

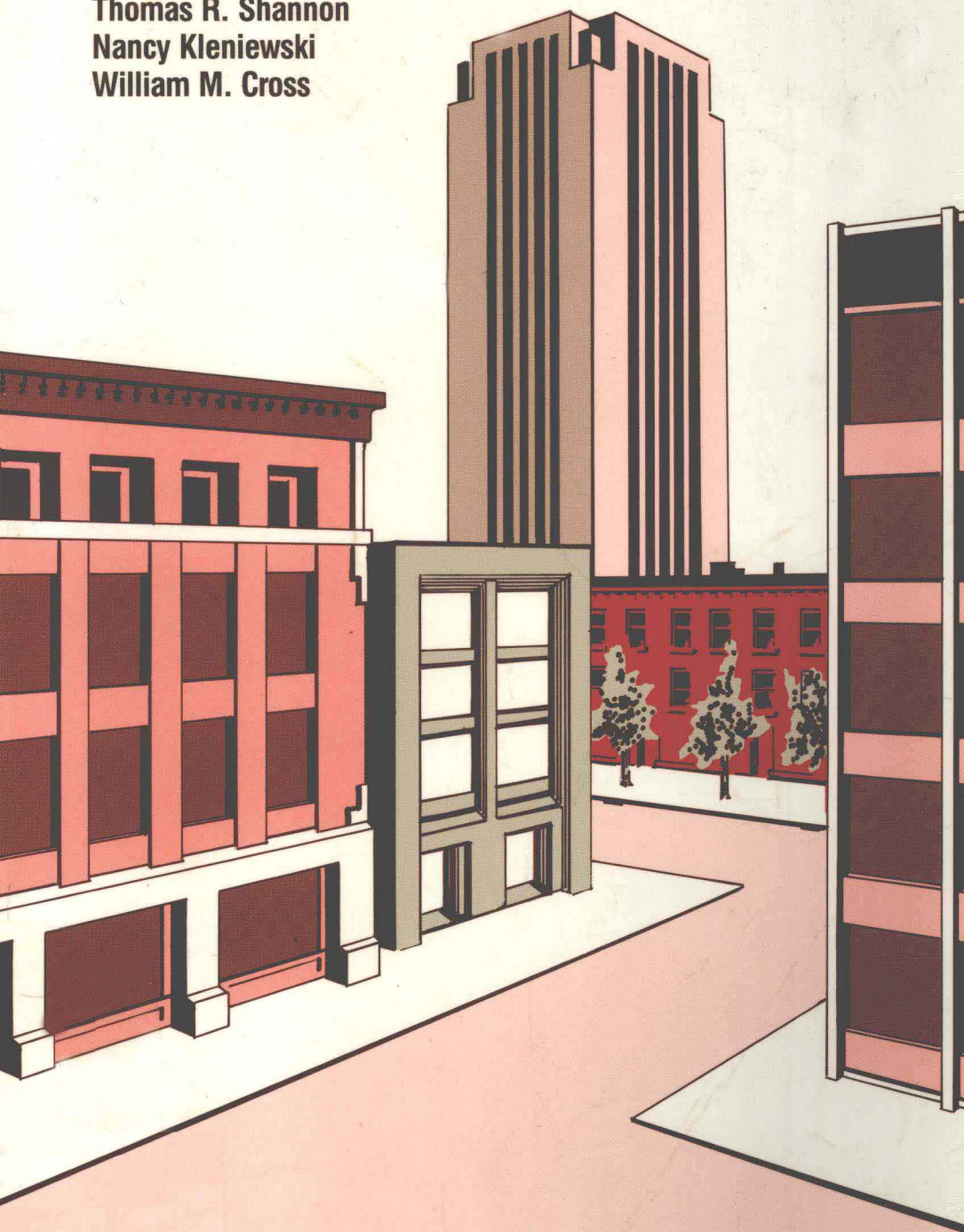
Second Edition

Urban Problems in Sociological Perspective

Thomas R. Shannon

Nancy Kleniewski

William M. Cross



Urban Problems in Sociological Perspective

Second Edition

Thomas R. Shannon

Radford University

Nancy Kleniewski

State University of New York

College at Geneseo

William M. Cross

Illinois College



Prospect Heights, Illinois

For information about this book, write or call:

Waveland Press, Inc.

