guys having a conversation or as things come up you just figure it out?
AI: It's more as things come up. I'd love to have a little bit more set plan and organization, but for us the activity in the house runs so fast with 3 kids and their own schedules, and Jeff working, and me coordinating everything. There is no day that is consistent.

This was consistent across sites, and was a common narrative among mothers in the Liberty on the Lake and Oak Park developments. As one woman at Oak Park said chores “just kind of evolved over time” and cited that both her and her husband came from families with a “very traditional break down of the division of labor” and therefore her family followed in those footsteps. Since these women did not have explicit conversations with their partners about how to divide up domestic chores, they were less likely to challenge traditional divisions of labor, and therefore end up with more of the burden of housework.

Despite these similarities across the three sites in relation to the division of labor, interview participants had very different ideas as to how they viewed the built environment in their respective development as a resource for completing chores. Similar to the previous section, women at Excelsior and Grand emphasized that having commercial establishments within walking distance made many household chores easier
and more convenient. One participant said “I think grocery shopping and things like that are easier, because I can just run downstairs… That is definitely easier. It just doesn't take any time. It doesn't feel like a chore.” Another participant pointed to the ease of grocery shopping as the reason why her and her husband would often go together. She said “a lot of time we walk down there [to Trader Joe’s] together.” The proximity to the store meant that instead of one of them having to get in the car to drive there, they would walk down together to pick up something for dinner. As one woman put it “it’s easy living for me, I think about that being a single parent.” In the case of Excelsior and Grand, many women relied on the ease of the built environment as one way to maneuver completing domestic work.

Women at Liberty on the Lake also said that the built environment helped them with their household chores, but in an indirect way. Women often cited the various design elements of the neighborhood that encouraged neighbors to get to know one another, such as front porches, sidewalks, dense housing, and park spaces, as building close knit social networks. In turn, women said that these social networks helped them with childcare, and viewed these social networks as integral to doing domestic chores. As one mom said, “And then with the neighborhood being so close knit we share a lot of like transporting kids and carpooling and ‘hey you're in a bind - drop off your kids here.’ or I'm in a bind can you take mine for a little while. I think it helps a lot with raising kids.” One mother even talked about her “spy network” in the neighborhood to keep an eye on her kids, and the emotional support of having other parents to talk to when going through a tough time when raising her own children. A group of mothers had also
organized a baby-sitting co-op in Liberty where parents could exchange points for baby-sitting each other’s kids.

Social networks, as indirectly influenced by the design of the neighborhood, were not the only part of the built environment that women talked about, even though it was the most common response. Participants also talked about living within walking distance of the school, and having a Kwik Trip that sold essential food items, including basic produce items, nearby. One mother said when asked if anything about the neighborhood design helped or hurt her ability to do household chores,

Having the school nearby is huge. In terms of chores and household things... I don't know. Kwik Trip - that's not a place I go to for that kind of thing, well I guess for cooking supplies if I need something quickly. So that helps a lot with meals when you need that quick something.

When I asked another woman about the Kwik Trip she responded,

Yea. I do use that. It's nice because you can just run over there. Their milk, eggs, and orange juice is cheaper than in the grocery store. So we're always taking our shopping cart over there, my little old lady shopping cart, and I push it down there and come back with milk and eggs and a couple bananas.

Another woman talked about the park and sidewalks which made getting to know neighbors easier, and provided places “to be able to talk (to friends) and the kids can play at the same time.” So although the social networks that the built environment helped foster were the most important to the majority of the women at Liberty on the Lake, the actual built environment also facilitated domestic chores.

Unlike in my conversations with women at Liberty on the Lake and Excelsior and Grand, women at Oak Park were at a loss to come up with aspects of the built environment that helped them with household chores. They were simultaneously reluctant to criticize the built environment either or to call for things they wish were
different. The only comment that one mother said to that effect was that “it would be
great if we were closer to a grocery story. That would be great. That’s the only thing.”
Women did not find the single-use zoning problematic, and did not vocalize, other than
the above statement, desires to change anything about the landscape to make chores
easier.

These surveys and interviews did confirm that women are doing an unequal
burden of household chores as compared to their partners, and thus confirms the basis for
feminist design theory. This was consistent across all three sites, along with anecdotal
evidence that women who had explicit conversations about housework with their partners
were more likely to divide work more equitably. The designs of the built environment at
both New Urbanist sites did help facilitate women with household work more so than the
built environment of Oak Park. Women at Excelsior and Grand spoke at length about
how having commercial development in their building made chores easier, and was more
convenient. Women at Liberty on the Lake also spoke about the built environment both
directly and indirectly, but felt that both facilitated their ability to do domestic labor.
Considering that the built environment’s ability to facilitate domestic chores is one of the
most significant requirements of feminist design, this is important in understanding how
New Urbanism’s capacity to fulfill feminist design in practice. These findings support
the notion that New Urbanist developments do facilitate domestic labor in a more
productive way than typical post-World War II subdivisions.
3.4 Public Space in Suburbia

One of the most interesting aspects of New Urbanist design that intersects with feminist design is the emphasis on public space. Although their intention behind the design of public space may be different, they both call for public space to be closely integrated into neighborhood design. Whereas New Urbanism emphasizes public space’s capacity to encourage neighborly interactions, feminist design instead focuses on using public space as a democratic forum for self-expression. Based in these differing views of public space, I was interested in understanding how the women in these developments used public spaces, how they felt while using the space, how they defined the space, and how their use of space related to their sense of community in their neighborhood. I was also interested in investigating the intersection of public space and suburban settings in the interviews. Due to Liberty on the Lake’s and Oak Park’s location on the urban fringe, I wanted to interrogate Sibley’s idea on the purification of space in suburbia. Sibley (1995) argues that in highly homogenizing communities, such as on the urban fringe, groups actively purify space by pushing groups that are outside of the cultural hegemony to the borders, and thus maintaining a homogenous public. I was also keen to ask the women what spaces they defined as public, both based in the idea of the purification of space, and as a reaction to previous literature on suburban shopping malls and commercial space as the public space of suburbia.

Safety in Suburbia

In order to investigate these questions, I first asked women through the surveys about their use of space, and how they felt while using the space, as a way to
quantitatively understand the differences between the neighborhoods. The survey posed a series of statements and then asked participants to rate how strongly they agreed or disagreed with the statement. The questions covered three topics: perceived safety while using public areas, amount and usage of public areas as compared to other places they had lived, and how open the spaces were to people inside or outside the neighborhood.

**Figure 3.21.** “I feel comfortable walking and biking here during the day.”

![Graph showing responses to the statement: I feel comfortable walking and biking here during the day.](image)

*Chi-square of Liberty on the Lake/Oak Park = .058, Liberty on the Lake/Excelsior and Grand = .050

**Figure 3.22.** “I feel comfortable walking and biking here at night.”

![Graph showing responses to the statement: I feel comfortable walking and biking here at night.](image)

*Chi-square of Liberty on the Lake/Oak Park = .097, Liberty on the Lake/Excelsior and Grand = .005
The distribution of answers to the questions of comfort and safety were relatively similar across the three developments. Especially in relation to comfort walking or biking during the day, women at all three developments felt confident using public spaces. Women at Liberty on the Lake were more likely to strongly agree with the statement, but the distribution of answers was not significantly different. However, the differences in how women across the three developments felt walking at night were statistically significantly different.

