Journal of Urban Design, 2013
Vol. 18, No. 2, 220–241, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13574809.2013.772880

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group Ltd

That "Monster House" Is My Home: The Social and Cultural Politics of Design Reviews and Regulations

WILLOW LUNG-AMAM

Department of City and Regional Planning, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, USA

Downloaded by [Willow Lung-Amam] at 19:14 13 April 2013

ABSTRACT *Globalization and immigration have changed American suburbs both socially and spatially. In Fremont, California, a suburb of Silicon Valley, neighbourhoods that were once primarily the domain of single-family tract homes and white, middle- and upper-middle-class residents have given way to high-income Asian immigrant families and custom-built "McMansions". While most scholars advocate strict regulation of these properties, this paper questions the seeming mechanistic neutrality of the design reviews, guidelines, and development standards used to regulate large-home development. In an analysis of Fremont's pro- and anti-McMansion debates and McMansion policies, this paper argues that design guidelines and development standards often employ dominant social and cultural norms about "good" and "appropriate" design. Planning and design professionals, public processes, and policies tended to privilege established, white residents' values and meanings for their homes and neighbourhoods, while marginalizing those of many middle- and upper-middle-class Chinese immigrants. The paper shows how dominant social and cultural norms regarding the proper use and design of suburban space are often reinforced through planning, design, and public policy, and shape the built environment as well as non-white residents' sense of place and belonging in it, even for those of means.*

> The hearing adjourns and one has a feeling of incompleteness, of missing information. There is more here than an issue of housing sizes. On the surface the old and young quarrel over lifestyles, while underneath the silent stream of distrust cuts chasms between races and cultures, between generations. (Ley, 1995, 200)

"Let me tell you a very sad story", began Paul Chen (2008) in his address before the Fremont City Council. "My family needed more space. We decided to add a second storey to our house [in] Mission Ranch two years ago. [The] city approved my permit", he recalled. But after his neighbours became aware of his plans, Chen claimed, he and his wife began receiving harassing emails and were reported to the school system for allegedly falsifying their address. "We felt completely alone, as we were targeted and made to feel that we were somehow going to hurt the neighbourhood by doing what others had done, which is simply to add on to their home", Chen said. Feeling frustrated and humiliated, the Chens

Correspondence Address: Willow Lung-Amam, Department of City and Regional Planning, 309 New East, CB#3140, Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3140, USA. Email: lungamam@unc.edu

© 2013 Taylor & Francis

abandoned their remodelling plans and moved out of the Mission Ranch neighbourhood to a two-storey home nearby.

The neighbourhood effort to stop the Chens' building plans marked the beginning of a four-year battle over practices of tearing down or significantly remodelling existing homes to build much larger homes (colloquially referred to as McMansions, monster homes, or teardowns) in Fremont, California (Figure 1).[1] Between 2006 and 2010, a coalition made up primarily of established, white residents led a virulent campaign against these homes, which were occupied and supported by mostly Chinese immigrants like the Chens. The battle was mediated by Fremont planners and policy-makers in a public debate that ended in the adoption of a new citywide design review process and guidelines for all-new two-storey homes and second-storey additions, and development standards and design guidelines for Mission Ranch and Glenmoor Gardens, the two neighbourhoods whose residents had led the fight against these homes.

Fremont is not a unique case of neighbourhood protest over or regulation of large homes. In response to growing opposition over the teardown trend that has affected as many as 500 communities nationwide, cities around the US have adopted planning and design policies to regulate the construction of large-home development (National Trust for Historic Preservation 2008). Nasar, Evans-Cowley, and Mantero (2007) found that 57% of the 103 cities they surveyed had used either existing or newly adopted policies to regulate large homes in existing neighbourhoods, commonly through building height limits, design reviews, reduced floor-to-area ratios, and bulk and mass controls. To draw up their new guidelines and standards, Fremont city officials reviewed the large-home policies of at least eight other cities in Silicon Valley. But amidst this increasingly regulatory climate, few scholars have questioned the meaning and value of these homes to their occupants or the potentially disparate impacts of their regulation.

