

The New Suburban Paradox

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2012

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The suburbs have been the subject of academic criticism for decades, and critiques have recently gained momentum as sustainability has provided a focus for new debate. Despite this large body of work, suburbs remain popular with homebuyers in Canada. The result is the suburban paradox: a phenomenon in which suburban homes continue to be popular with homebuyers despite widespread and often passionate critiques against the suburbs. In this study, I investigate this phenomenon and identify some of the underlying causes of this disconnect between scholars and suburbanites. To do so, I employ a methodology based on the deconstruction of advertisements for suburban homes and condominiums in the Greater Toronto Area. By looking at advertisements placed from 1960 – 1964, 1985 – 1989, and 2005 – 2009, I identify trends that indicate that the restrictive rhetoric of sustainability prevents meaningful integration between suburbs and concepts of sustainability from taking place.