Noticeably, women at Excelsior and Grand were less likely to feel comfortable using public areas at night, which related to the more “urban” location. As one interview participant described Wolf Park,

Oh! It's fantastic! Very diverse - all walks of life, which I like. A little disconcerting sometimes in the evening. I've been cat called, and chased, well not chased but followed. And I didn't like that. And that happened last year and so - but all in all that was a rare event.

This respondent, similarly to other interview participants, cited the diversity of the people using the area as one of the reasons why she did not feel entirely safe at night. Although women at Excelsior and Grand felt less safe at night than the residents in other neighborhoods, the majority still agreed that they did feel safe at night. Residents talked about a regular security and police presence in the neighborhood that contributed to their sense of safety.

The property is so well managed- they have a private security company that roams the area here at two or three in the morning. They go around in little golf carts all the time and Rocco hates golf carts so he always barks at them. Also they have a little police substation right here in this building, and it's not manned all the time, but it helps to know that there is some police presence here.
The design of the built environment that allows for “eyes on the street” the most referenced contributor to women’s sense of safety, although the importance of this police and security presence was also echoed across many interviews. As one respondent explained, “There's windows all over if something happens, and you scream - somebody is going to hear it.”

Women at Liberty on the Lake also discussed people being at home and in the streets as why they felt safe using the public areas. Even more than the presence of people, women often talked about the sense of security in knowing their neighbors and having a strong sense of community. When asked what about the neighborhood made her feel safe, one woman said, “I'll walk by houses and I know who lives in a lot of the houses. You feel like you know a lot of people. There are plenty of people that I don't know, but on any given street that I walk on I can think of somebody that I know.” Or as another participant put it “[B]ut here because people are home, they're playing, they're so many people that know each other, [it] just seems safer.” Another woman explicitly referenced the amount of stay at home moms as contributing to the sense that eyes were always watching the public areas – “There are a lot of stay at home moms in the neighborhood. So they're out with their kids, or out weeding, or just out in their front yards.” Occasionally these statements about the safety of the neighborhood were mixed with melancholy. As a typical example of this, one resident noted, “I'm really sad to say, because I loved my neighborhood in Minneapolis, and I would move back there in a heartbeat, but I feel safer with my children in Liberty.”

Women at Oak Park answered in very similar ways to women at Liberty on the Lake, although they placed less emphasis on the sense of community, and more on the
presence of people. Furthermore, women also talked about the proximity of the public spaces, namely parks, to their home, and how that made them feel more comfortable. For example, one mother said “I think [the parks] are all open and usually there are a lot of people there and that probably makes me feel more safe. And this one is really close to our house, so it's in your comfort zone.” Women didn’t necessary characterize the parks as spaces for community interactions, as women at Liberty on the Lake did, but instead said:

    CF: How would you describe the personality of your street?
    CD: The street?
    CF: Yes.
    CD: Friendly but not social.

This lack of the social aspect of the spaces may account for why women at Oak Park felt less safe in those spaces as opposed to women at Liberty on the Lake.

Women at Oak Park and Liberty on the Lake both alluded to the homogeneity of their neighborhoods and towns as the main reason why they felt safe in their neighborhoods. This builds on Sibley’s ideas about how purification of space helps to foster a sense of safety because all “others” have been removed from the landscape. As one woman at Liberty on the Lake said, “Anybody who doesn't belong here you can recognize them.” Another example of a similar idea – “Everyone knows each other and they know if something looks odd or if someone doesn't fit or you know. I think to me maybe - it's just very safe and secure because of that.” Or as one woman at Oak Park said when referring to the nature preserve behind her house, “if you didn't know me you probably wouldn't know that there are just miles of walking trails back there.”
Perhaps the most apparent example of this purification of space came from a woman at Liberty on the Lake when she described a story of the only time that she has felt unsafe in her neighborhood.

But there has only been one time when I had a little scare. And then that's when I walked the bike loop, down around the lake and up through legends - the other development over there- and then along the path that runs along Manning. I remember I was out walking on a Sunday night - this was last summer. It got a little darker and it was right when I was coming almost to the main gate. And there were four teenage guys standing at the corner of the main gate that just looked like they were up to no good. And three of them were African American, and I'm not prejudiced but it's unusual for this area. So I remember I had to walk right past them and I think that they knew that I was a little intimidated so they just sort of stared at me. But that normally doesn't happen out here.

This anecdote shows that the only time that she felt unsafe was when the purification of her neighborhood was disrupted. Any disruption of the homogeneity of the community indicated to her that they were outsiders and thus not welcome in her neighborhood.

Another woman told a similar story, with less overtly racial tones, telling

So the mom went out and there were some random kids just hanging out like 18 year olds at that mailbox. And she's like "what are you doing?" and they said "we need some money to get back to Minneapolis" which just seemed really random and nobody really ends up at Liberty, or really Stillwater...

These two anecdotes show that the sense of safety at Liberty on the Lake and Oak Park was largely due to the purification of the space, and that when the space was no longer considered pure, that the participants began to feel unsafe.

This purification of space was not confined to just the neighborhood, it also was also largely influenced by the location of Stillwater and Eden Prairie. One resident of Liberty on the Lake said, “I think the location helps. That we're in Stillwater for one, which seems pretty safe.” Similarly, a woman at Oak Park claimed, “I think it's less about
the design of the space than it is about the overall character of Eden Prairie.” Both of these quotes echo the previous ideas of purifying the space of their neighborhoods, but talks about this purification of space as a larger scale. By way of being situated in these towns on the urban fringe, already purified of racial and economic diversity, the whole space was already considered safe.

Unlike in Liberty on the Lake and Oak Park, Excelsior and Grand, partially by nature of its location in the metro region, is not embedded in a homogenous community. Although the development itself may not be racially diverse, many interview participants cited the diversity of the surrounding community as important to them.

At night, you know, there are many different people who live in the area of St Louis Park. We have quite a range of ethnicities, nationalities, backgrounds, religions, and you are going to see different faces coming from a small town. You know, it's always kind of watch your back, you're in a big city. But I do feel safe here. And even in the park. I've walked through the park at night and no one has ever bothered me.

One woman even talked about how the diversity of the surrounding neighborhood has been a draw for her to come to the neighborhood – “And although the diversity isn’t here in the building, there is diversity here in the surrounding communities, and I wanted my girls to see that.” The diversity of the neighborhood was not just limited to racial diversity either. One participant when describing the park, pointed out that the park is surrounded by a mixture of land uses – Excelsior and Grand, an assisted living high rise, a hospital, an industrial park, and a halfway house.