P.O. Box 400

Prospect Heights, Illinois 60070

(847) 634-0081

Copyright © 1991 by Thomas R. Shannon, Nancy Kleniewski, and
William M. Cross

Copyright © 1983 by Thomas R. Shannon

ISBN 0-88133-584-3

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means without permission in writing from the publisher.

Printed in the United States of America

Preface

This book grew out of the authors' experiences teaching urban sociology and using the first edition of *Urban Problems in Sociological Perspective* in our own classes. We have tried to use those experiences to craft not only an updated book but also a very substantially modified one, while retaining the strengths of the first edition.

This version retains the basic orientation of the first edition. We have not assumed extensive background in sociological theory or terminology—thus, we have provided simple and straightforward explanations of both theories and terms. Nor have we assumed that students have much prior knowledge of urban history, or even contemporary urban conditions. This book is intended to provide a relatively brief introductory overview of urban history in the United States, some of the central issues of urban sociology, and contemporary urban trends and problems. Throughout, we have striven for simplicity and clarity.

We have also tried to maintain the theoretical and evaluative balance of the first edition. Where there are major contending theoretical positions or significant disagreements about how to interpret urban conditions or policies, we have tried to provide a fair exposition of the contending viewpoints. Students are entitled to hear both sides of an argument. On the other hand, we have also attempted to make clear our own interpretations of these controversial issues. Such an approach meets the often competing requirements of pedagogical balance and intellectual honesty. We invite both instructors and students to disagree with our interpretations and participate with us in the debates that enliven the study of urban conditions.

This edition also retains the applied, policy-oriented focus of the first edition. We have examined public policy as both a cause and solution to urban problems. Where possible, in this edition, we have included more consideration of specific examples of attempts to deal with urban problems. We believe that it is both appropriate and useful at the undergraduate level of instruction to acquaint students with the notion

that the analytical tools of sociology can be applied to think about public issues in a systematic fashion.

There also are significant differences from the previous edition. After nearly a decade, urban conditions have changed substantially, and we have struggled to address those changes. For example, the pattern of regional growth and decline has proven to be much more complex than it appeared at the end of the 1970s. As a consequence, Chapter 2 is essentially a new chapter. Similarly, the problems of the housing disadvantaged have become more severe and more visible, and we have provided more extensive treatment of that issue. Sociological theory has also not stood still. For instance, this edition has substantially increased its treatment of the political-economy approach in urban sociology and introduces the new theories of urban politics which appeared in the 1980s. While the book retains its primary focus on the United States, we have added an entirely new chapter which systematically compares and contrasts urban conditions in the United States with those in other countries. Introduction of this comparative dimension provides students with a more balanced view of conditions in their own society.

Acknowledgments

Previous adopters of this book provided the impetus to do a new edition. They told us what they liked, and did not, in the first edition. They also made it very clear that it was time to revise. Neil Rowe, of Waveland Press, provided the practical encouragement to attempt the revision. Each of the co-authors enjoyed the support services of their respective institutions, which made possible doing the revision in a reasonable amount of time. Special thanks go to Sally Harrington and Carolyn Sutphin for much typing, to Bill Davis for graphics, to Mike Liljegren for computer assistance, and to Leonard Beeghley for comments on Chapter 4. Of course, our students provided the real support for our efforts. Their concern and interest in the issues of this book made the effort worthwhile.

Thomas R. Shannon
Nancy Kleniewski
William M. Cross

Contents

1	Origins of the Urban Crisis	1
	The Preindustrial City in America	2
	The Rise of the Industrial City	3
	The Human Ecology of the Industrial City	10
	Cities in Transition: 1920-1945	17
	At the Crossroads: The Industrial City in 1945	18
	Suburbanization and the Rise of Megalopolis: 1945-1970	20
	The Decline of the Old Central Cities	29
	Evaluation	33
	Main Points	33
2	Recent Urban Trends	37
	Patterns of Regional Growth and Decline	38
	Explanations of Population Shifts	44
	Consequences of Regional Change	49
	Theories of Regional Growth and Decline	53
	The Debate Over Growth	58
	Main Points	61
3	The Nature of Urban Life: The Myth of the City	63
	The Classical View of the Consequences of Urbanization	64
	The Classical View Reconsidered	76
	More Recent Research	85
	Evaluation	87
	Main Points	88

4 Problems of the Urban Disadvantaged 91

- Urban Poverty 92
- The Racially Disadvantaged 110
- The New Immigrant Groups 122
- Main Points 124