This paper questions the seeming mechanistic neutrality of design reviews, guidelines, and development standards that govern the development of large new homes in existing neighbourhoods. It is argued that such policies often contain dominant social and cultural norms about what constitutes "good" and "appropriate" design and development. They tend to privilege extant suburban

Downloaded by [Willow Lung-Amam] at 19:14 13 April 2013

Figure 1. Fremont is located in the San Francisco (California) Bay Area. It is widely considered a Silicon Valley suburb because of its large number of high tech companies and residents employed in high tech industries. Image by the author.

landscapes and their embedded values, meanings, and ideals, and thereby naturalize and normalize established (and most often white) residents' privileged sense of place. At the same time, McMansion regulations can disparately impact new immigrants, minorities, and other suburban newcomers who do not share the dominant social and cultural norms of housing and landscape design. While most exclusionary housing policies tend to discourage poor and working-class minorities from purchasing homes in suburban neighbourhoods, McMansions expose the ways that planning and design professionals, processes, and regulations can disparately impact middle- and upper-class minorities by marginalizing their values, meanings, and desires for their homes and communities. They challenge policy makers, practitioners and scholars to look beyond issues of housing size and aesthetics to the social meaning and value of these homes and how issues of difference and demographic change are dealt with in suburban housing policy.

Downloaded by [Willow Lung-Amam] at 19:14 13 April 2013

McMansion Regulations and the Perpetuation of Suburban Inequality

> Spatial distinctions did not merely reify existing social hierarchies, but they helped shape ideas and understandings of them in ways that perpetuated them through time. In building suburbia, Americans built inequality to last. (Nicolaides and Wiese, 2006, 6)

Few US scholars have studied the development of large homes in existing neighbourhoods as an emerging and important phenomenon. Those who do are often extremely critical of the trend. They tend to describe these homes as market-, developer-, and profit-driven mass consumer products reflecting Americans' ever-increasing penchant for bigger and better homes (Weinberg, 2001; Fine and Lindberg, 2002; Kendig, 2004; Devlin, 2010)—or what Hinshaw (2002) calls Americans' "*nouveau riche* excess" (27). These scholars claim that McMansions lack quality craftsmanship, appropriate scale, and contextual features, and tend to diminish a neighbourhood's sense of character, identity, history, and community—"the epitome of public rudeness," according to Hinshaw (2002, 27). Knox (2008) calls large homes the "nurseries of neoliberalism"—places that put property rights and individual consumption above public amenities and civic infrastructure (173). Further, critics argue that McMansions promote gentrification and displacement of low-income residents by increasing the value of neighbouring properties (Fine and Lindberg, 2002; Kendig, 2004).

McMansions also often inform larger critiques of suburbia. Knox (2008) argues that suburbia (or, as he calls it, "Vulgaria"), like McMansions, is characterized by "bigness and bling", "conspicuous construction", and "*nouveau riche* tackiness at an unprecedented scale" (163). In a review of common suburban critiques, Robert Bruegmann (2005) argues that "McMansions are the newest culprit of taste critiques against suburbs, judged as excessive in size and stylistic pretension" (151). In contrast, only a few scholars note the benefits of McMansions, including that they can contribute to urban infill, encourage residents to age in place, promote neighbourhood revitalization, and increase property tax revenues (Danielsen, Lang, and Fulton 1999; Lang and Danielson 2002; McMillen, 2006). Yet, even most of these scholars favour their regulation. The anti-McMansion rhetoric is so popular that the central question asked by

many scholars is *how*, rather than *whether*, these practices should be regulated (Knack, 1999; Fine and Lindberg, 2002; Lang and Danielson 2002; Kendig, 2004; Szold, 2005; Nasar, Evans-Cowley, and Mantero 2007; Nasar and Stamps, 2009).