From these interviews and surveys, we see that the nature of the New Urbanist development did not necessarily change how safe or unsafe women felt in the public areas in their neighborhood. Safety was often explained in how participants viewed the
purification of their neighborhood and town. By nature of being on the urban fringe, Eden Prairie and Stillwater are both highly homogenous communities, whereas Excelsior and Grand is more diverse. Women at Oak Park and Liberty on the Lake only felt unsafe when the homogeneity of their space was tarnished, but in Excelsior and Grand women were constantly surrounded by diversity and therefore less likely to interpret diversity as making a space unsafe.

Use of Public Areas as a Space for Community

In the survey women also compared their access to public space in their current neighborhood to other places they had lived, and if they used the public spaces in their current neighborhood the same amount as in other places they had lived. Answers between Liberty on the Lake and Oak Park were very different, but there was a relatively similar distribution of answers between Liberty on the Lake and Excelsior and Grand. This suggests residents at that both New Urbanist developments feel that they have greater access to public space, and that they use the public space more frequently than in other places they have lived.

Women at both Excelsior and Grand saw the public areas as integral to fostering a sense of community, and as a physical space to get to know their neighbors. Interestingly, women at Excelsior and Grand viewed the main park, Wolf Park, as their access point to the community of St. Louis Park, as opposed to just people living at Excelsior and Grand. One woman described her involvement at the park in the following way:

You know we'll go out and pull weeds, or plant flowers. They count on community people to help with that because there are a lot of cut backs in the city. So I'll round up a crew on a nice day and we'll go out with our
weed pullers and go out and work. So it's welcoming. There are a lot of events in the parks that the community provides.

She also described how due to the parks extensive facilities (ice rink, recreation center, pool) the area draws people from outside St. Louis Park. Other women also talked about voting at the recreation center as other way that the center connected them to the community.

Figure 3.23. “I feel that there are more public areas than in other places I have lived.”

*Chi-square of Liberty on the Lake/Oak Park = .003*
**Figure 3.24.** “I use public areas here the same number of times per week as other places I have lived.”

![Bar chart showing public area usage](chart.png)

*Chi-square of Liberty on the Lake/Oak Park = .029

Excelsior and Grand also had a myriad of other private facilities for residents to use inside the building. Those spaces provided another community space for Excelsior and Grand residents to interact with other residents. One woman described the function of those spaces to foster the possibility of interactions between people – “And I think if the neighborhood is closed - I mean if people are intimidated by the environment they stop saying hello, and stop interacting, and then you miss the community.” Although women used these spaces in varying degrees to get to know their neighbors, most women acknowledged that these communal residential spaces did leave those options open.

Women at Liberty on the Lake were very intentional in how they described the public spaces as fostering neighborly interactions with statements like, “[S]o I think with
the public spaces and the front porches and sidewalks were very much about connecting with your neighbors.” When I asked one woman to identify a physical characteristic of the neighborhood that contributed to a sense of community, and the first thing she identified was the park – “the park- I now know everybody and it's a place to meet with the kids and be able to talk [to other moms] and the kids can play at the same time.” The parks, sidewalks, and front porches, the former two being public areas, were considered by most women I talked with to be the most important physical qualities of Liberty on the Lake that contributed to a cherished sense of community.

**Defining Public and Public Space**

Lastly, women in the three developments answered questions about how open they thought the public areas in their neighborhood were to residents and non-residents. In interviews I elaborated on these questions by asking women to define what they thought of as public versus private spaces. Most women at the three developments agreed that they thought the public areas of their neighborhood were open for anyone to use, with women at Liberty on the Lake being more hesitant to strongly confirm the statement. The difference between developments became more pronounced in how women reacted to the second statement – “I feel that the public areas are only open to people that live here.” Women at Liberty on the Lake were much more likely to agree with this statement than women at Oak Park or Excelsior and Grand.
Figure 3.25. “I feel like the public areas are open for anyone to use.”

Figure 3.26. “I feel public areas are only open to people who live in this neighborhood.”

*Chi-square of Liberty on the Lake/Oak Park = .005, Liberty on the Lake/Excelsior and Grand = .000
This last question interrogates the connectivity criteria of Varna and Tiesdell’s Star Model for Public Space, and asked the women in each neighborhood to assess to what extent the parks were open to the wider public. As I discussed earlier, the public areas of Liberty on the Lake are highly integrated into the neighborhood design to the extent that the spaces are hard to access unless you are driving down the quiet, residential streets of the neighborhood. Although the spaces have no barriers, and are for flexible uses, the parks are not inviting to people outside the neighborhood, and the women at Liberty on the Lake recognized that fact. When I asked women this question, many said statements such as ‘technically it’s open to anyone, but it would be weird if they didn’t live here.’ Or as another interview participant said “I don't know [that] people [who] aren't [living] in the neighborhood know about [the park] unless they use the school. It's sort of tucked away a little bit.”

Despite viewing these spaces as only ‘really’ open to residents, women at Liberty nonetheless included the parks in their definition of public places. One of my interview procedures invited women to draw a map of where they lived, which sometimes was on the scale of their street and other times the scale of the town. Of the areas they drew, they then had to define what areas were public and which were private. The following response is typical of the respondents at Liberty:

The grocery stores are all public. Public. Public. Public. Well these are all public places. Karate is a public place, but you have to pay to be part of it... I think pretty much everything on here is public. I think everything is public except for the friend's houses and karate lessons.

Many women who had drawn commercial establishments included them in their definition of public spaces because ‘they were open to everyone.’ Women at Oak Park
had similar responses such as, “[P]ublic - I'll put a P by them. Southwest Station, the Eden Prairie Mall, the trails…” or “Riley Lake. The Mall. Cosco. High School. Home Depot. They are all public areas. Anyone can go in to any one of them.” But not any one can go to these spaces. Commercial establishments are only open to people who are consumers, and the establishments have the right to exclude whoever they want to exclude. Although the high school is publicly owned, that does not mean that it is open to any member of the public. These distorted definitions of which spaces are public demonstrate that who these women imagined as part of the public is very narrow.

On the contrary, women at Excelsior and Grand were more limited in their definition of public areas. For example,

Well the park, everything in the park is public, well I don't know that exactly. It's public in the respect that it's part of St. Louis Park, it isn't a state park or Hennepin County or anything like that. That's public. Um. Well certainly all the streets we walk on are public. Um. Parking in public to a great extent - employees use the major parking places rather than the customers which has been an issue for quite a while.

From this quote, which was a typical response, women at Excelsior and Grand mostly limited their definition of public to parks and the street. No one I talked to included commercial establishments in their definition of public.

I find these definitions of public space are some of the most interesting narratives in the interviews because it speaks directly to the diversity of experiences living in different areas of the metro region, and how the purification of space can in turn expand what is imagined as public. Since women at Oak Park and Liberty on the Lake already imagined their space as homogenous, their imagination of who constituted the public in their neighborhoods and towns was quite limited. However, this imagined public could access many more spaces, such as commercial spaces, than a heterogeneous public could.
Therefore, although in the suburban fringe residents’ imagination of the public is limited, because of this limited imagination the amount of spaces that are considered public is expanded. This has the opposite effect in a first-ring suburb such as St. Louis Park where the public is not homogenous, but due to this the space that is considered public is space that is accessible to that entire public.