5 Housing and Urban Decay 127

- Housing Deprivation 128
- Government Housing Policies 135
- Urban Decay 142
- Main Points 149

6 Transportation 153

- The Contemporary Urban Transportation System:
The Automobile 154
- Other Characteristics of Urban Transportation 160
- Evaluating the Urban Transportation System 161
- Transportation Alternatives 165
- Evaluation 174
- Main Points 174

7 Urban Political Systems 177

- Structural Constraints on Urban Governments 178
- Pressures on Urban Governments: The Influence System 186
- An Illustration: The "Fiscal Crisis" and Its Aftermath 196
- Main Points 202

8 Urban Government: The Delivery of Services 205

- Physical Services 206
- Social Welfare Services 215
- Education 221
- Criminal Justice 231
- Main Points 242

9 Urban Problems in Other Societies 245

- Western Europe 246
- Japan 253
- Eastern Europe 259
- The Third World 265
- Main Points 275

10 Urban Problems in Perspective 279

- Urban Conditions in a Global Context 280
- Urban Problems in an Historical Context 283
- The Urban Future: Emerging City Types 293
- Main Points 299

References 301

Index 321

1

Origins of the Urban Crisis

Outline of Topics

- The Preindustrial City in America
- The Rise of the Industrial City
 - Reasons for Industrial Concentration
 - Consequences of Concentration
- The Human Ecology of the Industrial City
 - Concentric-Zone Theory
 - Sector Theory
 - Multiple-Nuclei Theory
 - Social Area Analysis
 - Factorial Ecology
- Cities in Transition: 1920-1945
- At the Crossroads: The Industrial City in 1945
- Suburbanization and the Rise of Megalopolis: 1945-1970
 - The Process of Suburbanization
 - The Causes of Suburbanization
- The Decline of the Old Central Cities: 1945-70
 - Economic Decline of the Central Cities
 - Influx of the Rural Poor
 - The Industrial City in Crisis
- Evaluation
- Main Points

To understand the problems of contemporary urban areas requires that we first review the historical origins of urban America. To a very significant degree, the present dilemmas urban areas face can be traced to the past. Current problems are an outgrowth of long-term economic, technological, social, demographic, and political trends. Hence, in this chapter we will trace the development of urban areas in the United States during the 19th and 20th centuries up through the first generation following World War II. In Chapter 2, we will look at the trends of the last two decades, which have had an immediate impact on the most recent problems faced by our urban areas and may play a major role in shaping the nature of urban problems in the future.

The Preindustrial City in America

At the time of the American Revolution, colonial North America consisted of a thinly settled strip along the Eastern seaboard. Most of the population was engaged in agricultural pursuits and lived in rural areas, either in isolated homesteads or small hamlets. Only about 7 percent of the population lived in communities which could even remotely be considered "urban," and most of those communities consisted of only a few hundred residents (McKelvey, 1973:24). A decade and a half later, the first official census in 1790 counted only 24 "urban places" which contained 2,500 or more people, and the largest cities were Philadelphia (44,096), New York (33,131), Boston (18,320), Charleston, South Carolina (16,359), and Baltimore (13,503) (McKelvey, 1973:24).

Despite the small percentage of the population living in those five largest cities, they played a dominant role in colonial society. Economically, their primary role was that of commercial and financial centers (Palen, 1987:63). They were the major ports for the export of raw materials and agricultural products from the countryside (the primary products of the economy at the time). They also served as distribution centers for critical imported manufactured goods and luxury items not produced domestically. They were not, however, major centers for the manufacture of finished goods. While these cities contained numerous craftsmen who produced some specialized items for use in the city and surrounding countryside, production of finished goods remained a very secondary activity in these cities. On the other hand, these cities played a central role in the political system. They were

centers of the legal system, government administration (in some colonies), and the politically active upper social strata. This was less true in the South, where the plantation aristocracy dominated political life. (Palen, 1987:64).

In the first few decades after 1790, cities in the United States remained primarily commercial centers (Peterson, 1961:28). Indeed, much early manufacturing was located in relatively small towns—such as the textile mill communities in Massachusetts (Pred, 1971:383). However, the rate of urban growth was extremely high. (An exception was in the 1810-20 period because of the disruptions caused by the War of 1812.) By 1860, nine cities had passed the 100,000 mark in population. All of these were port cities or were located near ports. New York was clearly the dominant city: its great harbor and good transportation connections with agricultural areas in the interior (first by canal and then by railroad) were advantages no other city could match. In 1860 (if you count then-independent Brooklyn), New York was the first city in this country to reach a population of one million. New York was the nation's financial center and handled more than one-third of the country's exports and fully two-thirds of its imports (Palen, 1987:67).