However, advocates of strict McMansion regulation often fail to acknowledge the contested nature of regulation. One particularly prominent controversy occurred over the regulation of these homes in Vancover, Canada. In the 1980s, several of Vancouver's middle- and upper-middle-class suburbs erupted in debates over large homes that were built and occupied largely by recent Hong Kong immigrants. Canadian scholars and other observers struggled with questions about how race and class factored into residents' support of or opposition to these homes. Some claimed that Euro-Canadians' objection to new development was an expression of their racist fears over the "Hong Kongization" of their neighbourhood. Others claimed that their concerns were based more on class antagonisms brought about by the threat of a new global elite. And still others argued that both race and class played decisive roles in Euro-Canadians' fears and anxieties over neighbourhood change that were, at their base, efforts to preserve their economic, social, and political power and reinforce their class status.[2]

Katheryne Mitchell (1997) argued that the traditional design patterns of Euro-Canadians' homes and yards were the basis upon which established residents sought to normalize and naturalize their social positions vis-à-vis Hong Kong immigrants. Similarly, Henri Lefebvre (1991) has argued that dominant cultural meanings tend to get reproduced in the landscape in ways that make them appear natural or commonplace and serve the interests of those in power. In the US, scholars have shown how suburban landscapes and homes tend to normalize white, middle-class and elite norms regarding proper aesthetics, form, and use while also hiding the social and economic privileges accrued by these landscapes (Duncan and Duncan, 2004; Harris, 2006).

This case study underscores the ways in which planning and design professionals, processes, and policies are implicated in how dominant social and cultural ideas, values, and meanings of suburban homes and neighbourhoods are normalized and reproduced. By putting in place design standards, guidelines, and review processes that reinforce dominant norms about the proper or desirable form and function of a home and neighbourhood, McMansion regulations signal to newcomers, be they Chinese immigrants or others, that their values, ideals, and preferences are not welcome. Further, like other contemporary suburban design and planning tools, including exclusive zoning, gated communities, and common-interest developments, McMansion regulations often disparately impact poor and working-class minorities by raising the cost of homeownership and enforcing certain standards of development and design. But unlike these other mechanisms, McMansion design regulations and standards can also disparately impact minorities of means by marginalizing their values, preferences, and needs for their homes and communities. This distinction makes McMansion regulations particularly important to understanding how race and ethnic privilege work, not only through white Americans' class privilege, but also their power to shape the landscape and its social and cultural norms through institutionalized planning policies and processes.

Downloaded by [Willow Lung-Amam] at 19:14 13 April 2013

Methods

This study is based on semi-structured interviews, archival research, and observations in Fremont. Between 2010 and 2012, interviews were conducted with seven city planners, including Fremont's director of planning during the McMansion debates and two staff members involved in drafting the new large-home policies; three city council members who presided over the debates; the urban design consultant for the Mission Ranch and Glenmoor Gardens design guidelines and development standards; and 20 neighbourhood residents. Nine residents interviewed lived in Mission Ranch and were actively involved in the debates, either through neighbourhood activism or their appearance at public meetings (five were against large-home development and four supported it). Eleven residents lived in Glenmoor Gardens and Mission San Jose, the larger neighbourhood in which Mission Ranch sits, but were not personally active in the debates (five were against large-home development, four supported it, and two expressed mixed opinions about the issue).

The primary source of archival data came from public Fremont City Council and Planning Commission steno notes from the 13 meetings held about McMansion development between 2006 and 2010. Other archival sources included US Census data, media reports, residents' correspondence with city officials, Fremont Planning Department reports, community meeting notes, resident surveys, and documents shared with me by residents about their homes, neighbourhood mobilization efforts, and the planning process.

To understand the visual qualities of large homes and their neighbourhood context, the exterior landscape and architectural design features of several controversial large homes were observed, together with the interiors of three ranch-style and two large homes in Mission Ranch. Publicly available subdivision maps, real estate tax assessments, and sales data on Mission Ranch's most controversial homes were also reviewed.

