

These Self-Driving Cars Assemble Into Moving Towns

San Francisco design firm NewDealDesign—known for commercial projects like the Fitbit and unabashed provocations like Scrip—has a different view of the future. In a concept it calls Autonomics, the studio considers how autonomous, electric vehicles might change suburban and even rural life.



It paints a picture of tiny delivery bots that pull up to your car in motion to deliver food, bus-sized vehicles that you can dock with to party or shop from the road, and dozens or even hundreds of vehicles could assemble into cities on wheels.

“We see a lot of possibilities here that are currently not explored,” says Gadi Amit, founder of NewDealDesign. He points to research by Trulia that suggests suburban growth could be on the rise—and the fact that urban sprawl that means that people in big cities, like Houston, actually do a lot of daily driving. “The urban/suburb effect of these cars is not being covered. And one of the key points we’re trying to make here is [with autonomous vehicles] you’re moving more because it’s easier to drive more. Maybe you’ll drive around the countryside while getting the best services.”

So instead of getting delivery to your home, you’d get it to your car. NewDealDesign suggests that a drone it calls a “Leechbot” could drive up to your vehicle on the way to your kid’s soccer practice, drop off McDonald’s, and scurry away—saving you that few extra minutes that could be spent in a drive-thru window. Or a ZoomRoom—essentially an automated bus—could do anything from park in your driveway to fit you with a suit, to dock with your car on a road trip to offer refreshment, to camp out with several other ZoomRooms to create ad hoc villages.

<https://www.fastcodesign.com/3067368/these-self-driving-cars-would-revolutionize-life-in-the-suburbs>

A Housing Crisis for Seniors

But suburban homes were originally designed, and for the most part still are, for young families — and for drivers. They are typically surrounded by other single-family houses. Lacking a fitter partner or a network of helpful neighbors and caring family members, older residents can end up feeling isolated, unable to do basic errands or keep up their property. Further, most suburbs are zoned to prevent any non-single-family housing from being built, whether multiunit projects or the seemingly benign granny flat.

Thoughtfully designed housing for older adults is not being created on a scale commensurate with the growing need. It’s not a market many architects or developers have embraced. Conversely, a disproportionate amount of attention has been focused on the presumed desires of millennials. We hear all the time that it’s that group that craves walkability, good transit and everything-at-their-doorstep amenities — and that only cities can provide it.

But what if these offerings weren’t exclusively urban? What if suburban communities could provide some of them? And what if more communities weren’t so keyed into specific demographics, maybe even aiming instead to serve multiple generations?

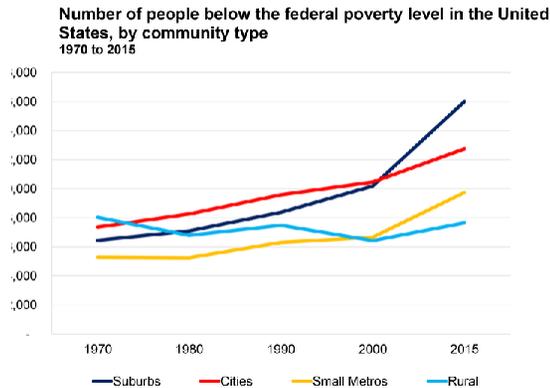


Professionals are starting to pay attention, with some suggesting that the housing industry ditch the term “senior” altogether.

https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/28/opinion/sunday/a-housing-crisis-for-seniors.html?_r=0

The changing geography of US poverty

Poverty in the United States has long been associated with large urban centers or rural communities, where it has historically been most concentrated. As poverty grew in the 2000s, it continued to climb in those places:



Both large cities and rural counties experienced an uptick in their poor populations of roughly 20 percent between 2000 and 2015 (see chart).[1] But the rapid rise of poverty in the 2000s touched a broad swath of communities across the country, moving well beyond its historic homes.

Between 2000 and 2015, the poor population in smaller metropolitan areas grew at double the pace of the urban and rural poor populations, outstripped only by poverty's growth in the nation's suburbs. Suburbs in the country's largest metro areas saw the number of residents living below the poverty line grow by 57 percent between 2000 and 2015. All together, suburbs accounted for nearly half (48 percent) of the total national increase in the poor population over that time period."

The growth of poverty in the suburbs reflects a combination of contributing factors that saw both low-income individuals and families move to the suburbs and more long-time suburban residents fall into poverty over time. These factors include:

- Growing and diversifying populations in the suburbs...
- Regional housing market trends...
- The continued suburbanization of jobs...
- The prevalence of low-wage work...

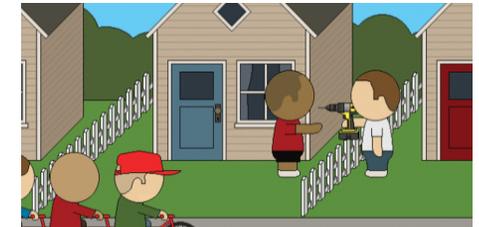
<https://www.brookings.edu/testimonies/the-changing-geography-of-us-poverty/>

The "Sharing Economy" Is Dead, And We Killed It

"How many of you own a power drill?" Rachel Botsman, the author of the book *The Rise Of Collaborative Consumption*, asked the audience at TedxSydney in 2010. Predictably, nearly everyone raised his or her hand. "That power drill will be used around 12 to 15 minutes in its entire lifetime," Botsman continued with mock exasperation. "It's kind of ridiculous, isn't it? Because what you need is the hole, not the drill." ...

"Why don't you rent the drill? Or rent out your own drill to other people and make some money from it?"

Back then, this version of what Botsman called collaborative consumption, or what would become better known as "the sharing economy," seemed like a warm and fuzzy inevitability.



American consumerism had been tamped by one of the worst recessions in history, concerns about the environment were growing, and new online networks provided a connective thread that could help us get by on less by sharing things with our neighbors. "We now live in a global village where we can mimic the ties that used to happen face to face, but on a scale and in a way that has never been possible before," Botsman explained, and these new systems allowed us "to engage in a humanness that got lost along the way." We were now, she said, experiencing "a seismic shift from individual getting and spending towards a rediscovery of collective good." ...

There was just one problem. As Adam Berk, the founder of Neighborrow, puts it: "Everything made sense except that nobody gives a shit. They go buy [a drill]. Or they just bang a screwdriver through the wall." ...

While sites like Airbnb and Uber became giant companies, the platform on which we would share our power drills with neighbors never took off.

<https://www.fastcompany.com/3050775/the-sharing-economy-is-dead-and-we-killed-it>