Not all regions shared equally in this urban growth. In 1860, one-third of all the residents in the Northeast lived in cities and towns. In contrast, only about one in ten residents of the South lived in urban areas. The slave-based system of agriculture was oriented toward the export of agricultural products and bound the region to a continued reliance on an agricultural economy. Slave labor discouraged labor-saving technological innovations and discouraged the creation of an urban working class. This was in part due to an active fear of the consequences of concentrating the slave population in cities. Low average income (despite the wealth of the planter class), a small middle class, and the political domination of the rural aristocracy also discouraged urbanization (Wallace, 1980:38). This pattern of slow urbanization in the South was to continue well into the 20th century.

The Rise of the Industrial City

The last half of the 19th century saw the transformation of American cities in the North and Northeast into a new kind of city: the industrial city. This new kind of city was the creation of a fundamentally different kind of technology and system for organizing production: factory-based industrial production.

At the roots of this new system were certain basic technological innovations. Improved agricultural techniques and the introduction of agricultural machinery meant that each farmer could now produce much more than before. This, in turn, meant that farmers could produce much more than their families could consume. Farmers could sell this "surplus" production and use the cash to buy consumer goods and machinery. For society as a whole, this development had two important results. First, there was a growing market for finished manufactured goods. Second, there now were more workers available in the economy to engage in nonagricultural production (the farmers' surplus was available to feed them). These nonagricultural workers, in turn, could be employed to operate the new steam-powered factories to produce more finished goods.

The rapid development of industrial machinery and the application of steam power to production increased the output of each worker immensely. This decreased the cost (relative to people's incomes) of the goods produced. The availability of cheaper manufactured goods stimulated consumption, increased the standard of living, and set off a period of rapid long-term economic growth. Manufacturing grew rapidly as a result.

Steam power for railroads, river boats, and ships meant that raw materials could be moved relatively inexpensively to central factories. Goods produced in one place could be shipped long distances economically. Thus, a single large manufacturer could produce goods for a national or international market.

In short, this "Industrial Revolution" created a system of large-scale factory production. These factories required the concentration of large numbers of workers in one place. In turn, until the early 20th century, these large factories tended to cluster together in just a few cities.¹ The industrial city was born.

Reasons For Industrial Concentration

Why did the factories cluster together in cities? A number of factors favored the cities as places to locate industry.

For one thing, reliance on steam power encouraged industrial concentration. Steam is produced most efficiently in large boilers and cannot be piped long distances. Factory and power supply needed to be close together, and it often made sense for several factories to share a common steam plant. Steam was produced from coal, and the only efficient ways to move coal were by railroad, ship, or barge. Hence, factories had to be located along rail lines or rivers, or near port areas.

Limited transportation technology meant that workers had to live close to where they worked. Only the more affluent could afford to travel by train or carriage every day. Even after the introduction of the electric trolley in the latter part of the century, regular commuting by working-class people was expensive and avoided when possible. As late as the turn of the century, the average commuting distance for workers in New York City was only two blocks (Palen, 1987:71). This created pressures to build working-class housing within walking distance of the factory district. Very quickly, densely packed multiple-story tenement buildings sprang up around the industrial districts. Once a large number of workers were concentrated in a particular city and industrial district, additional industry was attracted, anxious to take advantage of the existing pool of readily accessible (and already experienced) industrial workers.

Movement of bulky raw materials and finished goods also required clustering immediately around railroad switching facilities and dock areas. Once goods left the railroad car, they became very difficult and expensive to move: street transportation was by horse-drawn wagon and handcart.