Silicon Valley Immigration and McMansionization

By the mid-1990s, new large homes could be found in several existing neighbourhoods throughout Fremont. But not all residents were equally opposed to them. Indeed, in working-class neighbourhoods like Irvington, large homes went largely unchallenged by many residents, at least publicly. Instead, protest emerged from within Mission Ranch and Glenmoor Gardens, two of Fremont's oldest and traditionally most elite neighbourhoods. Completed in 1961 and 1966, respectively, Mission Ranch and Glenmoor Gardens were among the first neighbourhoods built in Fremont following its incorporation in 1956. Both included ranch-style, single-storey, two-to-four-bedroom homes (318 in Mission Ranch and 1624 in Glenmoor Gardens) averaging around 1700 square feet, on generous lots of around 7000 square feet.

Like most post-war middle- and upper-middle-income, suburban neighbourhoods, part of what defined the elite character of these neighbourhoods was their racial and ethnic homogeneity and pastoral landscapes, both of which were enforced through planning and design controls (Figure 2). These neighbourhoods were among the early beneficiaries of Fremont's exclusive zoning regime, in which large areas of farmland were set aside for large-lot single-family homes. Such exclusive zoning was made possible by incorporation, which itself was primarily a defensive act against working-class

Downloaded by [Willow Lung-Amam] at 19:14 13 April 2013

Figure 2. Mission Ranch and Glenmoor Gardens were two of the earliest subdivisions built in Fremont, whose residents led the citywide debate over large-home development. These early neighbourhood advertisements emphasize that the elite character of both neighbourhoods was defined by their highly planned pastoral landscapes, which were upset by McMansion development. Images published in Hardy et al. (2009a, 2009b).

Downloaded by [Willow Lung-Amam] at 19:14 13 April 2013

and minority encroachment from Hayward and inner-city Oakland (Self, 2003). In addition, early Mission Ranch and Glenmoor Garden residents took advantage of Federal Housing Administration and Department of Veterans Affairs financing, in which the standards for racially and ethnically exclusive housing were embedded (Jackson, 1985). Even more, both neighbourhoods initially employed strict covenants, codes, and restrictions (CC&Rs) that dictated minimum house sizes, costs, setbacks, heights, and landscaping. For nearly half a century, these restrictions protected the homogeneous racial, ethnic, and spatial character of these neighbourhoods.

But in the 1990s, the high tech boom in Silicon Valley brought unprecedented growth to Bay Area suburbs like Fremont, especially among high-income Chinese and Indian immigrants who were often employed as research scientists and engineers. Rapid Asian immigration and demographic change occurred in neighbourhoods throughout Fremont, but especially Mission Ranch. Located in the Mission San Jose High School attendance area, the neighbourhood was a prime destination for many Asian immigrants seeking to enrol their children in the neighbourhoods' premier public school district (Lung-Amam, 2013). According to the US Census, between 1990 and 2010, Fremont's population went from around 70% white to over 51% Asian. In Mission Ranch, the changes were even more pronounced. During the same period, Mission Ranch's white population decreased from just over 90% to less than 28%, while its Asian population grew from around 7% to 67% (Table 1)[3]. In 2006, the year that the controversy in Mission Ranch began, about 50% of the residents listed in a city directory for the neighbourhood had Chinese last names.

Alongside new Asian immigration came feverish development and dramatic changes in housing sizes and styles. Many new large-home subdivisions were built throughout Fremont, especially in Mission San Jose. But housing supply did not meet demand. Competition was stiff and home prices soared throughout the dot-com era (1995–2000) and beyond. Existing neighbourhoods, especially those in desirable areas with relatively small and affordable homes on large lots, like Mission Ranch and Glenmoor Gardens, offered prospective homebuyers the opportunity to expand or rebuild a small house, often for less than the cost of

Table 1. Comparison of demographics for Mission Ranch and Glenmoor Gardens from 1960 to 2010.