3.5 Sense of Community

It can be very isolating to be home. I was never home with young children, but I can't imagine - I would think that could be very isolating. It’s a job, and it's a good job and it needs to be done, and a lot of people want to do it. But to be around other adults... I just really want to feel like I'm a part of something.

The above quote came from a mother of three children at Liberty on the Lake, but could be from a number of women living in suburbia. The feeling of isolation described in the quotation was one of the first experiences that feminist geographers problematized about suburbia, starting with Susan Saegert in 1980. It was exactly this feeling of being trapped in one’s home that affected so many women living in suburbia. The above quote is taken from the context of the woman describing her move from a suburb in Brooklyn Park, a second ring suburb north of Minneapolis, which she described as the “parade of garages” to Liberty on the Lake, and how different the sense of community was in each of these places. These place-based social networks in neighborhoods can be a powerful tool to combat feelings of isolation, which is why I was very interested to ask the women how they felt about their social networks in their neighborhoods. Furthermore, since New Urbanism places such a large emphasis on creating a place-based sense of
community, I wanted to evaluate these claims and question to what extent they could be considered empowering for women in those neighborhoods.

Similarly to the public space questions, I asked participants to rank how strongly they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements about their connections to neighbors, ability to ask neighbors for favors, and their friendships with other people in their neighborhood. I then further explored these same themes in interviews. The themes that emerged from these questions about community fall into four categories: strength of place-based community, organized neighborhood activities, networks for favors and help, and, lastly, how the built environment fostered or hindered a sense of community.

Figure 3.27. “I have friends who live in this neighborhood.”
Figure 3.28. “I can recognize most of the people on my street.”

From Figures 3.27 and 3.28 we see that all three neighborhoods similarly responded to feeling that they had friends in the neighborhood, but there was a significant difference between the three as to the extent to which people could recognize people on their street. I see these two questions as compelling indicators as to the strength of a sense of community in a neighborhood. Women at Excelsior and Grand were the least likely to recognize their neighbors, however the question of the ‘street’ was less clear, because the development consists of five large buildings. Many respondents amended the survey to indicate that they interpreted street to mean building, and answered according to how many people they could recognize in their building.

*Chi-square of Liberty on the Lake/Oak Park = .019, Liberty on the Lake/Excelsior and Grand = .000
Despite recognizing fewer people, many women at Excelsior and Grand felt that there was a very strong sense of community. One woman described the sense of community as, “not smothering, but at the same time it's just nice. It's like being part of a neighborhood. And that's what I thought I'd be leaving behind when I left my house [in Minneapolis].” In fact, many women talked about the community in Excelsior and Grand as one where some people were very active and others less so, but that the opportunities to get involved existed for those who wanted them. For example, when I asked one younger woman if she wished she had more friends in the development she said “no, I’m fine with the way it is.”

Many women identified two barriers to a cohesive sense of community at Excelsior and Grand: a lack of community between the different buildings in the development, and low interaction across different ages of residents. Many women said that they did not know anyone in other buildings, and had no opportunities to get to know them. Curiously, the only women who did know people in different buildings were dog-owners:

CF: And do you know anyone in the other buildings?
BD: The dog walkers. Yea mostly they're dog people. Yea because if you're not out on the street, you don't tend to know people. If they spend most of their time inside, I wouldn't know them.

The other barrier to a sense of community was the separation of age groups. Most women interviewed said that most people were either younger (ages 25-35) or older (50 and older) with fewer people in the middle. Many people said that there was a strong sense of community among the older crowd, especially for those who were retired, and a weaker sense of community among the younger crowd. Again, women I interviewed commented that dog-owners were more likely to cross this barrier:
CF: Do you think there is much interaction across the age groups? Or do you think most people interact within their own age group.
BH: I think a little bit. I think there is a little bit of an interaction - but from what I know I see the dog owners that talk to each other - young, old, middle aged, whatever.

Despite these barriers, many women were happy with the sense of community in that those who desired a strong sense of community could access it, and those who did not want that did not participate, which contrasts with the type of community that women described at Liberty on the Lake.

In Liberty on the Lake, the majority of the women who answered the survey cited the sense of community, or the people, as their favorite part about living there. Many people spoke of tight bonds with their neighbors, and a sense of camaraderie throughout the neighborhood. One of the major factors that contributed to this sense of community was that most of the women were not from Stillwater, and many felt excluded within the town.

Most people [in the neighborhood] aren't from Stillwater - they're transplants. When I first moved here, I don't see them very often anymore, there were people with bumper stickers that said "welcome to Stillwater, now go home." [People from Stillwater] didn't like all these people coming in.

This similar experience of living in Stillwater, but feeling excluded from the community meant that many women formed stronger friendships in the neighborhood. Furthermore, women felt strongly that they could identify everyone on their block, and most people felt like they knew most people in the neighborhood, or at least could identify someone they knew on each block.

Unlike Liberty on the Lake, which many women described as warm, welcoming, and friendly, one participant described Oak Park as “Polite is a good word for it. That
works. I live in a very polite neighborhood.” A few of the women felt that the diversity of
the neighborhood was a barrier to a strong sense of community. Two different women
made similar comments:

CA: And [the neighbors are] actually a lot more diverse than our
neighbors in Texas. Which was weird in a suburb but.
CF: It's a very multicultural neighborhood.
CA: Yea it is. It's kind of bad...

CB: The Indian families normally have a better grasp of English than the
Asian families so they very rarely - they almost scurry off when you try to
talk to them. I'm sure that's very isolating for them - but that is what it is.

Women would occasionally comment on appreciating that multi-cultural dimension of
the neighborhood, yet it was also clear that respondents sometimes regretted it and felt
that it impeded their ability to create a strong sense of community, which many residents
desired.

The sense of community at Oak Park was very localized, and some blocks had
strong social networks, and others were non-existent. Some blocks had many social
events that they would do together, whereas on others people could barely recognize the
people on their block. However, either way, no one I talked to knew many neighbors
outside of their street no matter where they lived in the neighborhood. One respondent,
when talking about the next street over from her house, Marshall, said,

CB: I don't know. I think it's Marshall but I don't know anyone there.
CF: Outside of your block do you recognize anybody?
CB: No I don't. I mean there are a couple of families who a little further
down - I know them because their kids used to study with my daughter.
And I know their parents now too. So that's how I know them.
So although there were examples of strong place-based social networks in some parts of the neighborhood, those instances were limited to clusters of houses next to each other and were not part of a broader sense of a neighborhood community.

Another indicator as to the strength of the placed-based community in the three neighborhoods was how many events were held to encourage neighbors to get to know one another.

**Figure 3.29.** “The neighborhood holds events to encourage neighbors to get to know one another.”

*Chi-square of Liberty on the Lake/Oak Park = .001*

Here we see statistically significant differences between the three neighborhoods, namely between Liberty on the Lake and Oak Park, as to how many events were held. In the case of Oak Park, this was again different on a block-by-block basis. Some streets held events
such as walking groups, Christmas parties, and birthday clubs. This was only done on the block level, and never as a wider neighborhood event, which contributed to why women did not know their neighbors in the greater neighborhood.