Moreover, as the early sociologist Charles Horton Cooley pointed out, industry was usually attracted to certain points along the transportation system. These points he called *breaks in transportation*. These are places where goods must be moved from one vehicle to another (lake boat to train, train to train, train to ship, etc.). This entails labor costs. It is cheaper to process goods at transportation breaks because one has to pay the labor costs whether or not anything is done to the raw materials or merchandise. Storage facilities are often required at such transportation breaks, and other facilities such as banks and brokerage houses must be present since ownership often changes hands at these points. This further enhances the attractiveness of building factories at these breaks (Cooley, 1930:17-119). Thus, the city of Chicago grew into a major industrial center partly because it was where the railroad lines came together from the Northwest (lumber and cattle), Midwest (agricultural products), and Southwest (cattle, grain, and coal from central Illinois). At the same time, lumber, grain, and iron ore and other minerals came down the lake by boat. Chicago became home for the production of steel, agricultural machinery, wholesale merchandising, food processing ("hog butcher for the world"), and that great mail-order house for rural America, Sears Roebuck.

To some extent, success and growth tended to bring further success and growth to the already large cities. Larger cities provided a place to locate a factory where there was an easily accessible, very large market. In addition, the existing large cities had the advantages of

already having an *infrastructure* of services such as water supplies, warehouses, switching facilities, docks, raw materials suppliers, municipal services, and skilled repairmen. It was cheaper to use these already existing services than to try to create them from scratch at a different location (Wallace, 1980:44). Corporate offices, in an era of slow communications and transportation, needed both to be near their factories and to be adjacent to other corporate headquarters and to such services as financial institutions, legal offices, and courts (Palen, 1987:73). Finally, some areas were better able to capitalize on their local advantages because of the organization and skill of their business and political leaders. These “growth entrepreneurs” mobilized local resources and governmental connections to provide incentives to business for location in their cities (Molotch, 1988). For example, there was competition between Eastern cities to get state subsidies for canal building in the 1830s and 1840s.

Consequences of Concentration

These centralizing forces meant that a large proportion of all industry located in cities and that a few cities grew very large. The last half of the 19th century was a period in which much of the urban population came to be concentrated in a few large urban areas.

Within these urban areas, most of the population lived inside the city limits of one municipal government. This was because urban growth in the 19th century was characterized by the process of annexation. In most states, cities had the right to incorporate surrounding areas (including other independent towns) into the city as it spread out from the center. For instance, in 1854, Philadelphia swallowed 28 cities, towns, and boroughs in a single year (Kotler, 1969). This process was enhanced later in the century by the introduction of the horse-drawn cart and then, at the end of the century, the electric streetcar. Streetcars expanded the potential space of the city and made possible the outward expansion of the city. Growth proceeded outward along the streetcar lines and allowed convenient commuting as far as 12 miles from the downtown areas. Where streetcar lines crossed, these “breaks” in the transportation system encouraged the creation of small, neighborhood business districts. Gradually, the space between the streetcar lines filled in (Hawley, 1971:92).

A convenient (if somewhat arbitrary) date to designate as the zenith of the industrial city is 1920. In that year, the census found 51 percent of the population living in cities and towns. In a statistical sense, U. S. society had become a predominately urban society. Moreover, despite

Table 1.1 **Percent Population Urban, Urban Population Size, and Total Population Size, United States, 1790-1987 (Selected Years)**

Year	Percent Urban	Urban Population (in millions)	Total Population (in millions)
1790	5	.2	4
1840	11	2	17
1890	35	22	63
1920	51	55	107
1940	57	75	133
1960	70	126	181
1980	75	167	226
1987	77	187	243

SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of the Census

the fact the movement of industry to suburban areas had already begun (see Table 1.1), central cities still clearly dominated the urban landscape. There were three cities with more than a million in population and nine with between half a million and a million (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1973).

What was the industrial city like? There was an extremely compact and crowded downtown district. The attraction of this downtown area was simple. It was centrally located, and transit lines radiated out from it like spokes on a wheel. This made it the single most accessible point in the city. Offices clustered together to make possible easy communication by means of messenger and face-to-face contact. Office workers could commute in on the transit lines. Stores and places of entertainment catering to a mass market could be reached by the most people with the least inconvenience by locating in the downtown district. Intercity transportation was by train, and massive passenger terminals were usually located near the edge of the business district. The fact that once downtown, people had to walk required that the downtown be very compact. All this meant that competition for space in the downtown district was intense and the price of land very high. In 1930, street frontage on Wall Street sold for \$100,000 a foot. That meant that downtown location was practical only for business enterprises, and only for those businesses which had the greatest need for accessibility to large numbers of customers or workers. Banks, hotels, department stores, luxury shops, corporate headquarters, legal firms, other business professionals, and the like crowded together within easy walking distance of one another. The premium on space and the need to be close meant that the invention of the elevator and steel girder building quickly

led to taller and taller “skyscrapers.” These buildings allowed jamming very large numbers of people together with rapid access to one another by elevator.