		1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010
Metro[a]	White[b]	89.8%	86.4%	76.1%	68.9%	58.1%	52.0%
	Asian	3.2%	4.8%	8.9%	15.3%	19.5%	23.9%
	Hispanic		8.2%	12.2%	14.9%	19.4%	23.5%
	Black	6.7%	7.9%	9.0%	8.9%	7.5%	3.1%
	Other	0.4%	0.9%	6.0%	7.0%	14.7%	16.9%
	Foreign born[c]	10.0%	10.2%	15.1%	20.0%	27.4%	31.8%
Fremont	White	98.3%	96.8%	85.1%	70.0%	47.7%	32.8%
	Asian	1.5%	2.0%	7.3%	19.4%	37.4%	51.1%
	Hispanic	11.8%	9.9%	13.9%	12.9%	13.5%	14.8%
	Black	0.0%	0.4%	2.6%	3.8%	3.1%	3.3%
	Other	0.2%	0.8%	5.0%	6.1%	11.8%	12.8%
	Foreign born	4.9%	5.0%	10.0%	20.0%	37.0%	43.1%
Mission Ranch[d]	White				90.3%	66.6%	27.9%
	Asian				7.5%	27.9%	67.4%
	Hispanic				5.4%	4.3%	4.3%
	Black				0.8%	0.6%	0.4%
	Other				1.4%	5.0%	8.6%
	Foreign born				13.6%	12.0%	41.6%
Glenmoor Gardens	White				86.1%	69.3%	52.5%
	Asian				7.2%	17.6%	26.2%
	Hispanic				11.2%	15.1%	18.1%
	Black				2.6%	2.6%	4.0%
	Other				4.2%	10.5%	17.3%
	Foreign born				22.6%	28.9%	27.9%

Notes [a] The metro statistical area includes San Francisco–Oakland and San Jose. [b] All racial categories include Hispanic populations for all years to facilitate comparsion of data across time. The US Census did not account for Hispanic by race until 1990. [c] Foreign-born populations are US Census statistical estimates. All other data are 100% data counts. [d] Mission Ranch and Glenmoor Gardens data are based on census tract and block groups. In 2010, the census block group boundaries for the Mission Ranch neighborhood changed, making it difficult to compare 1990 with 2010 data. However, these figures are consistent with the larger Mission San Jose neighborhood. At the time of this publication, 2010 census block group data for Mission Ranch's foreign-born population had not yet been published, so census tract data was used.

Downloaded by [Willow Lung-Amam] at 19:14 13 April 2013

purchasing a new or existing home in a large-home subdivision. By 2006, two existing single-storey homes had been torn down in Mission Ranch to make way for new homes of between 4000 and 5000 square feet, and three others soon followed (Figure 3). Of these five new homes, at least four, if not all, were built and occupied by Chinese immigrants.[4]

It was not only the size of the new homes that raised the ire of many established residents but also their design. While older homes had low-pitched roofs, rustic exteriors, patios, porches, picture windows, large lawns, and lush landscaping, newer homes like the one built on Covington Street in Mission Ranch had none of these familiar features. It had palatial Italianate doors framed by an arched grand entryway, and a Mediterranean red tile roof. A high wooden fence secured the entire perimeter of the property, and its small, sparsely landscaped lawn featured a triple-tiered cascading fountain and elaborate stone path. The home was finished in pink stucco (Figure 4).

Throughout the Silicon Valley, especially in new subdivisions, such homes were quite common, and had even acquired the popular nickname of "pink

Figure 3. Mission Ranch became ground zero for Fremont's McMansion home debate. Highlighted here are two large homes built before the neighbourhood's new large-home design guidelines and development standards were passed. These homes are pictured with their single-storey ranch-style neighbours. Photos adapted from Google Maps.

Downloaded by [Willow Lung-Amam] at 19:14 13 April 2013

palaces" or "pink elephants" for their signature colour and size (Li and Park, 2006). Though considered an eyesore by many established residents, these homes were permitted under both Mission Ranch's and Glenmoor Gardens' existing zoning. But this practice of tearing down or significantly remodelling existing homes to build homes of twice or even three times the original size generated backlash from established residents and raised serious concerns among city officials and planners.