This was somewhat similar to Excelsior and Grand, in that the amount of events planned depended on what building you lived in. There are bi-annual events that the entire development is invited to, and then each building can organize their own events in addition to that. The newest building, which also had the most communal spaces on the first floor, was the most active in organizing events. They had a walking club, birthday club, book club, and weekly coffee groups, among other activities. However, the 50 and older group of residents mostly attended these events. The event that many women pointed to as an event attended by a more diverse age group was the Saturday Coffee event. One woman described the coffee group as integral to building a wider sense of community:

I would say the... morning coffee every week is pretty well attended. It's Saturday mornings. It's also a good feeder for new people when they come. It's kind of a, I look at it almost as the welcome wagon.

Although many women would choose not to attend these events, they always knew there was the option – “But also building - I mean there are lots of activities. I don't participate that much because of my hours, but I know that if I ever wanted to I could.”

Again, Liberty on the Lake is the neighborhood that had the most geographically expansive events than spanned the whole neighborhood. One woman talked about a ‘Ladies Night Out’ that helped her to meet other women from all over the neighborhood – “I mean I think when I first moved here there were a lot of social events too. They had a ladies’ night out every night, so I met a lot of the women all over from that.” As I
described earlier, there is also a baby-sitting co-op that helps parents get to know another, as well as exchange services. Different people in the neighborhood also organized 4th of July parades, a Thanksgiving run, and other holiday events. One woman summarized by saying, “The other parents are in the same boat so there's lots of support, they make a point of having things to do as a way to meet people... They make it easy for you to know people.”

Another way in which women expressed the bonds of their place-based social networks was in their comfort in asking neighbors for favors. I asked women about two statements surrounding asking neighbors for favors, and having neighbors they could count on. The responses to these questions, and further anecdotes in interviews, revealed some incredible stories of generous neighbors.

Figure 3.30. “I have friends how I would feel comfortable asking them to do me a favor.”

"I have friends who I would feel comfortable asking them to do me a favor."

*Chi-square of Liberty on the Lake/Excelsior and Grand = .005
Figure 3.31. “I feel like I have neighbors I can count on.”

Although the survey responses between Liberty on the Lake and Oak Park were statistically comparable, the interviews revealed something different. Of the four women I interviewed at Oak Park, two felt that they could ask neighbors for favors, and two did not. One woman, from a well-connected part of the neighborhood, said “four years ago I became very ill, and we didn't know a lot of people really really well, but my neighbors got together and made sure that for 3 months there was always food here for my kids. And they would look after my kids.” This differed from another woman who said,

CF: Do you feel comfortable asking neighbors for favors?
CD: Not favors, but if you see someone struggling with something and you have the tool you'd lend it to them.
CF: If you need help with something are you more likely to call someone who doesn't live here?
CD: Yea - I'd call people from outside the neighborhood. Like when I used to have a dog we'd call people from outside the neighborhood to take care of the dog. My daughter used to baby-sit for people.

Similarly, another woman said that if she needed help “we'd ask someone from Bloomington or Burnsville to help us instead of asking someone who is just next-door. I think that that should change, but I don't know how to change it.” Thus, the responses these questions were variable and depended on where the women lived in the neighborhood. Furthermore, the limited sample size of the interviews at Oak Park makes it difficult to draw wider conclusions about the neighborhood.

Women at Liberty on the Lake were much more consistent in their answers in interviews about feeling confident asking neighbors for favors. There were similar tales of cooking meals for families dealing with illnesses, and anecdotes about emergency childcare. However, a few women took the question of ‘favors’ and ‘someone you can count on’ further and told tales of the emotional support from other women in the neighborhood. For example,

CF: Do you see your neighbors as a resource to you?  
AD: Yea. In a major way. Some you call for advice, some you just exchange favors, but yea. Yea - we'll bounce ideas off each other like asking if it's normal for our teen daughter to be this grumpy and they say "oh yea. It’s normal." We're at similar stages with raising kids that we can help each other out, and say "oh it's normal." And "yea she's going to be fine."

Other women talked about being able to identify their neighbors’ different strengths and knew who to ask for different advice on different things. When I asked one woman if she saw her neighbors as a resource, she said “Oh yea. Like my one neighbor over there is really good with bushes and trees, so I'll ask her the names of plants and stuff.” Not only
were women more consistent in their answers about their comfort asking neighbors for favors, but they interpreted the question as more than just exchanging favors, but also about emotional support and identifying their neighbors’ different strengths. Liberty on the Lake might also attract women who are looking for these types of neighborly interactions, and so these relationships may be a result of those preexisting desires for friendly neighbors.

Women’s responses at Excelsior and Grand similarly reflected the age gap between the older and younger residents. Older residents felt confident in their ability to ask neighbors for favors, advice, and support, whereas younger women felt comfortable exchanging favors, but considered themselves to be pretty independent. Furthermore, many younger women talked about how the ease of having so many commercial establishments nearby meant that they did not necessarily need to ask for as many favors, because they had easy access to most services and things they might need.

This aspect of the built environment meant that people could live more independently, however many women at Excelsior and Grand did cite parts of the built environment that fostered a sense of community. One woman talked about the walkability – “I think that where the building is, and the fact that it is built in a community like this where there are services around it and walkable, just brings a certain kind of person to the building.” Another talked about all the different aspects of her building that forced her to run into neighbors – “You’ve got to go get your mail. You've got to go down to the lobby at least once a day where I run into a lot of people. I go to the garage to get to your car and you see people there. You got to carry your trash down to
the end of your hall.” Thus, there were many aspects of the environment that encouraged neighbors to interact and helped foster place-based social networks.

Women at Liberty on the Lake similarly emphasized aspects of the built environment that helped to build a sense of community. Almost all women pointed to one of four parts of the physical environment that encouraged a sense of community: front porches, sidewalks, parks, or the proximity of the houses. One woman talked about these aspects not just in a way that fosters social networks, but also can help combat loneliness—

The sidewalks and the front porches I think were great ideas. It keeps people out and in front. I think the park is a great idea, all the green spaces. The main parks - that's really a gathering spot. If you're lonely or you're bored, if you walk up there generally there are people around. So you're not really lonely anymore, you'll just see people and things going on.

A few women also talked about the design of the neighborhood in that the streets were not just an endless ‘parade of garages’ – “You actually see life going on instead of just staring at somebody's windows and garage doors. Which is kind of important. That’s what we were looking for.” Many women talked about using their front porches as a way to be open to interacting with neighbors, and using their front yards to play with their kids as a way to welcome others to join. These women also reflected that the constant openness to socializing and the proximity of the houses was not for everyone, and that many families had moved away because of it, but that those who stayed really enjoyed and utilized those elements.

Unsurprisingly, women at Oak Park were critical of the built environment and felt that it did not foster community. One of the women I interviewed lived in a house with the only front porch in the neighborhood –
CF: You're one of the few houses that has a front porch.
CD: That's because we had it built, we asked for it. I was hoping that it
would mean that we would get to know our neighbors better.
CF: Do you use it often?
CD: Yea we'll have coffee in the morning, and hang out there in the
evening. We use it a lot.
CF: Do you interact with neighbors while you're out there?
CD: The polite wave.

