

AMST 334
Urban America
ROGER WILLIAMS UNIVERSITY
GHH 108
T, TH 11:00 -12:20
Spring, 2013

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Week of February 26

For *Tuesday, February 26*

Read, in *Rybczynski*,
#7, "High Hopes" pp. 149 - 172
#8, "Country Homes for City People," pp. 173 - 196

I wonder if Rybczynski had the lyrics of this popular [Frank Sinatra Song](#) in mind when he wrote chapter 7:

Just what makes that little old ant
Think he'll move that rubber tree plant
Anyone knows an ant, can't
Move a rubber tree plant

But he's got high hopes
He's got high hopes
He's got high apple pie
In the sky hopes

So any time you're gettin' low
'Stead of lettin' go, just remember that ant
Oops, there goes another rubber tree plant
Oops, there goes another rubber tree plant
Oops, there goes another rubber tree plant

Or perhaps he was think more like Pink Floyd:

Encumbered forever by desire and ambition
There's a hunger still unsatisfied
Our weary eyes still stray to the horizon
Though down this road we've been so many times

The grass was greener
The light was brighter
The taste was sweeter
The nights of wonder
With friends surrounded
The dawn mist glowing
The water flowing
The endless river

Forever and ever

Whatever the stimulation, the story here is about the cycle though which cities go—generation, decay, and (high hopefully) regeneration. More specifically, the chapter introduces ideas of urban planning and “urban renewal,” especially in the form of public housing. You’ll read about Cabrini Green in Chicago as one instance. I’m wondering if you’ll find an example of a public housing project in your city. Why not take a look? If it is visible on Streetview, so much the better.

Chapter 8 looks at a related phenomenon, the “flight to the suburbs” a.k.a “white flight” in many cases. We’ll begin to look at this. Suburb once meant what the word implied an area on the fringe which was “sub” urban—meaning less civilized, less urbane. Not any more, though many urban sociologists and historians see suburbs as mixed blessings. There are a lot of different types of suburbs. I may show the video, “Suburbs: Arcadias for everyone,” or I may hold it off until Thursday’s class.

For Thursday, February 28

Two short chapters which will complete our Rybczynski work.

Read, in *Rybczynski*,

Chapter 9: The New Downtown. pp. 197 - 217

Chapter 10: The Best of Two Worlds pp. 218 - 235

The Mall: either you love it or hate it. Chapter 9 will muse about this a bit...What have the strip malls done to our Urban centers? The Story of Plattsburg New York isn’t a particularly new one. We’ll also see efforts to use some of the techniques of tourism to revive downtowns—but every city doesn’t have a Quincy Market Place like Boston does. Providence brings a suburban Mall into the heart of the city, and around it spring up new apartments and condos—but what happens to the old city only a few blocks away?

What *is* the best of all possible world? Rybczynski tries to answer the question “So where would you live if you could live anywhere at all?” You might try asking yourself the same question, now, and as you explore your city.

I’m going to let you decide how much discussion of these chapters we need. So ask questions and more questions and even more

questions—assuming you have any. When conversation dries up, I'll get the video in.