The Politics of Design Regulation

> They think, "You come here driving a Mercedes. You live in big houses, we live in small houses. You get all the sunshine, we get all the shadows."
> —Cupertino, California, resident, quoted in Stocking (1999)

Figure 4. The house on the right, on Covington Street in Mission Ranch, became a rallying point for neighbourhood opposition to large homes in existing neighbourhoods in Fremont. The captions compare the size, configurations, and tax-assessed values of this home and its neighbouring property. Note that the tax-assessed value of the ranch-style home is not a reflection of its market value. In California, Proposition 13 has significantly limited property tax increases on long-term homeowners, thereby mediating the potential effects of their displacement by McMansion development. Photo adapted from Google Maps.

In Fremont, the controversy over the building of large homes began in 2006, when the Chens approached their neighbours about plans to demolish their ranch-style home in Mission Ranch and replace it with a new, 4200-square-foot home. One of the Chens' neighbours, Amir Mehta (a pseduonym), who had emigrated from India, opposed the changes and at the refusal of the Chens to change their plans began to rouse his neighbours in opposition to their proposed development. Mehta and other residents began a letter-writing campaign against the owners and petitioned the Fremont Planning Department to intervene. When the department refused to do so, noting that the home was being constructed in accordance with citywide regulations, the neighbours petitioned the city council to change the regulations. In December 2006, members of the newly formed organization, Preserve Mission Ranch, presented a petition to the city council calling for a moratorium on the construction of all new two-storey homes in the neighbourhood.

Between 2006 and 2010, supporters and opponents of large-home development engaged in heated public debates about these homes. Both sides were constituted largely, though not exclusively, along racial and ethnic lines. By most accounts, the members of Preserve Mission Ranch and other opponents of large-home development were mostly older, white, long-term residents. Among the 30 residents who spoke out against McMansion development publicly, 23 had European last names and many reported that they had lived in Mission Ranch or Fremont for many years. Mehta, one of the co-founders of Preserve Mission Ranch, was the only Indian American resident to speak out publicly against large-home development. In contrast, supporters of large homes were largely Chinese immigrants. Of the 23 members that publicly spoke in support of large-home development, 18 had Chinese last names. Among those interviewed, all were recent immigrants.

The debates resulted in the adoption of two new policies. The first came out of the city's attempt to find an "interim solution" to the problem. The planning department suggested a citywide design review process and design guidelines for all new two-storey single-family homes, second-storey additions, and any project involving "substantial expansions"; the city council unanimously approved it in 2007. City officials then directed their attention to resolving the issues raised in Mission Ranch and Glenmoor Gardens directly. In September 2008, the council imposed a moratorium on construction permits for all new two-storey homes in these neighbourhoods. In April 2009, the city adopted neighbourhood-based design guidelines and development standards on a trial basis, and in July 2010, both the planning commission and the city council unanimously voted to make them permanent. The design guidelines provide planners with a sense of what they should consider when approving building or remodelling plans in these neighbourhoods. The development standards changed the neighbourhoods' zoning designations, maximum permissible floor-to-area ratios, setbacks, and height limits.

City officials proclaimed the new guidelines and standards a compromise and fair resolution of the debate. But in fact, they largely reflected the interests of McMansion opponents and not those of supporters. In 2010, just before the passage of the Mission Ranch and Glenmoor Gardens design guidelines and standards, supporters of large homes collected 100 signatures (85% of which were from residents with Chinese last names) opposing the new guidelines. Among the large-home proponents interviewed, none agreed with the regulations or felt they

Downloaded by [Willow Lung-Amam] at 19:14 13 April 2013

represented a fair compromise. City officials' conciliatory claims may have reinforced an illusion that the new guidelines and standards established a neutral set of policies and principles to promote good design. But in fact, Fremont's McMansion policies made many normative claims about the proper and appropriate uses, values, and meanings of suburban homes and landscape design that favoured the positions of McMansion opponents, including those regarding neighbourhood character, housing size, historic preservation, aesthetics, privacy, and outdoor space, while giving little credence to those expressed by Chinese immigrants.