Even though she attempted to modify her built environment to be able to interact better
with her neighbors, it did not have that effect. Another woman commented that maybe if
the houses were closer together, people would talk more. Another simply said “Nobody
is outside… What's the point in having such a nice lawn if nobody is sitting on it.” The
lack of people outside, as I had experienced while door-knocking, was the biggest factor
that women talked about.

Excelsior and Grand and Liberty on the Lake showed both a quantitatively and
qualitatively stronger sense of community than Oak Park. This does not discount the
social ties and networks that do exist in Oak Park, but because they were not consistent
across the neighborhood, and very localized, it is difficult to draw conclusions about the
neighborhood as a whole. Liberty on the Lake and Excelsior and Grand were successful
in fulfilling the New Urbanist principle of fostering a sense of place-based community,
which helped women to feel connected to their neighbors, and in the case of Liberty on
the Lake, combat feelings of loneliness. Women at these two New Urbanist developments
emphasized how the built environment encouraged and fostered these interactions,
whereas women at Oak Park saw the built environment as a barrier to creating a strong
sense of community.
Summarizing Data Analysis

Overall, these three neighborhoods represent distinct lived experiences for the women that reside there. Much of these differences can be attributed to the type of people that are attracted to certain designs of neighborhoods. As Julie Markovich and Sue Hendler (2006) argue in “Beyond Soccer Moms: Feminist and New Urbanist Critical Approaches to Suburbs,” the aesthetics of the neighborhood were paramount in women’s decision to move to the New Urbanist community they studied. Those aesthetic desires may also speak to the type of cultural background of the families that choose to live in these neighborhoods that may impact their lived experience in that place.

This thesis builds on this previous research, but expands the scope to analyze how women interact with their built environment in New Urbanist communities and compares those interactions to women living in a post-World War II subdivision. I look at how women use the built environment as a way to navigate a ‘second shift’ of domestic labor, how women interact with public spaces in their neighborhood, and women’s social networks in their neighborhood. The experiences of the women who participated in this study varied both between and inside neighborhoods. Women at Excelsior and Grand were able to use the built environment to navigate multiple roles, and were able to pick and choose their participation in place-based social networks, which was empowering for women in non-traditional gender roles. In contrast, women at Liberty on the Lake placed the most emphasis on place-based social networks as a way to complete the ‘second shift.’ Lastly, women at Oak Park experienced place-based social networks on the street scale, as opposed to the neighborhood scale, and those networks were sometimes present or absent throughout the neighborhood. In sum, women in Liberty on the Lake and Oak
Park, as suburban fringe communities, built their social networks based on the assumed homogeneity of the community, and in the case of Oak Park the heterogeneity of residents was often seen as a barrier to community. Whereas at Excelsior and Grand, in a first-ring suburb, women considered the diversity of the surrounding community while defining their community and the public spaces around them. Ultimately, the location of these developments in the wider metropolitan region limited the ability of these neighborhoods to fulfill feminist design principles despite being New Urbanist communities.
CONCLUSIONS

This thesis critically examines New Urbanism and feminist design with the goal of understanding how women living in suburban settings interact with the design of their respective neighborhoods, and if there are designs that are better and more empowering for women. Given that more than half of Americans live in suburbs, understanding that lived experience is of paramount importance. Additionally, suburbia is often defined as boring and placeless, while simultaneously constructed as a feminine space. Both the literal and figurative construction of suburbia is based on the exclusion of certain groups, often based on class and race, and on the strict segregation of private and public facilities. Thus, understanding how certain designs can be seen as empowering for groups that have traditionally been marginalized by this exclusion and segregation of land-uses can help to build a more just and equal built environment.

To this aim, I use feminist design theory as a way to imagine what the built environment would look like if it were built with the specific aim of empowering marginalized groups. Feminist design focuses on mixed land-uses, communal facilities, and integration of residents across race, gender, class, and age. Since feminist design does not exist in practice, I examine New Urbanism as a design ideology that shares many of the same design facets, but with different motivations. This research asks if New Urbanism can be an empowering design for women even if the motivations are not the same as feminist design. Therefore, my research enters into conversations about both New Urbanism and gender empowerment.

My thesis contributes to current scholarly debates about New Urbanism and the female lived experience of suburbia by articulating the need to examine the context of
suburban developments as integral to understanding the lived experience of women. It examines multiple New Urbanist sites from a feminist perspective, and compares women’s responses in a New Urbanist site to a control site. This study highlights the heterogeneity of New Urbanism as opposed to its homogeneity, which is central to understanding the varied lived experiences of women in New Urbanist developments.

My research also contributes to and expands understandings of purifying public space and community as a policing force. Rather than just understanding suburban space as purified, my research shows how women’s narrow mental image of who constitutes the public on the edge of metropolitan sprawl works to expand what spaces they imagine as public. Furthermore, neotraditional New Urbanist developments, such as Liberty on the Lake, foster such an intense sense of community that residents act as a form of surveillance for public areas to ensure that people who are outside their image of the homogenous public do not occupy those spaces.

This type of case study lends itself to two comparisons: one between two differing forms of New Urbanism, and another between two fringe suburban developments. When analyzing the first, Liberty on the Lake and Excelsior and Grand have very little in common other than that they both adhere to New Urbanist design prescriptions. They both have mixed-land use, pedestrian friendly streets, and easy access to park space, but many of the comparisons end there. Excelsior and Grand is a high-density apartment and condo development, whereas Liberty on the Lake is a mostly single-family home development. These contrasts speak to the importance of why we should not examine New Urbanist sites just for the sake that they are New Urbanist. Instead we should examine New Urbanist developments as embedded within a specific geographical
context, and analyze New Urbanism as existing in multiple forms. Women at each site were drawn to that place for different reasons, interacted with their environment and their neighbors in different ways, and had a different mental image of public spaces due to where they were located in the metro region. Therefore, when examining New Urbanist sites we must first ask what can be attributed to New Urbanism, as opposed to what is a product of site and situation.

However, when comparing Liberty on the Lake and Oak Park, as two sites on the urban fringe, it becomes much clearer what differences can be attributed to the New Urbanist design of one neighborhood, because the two developments already have so much in common. They are both located in wealthy towns, represent a certain economic exclusivity, and have similar surrounding geographies. Thus, the causes of the differences are clearer. Women at Liberty on the Lake were drawn to the neighborhood for aesthetic reasons, as opposed to women at Oak Park, who were drawn to the town of Eden Prairie. Yet, the greatest difference between the two developments was the strength and scale of the sense of community. Women at Liberty on the Lake felt a strong sense of community throughout the neighborhood, and they greatly attributed that to the built environment; women in Eden Prairie felt a hyper-localized sense of community, or lack of a sense of community, on the block level. Other differences between these two developments were apparent in the Data Analysis section, but what is significant is how these differences are more easily attributed to the built environment than in comparisons between Excelsior and Grand and Liberty on the Lake. These comparisons help to distill the most significant ways in which the built environment can empower similar populations of women living on the urban fringe.
Purifying Public Space in Suburbia

One of my central questions in this study was how women interacted with the public spaces in their neighborhood, their comfort in using public spaces, and how they defined ‘public’ in their neighborhood. I was particularly interested in these questions because both feminist and New Urbanist design focus on public space, but for very different reasons. New Urbanism promotes public space in order to have a physical space to foster a sense of community. Feminist design instead approaches public space as a place for political empowerment. Yet, given that all three sites were located in suburban settings, I also had to analyze this within the context of purified suburban space.