Factories, warehouses, and residential housing—activities which required large amounts of space—could not afford to locate in the central downtowns. Rather, they located, depending on their transportation needs and ability to pay, in different parts of the city. Each part of the city tended to specialize in a particular type of land use.

Adjacent to the downtown was usually a district of railroad switching yards, warehouses, factories, and slums. The factories needed to be close to the railroads, warehouse facilities, and each other. Workers in these facilities needed to be close to their work, and they could not pay much for either transportation or housing. The result was densely packed working-class housing districts mixed in with and adjacent to the factory district. Multiple-story tenements housed huge numbers of people under conditions of appalling squalor and crowding. Families of six to eight people crowded into one, two, or three rooms, often with no plumbing facilities (or with the bathroom down the hall and shared by several families). There were dangerous, poorly vented coal stoves for heat, few or no windows for light and ventilation, and inadequate fire escapes. The danger of fire, desperate cold in the winter and suffocating heat in the summer, ghastly sanitation and hygiene problems, and disease were part of the shared experience for many in the urban lower classes at the beginning of this century. At the end of the 19th century in New York, urban reformers of the day considered it a major victory to require that newly built tenements at least have windows facing into air shafts for ventilation and outside, metal fire escapes. Overall densities of these areas were higher than at any other point in our urban history. In Chicago, in 1894, one district on the West Side was three times more crowded than the most crowded portions of Tokyo or Calcutta. In some neighborhoods, density reached 900 people per acre (Mayer and Wade, 1969:256).

As one moved beyond the working-class districts, the quality of the residential areas improved. However, limited transportation still required that people be fairly close to their places of work: streetcars were very slow. Competition for land close to the center meant that land costs were high. Hence, by modern suburban standards, the housing was still densely packed. Apartment buildings, row houses, and two-family houses were the order of the day for most of the better-off, skilled workers and average middle-class families of the period. In this regard, it should be remembered that the average purchasing power of even these more affluent workers was much lower than it is today. Hence, what a middle-class standard of living implied for such things as housing

and basic comforts was much different than now.

Those neighborhoods of large Victorian clapboard houses and tree-lined streets which seem to be the popular image of the urban past were really preserves for a small portion of the population: the affluent upper middle classes composed of successful professionals, independent successful businessmen, and the new class of corporate managers. Even in these areas, the premium on land in the city often meant relatively large houses crowded together on small lots.

By 1920, in many cities, the affluent upper middle classes and the upper classes had also begun settling in suburban towns outside the city limits. Many of these communities had started out as independent rural towns in which wealthy people in the 19th century had built summer homes. Gradually these summer residences were converted into year-round homes. Early commuting to the city was made possible by the availability of rail passenger service. Later, the streetcar lines were extended beyond the city limits to create "inter-urban" trolley systems which actually ran cross-country between cities. (At one time, it was possible to travel between New York and Boston by streetcar.) These streetcar systems further spurred suburban growth. By 1920, most large cities had suburban "bedroom" communities from which people commuted to the central business district. By and large, these were fairly prestigious enclaves of affluent residents, such as Evanston, just north of Chicago (Wilson and Schulz, 1978:1190-191; Jackson, 1985:113-115, 120-122, 256; Warner, 1962:20-29, 43-45).

The early 20th century also saw another movement which was an indication of the future directions of urban development. Industries began locating (still on rail lines, of course) outside the city in industrial "satellite" towns. Up until 1900, industrial employment had increased most rapidly in the central cities. But between 1899 and 1909, industrial employment in cities grew by about 40 percent, while in areas surrounding the cities such employment increased by 98 percent (Gordon, 1977:74). Thus, for example, the newly-formed giant of the steel industry, United States Steel, built a whole industrial city outside of Chicago and named it after the chairman of the board of directors, Judge Gary (creating Gary, Indiana).

A very significant fact about this development of affluent suburban communities and industrial satellites in the early 20th century was that it did not, as it had in the past, lead to annexation by the central cities. The great wave of annexation in the 19th century crested with the consolidation of the city of Brooklyn into New York in 1898. The pace of annexation abruptly slowed in the early 20th century. Of the twenty largest cities, thirteen had stopped expanding by 1910 (Gordon, 1977:77). Partly this was the result of ethnic and class hostilities. The