Excelsior and Grand, as a first-ring suburb, is embedded in a heterogeneous community, and women often remarked on the diversity of the neighborhood and the diversity of users in Wolf Park. Women were also much clearer as to what constituted public space, and what was private space. Women rarely noted any space other than Wolf Park as public, and the only other space women would sometimes define as public was the Town Green space in the middle of the development. Women were much clearer in their definition of public space to mean space that was accessible to everyone, but since those spaces are less abundant, the spaces that women imagined as public was narrower.

This was the opposite at Liberty on the Lake and Oak Park. As a hyper-purified space, women often commented on how Eden Prairie and Stillwater were safe towns, which contributed to their sense of safety and security. In contrast to Excelsior and Grand, women at both fringe developments were much broader in their definition of public space. In many cases women said that all space other than private houses were
public, including malls, grocery stores, and other commercial spaces. Since women’s imagination of what constituted the public is more limited, because the space is already purified, the spaces that are accessible to that public are much wider. The purification of space means that more spaces can be considered public.

Interestingly, this trend was especially pronounced at Liberty on the Lake due to the tight knit sense of community. The development was much more homogeneous than Oak Park, and women often said that they could immediately recognize people who did not belong in the neighborhood. The strong social networks facilitated women’s ability to further purify the space, and allowed for the community to regulate who did and did not belong in that space. Women’s sense of safety in the neighborhood was founded on the absence of diversity, and those unlike them.

Thus, the intention and imagination of public space in New Urbanist developments could only fulfill feminist design principles when the space was not conducive to purification. Women at Excelsior and Grand did not see the space as pure, and also saw Wolf Park as a place to interact with those unlike them. This type of use and imagination of public space is more in line with feminist design than public spaces in Liberty on the Lake. Women at Liberty on the Lake saw parks and green spaces as places to interact with their neighbors, and places to build community, but only because the space was purified. Again, the context of the New Urbanist site speaks to the openness of the public space, instead of just the design of the development.
Female Empowerment and New Urbanist Design

This thesis began with the hypothesis that New Urbanist neighborhoods are more empowering for women than traditional post-World War II suburbs. After completing this research and analysis I reject this hypothesis and instead propose two separate hypotheses. I reject this first hypothesis because it would be a mistake to assume that what might be empowering in one New Urbanist development might be similarly empowering in another. My research shows that New Urbanism must be studied in the context of its regional situation. Instead I would hypothesize that; first, New Urbanist developments in first-ring suburbs are more empowering for women than traditional first-ring suburb designs, and second, I hypothesize that New Urbanist neighborhoods on the urban fringe are more empowering for women than traditional suburban fringe developments.

This first revised hypothesis is difficult to answer, because I did not compare Excelsior and Grand to another first-ring suburban development, but women did articulate many empowering aspects of the built environment. The most common part of the built environment that women referenced was their ability to walk to all of their basic needs: a grocery store, a pharmacy, a health clinic, and many other amenities. Women also cited the walkability as a reason why they were able to divide up domestic chores more evenly with their partners, since both of them could easily walk to get something they needed for their house. Thus, women did find the built environment empowering at Excelsior and Grand.

My second revised hypothesis is easier to think about given that I did compare two fringe developments. I feel confident in concluding that Liberty on the Lake is a
more empowering built environment for women than Oak Park. The most empowering aspect of Liberty on the Lake was the sense of community that women felt, and their ability to use their neighbors as resources. This sense of community, although predicated on the exclusion of other groups, did provide a powerful way for women to combat feelings of isolation. In this way, Liberty on the Lake is clearly not a feminist environment, because this form of empowerment for women is founded on the exclusion of others. This is not meant to discount how this built environment does empower the women who live there. Women at Liberty would often talk about the parks, sidewalks, and front porches as spaces to interact with neighbors, and as spaces that helped them from feeling isolated and alone. This was in stark contrast to Oak Park, where women often expressed frustration in feeling alone in their homes, and isolated. I think it is important to recognize this real difference in the quality of life for the women who live in these two developments as a way to understand one of the benefits of New Urbanist developments on the urban fringe.

The last question that my thesis addresses is to what extent can we attribute empowering design aspects to New Urbanism versus the context of the metropolitan region. For example, if Excelsior and Grand was located in Stillwater, on the suburban fringe, instead of its current first-ring suburban location, would it still be an empowering design? It probably would not be as empowering as it is in its current location. This research shows that we can not divorce New Urbanist sites from their context in the metropolitan region, but instead empowering built environments can be achieved by a combination of design elements and the context in which they are embedded. If we were to move a dense, transit-oriented New Urbanist development to the fringe, it might still
be empowering, but would perhaps do so at the exclusion of other groups. To answer this last research question, I argue that it is a combination of both design and context that can create empowering environments, and that they cannot be empowering independently.

**Further Research and Why it Matters**

One of the most compelling reasons to continue to study the lived experience of New Urbanist developments is because developers are now increasingly adopting New Urbanist design such that these appear in a wide variety of metropolitan contexts. While searching for a control site or my research, it was difficult to find a development that had been built in the last 10-15 years that did not show a strong influence of New Urbanist design. The idea of the parade of garages, cul-de-sac street patterns, and neighborhoods with a weak sense of place, which was the norm in the late 80s and early 90s, are not as common as before. When looking for control sites I found many developments that had a diversity of houses, sometimes mixed with attached town-homes, and often built with park spaces and communal recreational facilities. This speaks to how New Urbanism is now permeating broader suburban neighborhood design, and thus I hypothesize that the lived experience of women in New Urbanist developments is more likely to become the norm in the coming decades. Therefore, it is incredibly important to understand this lived experience.

In order to further understand this lived experience, geographers should continue to compare and contrast different forms of New Urbanism. New Urbanism is not a monolith, and studies should instead focus on the breadth of New Urbanism and how the lived experience varies in its different forms. Furthermore, as this study indicated, New
Urbanism needs to be studied with a focus on the scale and context of the development within the metropolitan region. For example, geographers should study both small one-building New Urbanist developments along with larger-scale planned communities. Along with studying varying scales, scholars should examine New Urbanist developments both in the urban core and in the subsequent rings of suburban development.

Finally, this thesis also speaks to the need to understand the female lived experience of suburbia at its varying places in the metropolitan region. Clearly, women in first-ring suburbs experience suburban living in a very different way than women on the urban fringe. Studies on these differing experiences are underdeveloped, and should be a topic of future focus. Just as New Urbanism is not a monolith, neither is suburbia. As suburbs age, and as first-generation immigrants continue to settle in suburban as opposed to urban locations, there is a great need to understand these lived experiences. Feminist geographers should focus on studying how women experience different rings of development in diverse ways, because as suburbs age the built environment will be interpreted and navigated in different ways in each coming contemporary moment. Suburbia is where more than half of Americans live, and its imagining as a feminized landscape has many implications for women, and therefore studying how women interact with that environment in ways that can be empowering is important for advancing feminist theory and practice.
Works Cited


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Appendix A: Complete Survey

Women’s Experience and Neighborhood Design: Excelsior and Grand

Part 1: These questions are about your home and who lives in it.

1) How long have you lived at this address?

__________ Years       _________ Months

2) Type of dwelling unit (check one):

___ Single family house  ___ Attached townhouse  ___ Other:__________

___ Condo             ___ Rental Apartment

3) How many people live in this household including yourself?  ________ people

Part 2: These questions ask about what attracted you to this neighborhood. These questions ask what you like about your neighborhood, what you dislike, and what features were important in your decision to move here.

4) On a scale of “Not at all Important” to “Extremely Important” please rate the following factors in your decision to purchase or rent your current home. Please mark the appropriate box.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not at all Important</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Extremely Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Price/rent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Style of inside of house/apartment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architectural Style of the neighborhood</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of community</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of schools</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhood safety</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having stores within walking distance</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having cafes/restaurants within walking distance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Having a post office within walking distance</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Having schools within walking distance</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location relative to work</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location relative to family/friends</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neighborhood parks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount of car traffic on my street</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Layout and size of the neighborhood streets</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Having bike lanes and paths nearby
Having sidewalks in my neighborhood

5) Are there other factors that were important in your decision to purchase or rent your current home? If so, please list them:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not at all Important</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Extremely Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>____________________</td>
<td></td>
<td>____________________</td>
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<tr>
<td>____________________</td>
<td></td>
<td>____________________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6) What do you like best about where you live?

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

7) What do you like least about where you live?

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Part 3: The following questions ask about your connections to people in your neighborhood.

8) Please mark the box that most closely matches your feelings about the following statements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I think my neighborhood is a good place for me to live.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have friends who live in this neighborhood.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have more friends who live outside this neighborhood than in this neighborhood.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have friends in this neighborhood who I would feel comfortable asking them to do me a favor.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can recognize most of the people who live on my street.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel like I have neighbors I can count on.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The neighborhood holds events to encourage neighbors to get to know one another.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I feel at home in this neighborhood.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are many opportunities to get to know neighbors that I haven’t met.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is important to me to live in this particular neighborhood.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
My neighborhood has good access to schools.
My neighborhood has good access to parks.
My neighborhood has good access to shopping.
I like this development more than other places I have lived.

**Part 4**: The following questions ask about how you use public areas, how often you use them, and how you feel when you are using the public areas in your neighborhood. Public areas include parks, sidewalks, trails, streets, etc.

9) Please fill in how many times per week you use the public areas in your neighborhood to do the following activities. You can make these estimates based on how often you would use these facilities in good weather:

- Walking __________ times/week
- Jogging/Running _________________ times/week
- Biking __________ times/week
- Playing with kids ________________
- Walking a pet ________ times
- Other (____________) __________ times/week

10) Please mark the box that most closely matches your feelings about the following statements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I feel comfortable walking or biking in my neighborhood.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel comfortable walking or biking here during the day.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel comfortable walking or biking here at night.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel like the public areas are designed for me to use.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I feel like there are more public areas than in other neighborhoods I have lived.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I feel like there are the same amount of public areas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>than in other places I have lived.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I use public areas the same number of times per week</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>in this neighborhood as other places I have lived.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I feel like these public areas are open for anyone to use.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel like these public areas are only open to people</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>who live in this neighborhood.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Part 5**: The following questions ask you to describe how you divide up household chores in your home.

11) Please list each member of your household, his or her age, and relation to you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Member</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Relationship to you</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yourself</td>
<td>___</td>
<td>___________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>___</td>
<td>___________________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
12) For each person living in this household please indicate how many hours you think each member spends doing housework (cooking, cleaning, shopping, childcare, paying bills, etc.) each week. (Note that there is an extra space at the end for outside help).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Member</th>
<th>Hours each week</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yourself</td>
<td>___________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>___________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>___________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>___________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>___________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>___________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>___________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Outside Help ______________

13) Please indicate how much housework you do compared to the other members of your household.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Slightly Hardly</th>
<th>Slightly Less</th>
<th>Equal</th>
<th>Slightly More</th>
<th>Majority</th>
<th>N/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cleaning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooking meals</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparing meals</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transporting children</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Childcare</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shopping for household items</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grocery shopping</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paying bills</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Part 6: The following questions ask you to describe yourself. Remember that your answers are confidential.

14) How would you describe your race/ethnicity?
   - White/Caucasian
   - Hispanic/Latino
   - Native American
   - African American
   - Asian American
   - Other: ______________

15) Which best describes your occupation? (Mark one)
   - Work from home full-time (compensated)
   - Work outside home full time.
   - Work from home part-time (compensated)
   - Work outside home part – time.
   - Work from home (uncompensated)
16) What is your annual household income? (Mark one)
   - Less than $30,000
   - $40,000 - $50,000
   - $50,000 - $60,000
   - $60,000 - $70,000
   - $70,000 - $80,000
   - $80,000 - $90,000
   - $90,000 - $100,000
   - More than $100,000

17) Circle the last year of school that you completed.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17+
Grade School High School College Advanced Degree
Appendix B – Interview Questions

- So how did you come to buy this home here?
- What do you like about where you live?

Division of Labor:
- Do you feel like you do more or less household chores than the rest of your household?
- How did the division of chores end up this way?
- Are there characteristics of this neighborhood that help or inhibit you to do your part of the household chores?

Public Space:
- Could you please draw me a map of your neighborhood and describe what you are drawing.
- What places on this map do you use the most?
- What are the public places? Which ones do you use? Which do you use the most? Which do you use the least?
- How would you describe the personality of these places?
- What types of activities do you do in the public areas?
- Do you feel safe in these spaces?
- What about the design of these spaces make them feel safe to you?
- Do you use the public areas in this neighborhood more than in other areas you have lived?
- Do you feel different using public areas here than in previous places you have lived?
- What types of activities do you do in your backyard that you wouldn’t feel comfortable doing in the public areas of your neighborhood?

Social Networks:
- Of the friends that you have interacted with in the last week, where do they live?
- Where did you interact with those friends?
- How often do you interact with people who also live here?
- Do you have any close friends in the neighborhood?
- Can you recognize most of the people on your block?
- Do you know people from other parts of the neighborhood?
- Do you feel like there are people that you can rely on if you need help with something?
- Do you feel like your neighbors are a resource to you?
- Examples of times you have asked a neighbor for help or when someone has asked you for help?
- What one physical quality about your neighborhood do you think helps to encourage neighbors to interact with one another?