Respecting and Retaining a Neighbourhood's Existing Character

The central concern of Fremont's new large-home design and planning policies is to maintain the "character" of existing neighbourhoods. The new citywide design review process was adopted explicitly to consider the design of new two-storey homes and proposed additions "in the context of the surrounding neighborhood" (City of Fremont, 2009, 1). Mission Ranch's design guidelines explain that maintaining a visual fit among properties ensures that a building's or site's character is not "irreversibly damaged or diminished" by introducing "inappropriate" materials, "unrelated" features, or removing or changing its elements (Hardy, Anderson, and Minor 2009b, 16).[5] The neighbourhood's "character defining features", the guidelines state, are *the* primary contributors to its "enhanced value and special standing" among Fremont neighbourhoods (18). Accordingly, all alterations or additions to existing properties should be "compatible" both in size and architecture with established neighbourhood design.

To achieve compatibility, the guidelines establish specific design and landscape features that planners should "encourage" and others that residents should "avoid". Designs that are encouraged reflect traditional ranch-style architecture and landscape design. Enhanced by illustrative sketches of ranch-style home elements, the guidelines specify such desirable home elements as façade and roofing materials, trim patterns, garage-door styles, and window treatments. In contrast, sketches of McMansion homes provide illustrative examples of design elements to avoid that are equally specific. These include wrought-iron fencing, "grand entries", and Victorian, Italianate, or other "ornamental" front doors that are "unrelated to prevailing materials and character-defining features of the neighborhood" (Hardy, Anderson, and Minor 2009b, 20) (Figure 5).

Downloaded by [Willow Lung-Amam] at 19:14 13 April 2013

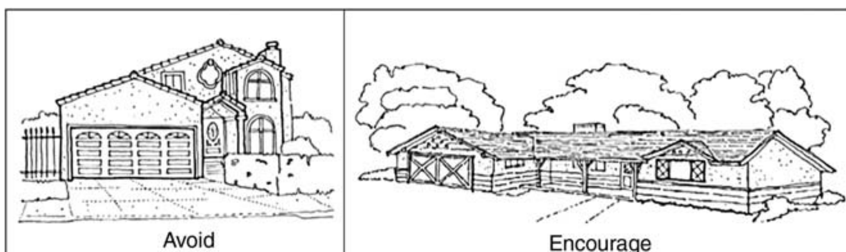


Figure 5. These sketches of these homes appear in the Mission Ranch design guidelines as illustrative examples of housing and landscape elements that residents should "avoid" based on large-home designs and for planners to "encourage" based on ranch-style home designs. Images published in Hardy et al. (2009a, 2009b).

The guidelines' emphasis on design conformity reinforced the primacy of existing development patterns and responded to complaints by McMansion opponents that cheap, modern, and "out-of-scale" building practices were producing housing styles that failed to "blend in" and "fit in" with the rest of the neighbourhood. Karen Miller (2010) complained that a neighbouring large home was "over-the-top" and "looks like it belongs in Malibu" rather than her "quaint little neighborhood" of Mission Ranch. "People that live in Mission Ranch want it to stay Mission Ranch and not let it become Mission Mish-Mosh", argued a long-time resident, Carol Parker (2008). Mission Ranch resident George Baker (2010) commented that McMansions created "an eclectic neighbourhood and that's just not *our* neighbourhood" (emphasis added).

McMansion owners and supporters, however, did not feel that conforming to the existing styles of development enhanced the value of their properties or neighbourhood. Supporters argued that modern additions and improvements were raising their property values and those of the entire neighbourhood. Edward Wang (2008) claimed that large, remodelled homes represented the "organic growth" of the Mission Ranch neighbourhood that made the entire city a more attractive place to live.

Moreover, McMansion supporters argued that the main value of their homes was in their affordability and their location in one of the nation's best school districts, not their ranch-style design. Mei-Zhen Lowe (2008) noted that she looked at over 100 houses throughout the San Francisco Bay Area before settling in Mission Ranch. "We did not move into our house because we wanted a one-storey ranch. I moved in here because I wanted to give my children the best education in the best home that I could afford", she explained. Chang and Lung-Amam (2010) have elsewhere shown the importance of schools to Taiwanese immigrant families' residential choices.

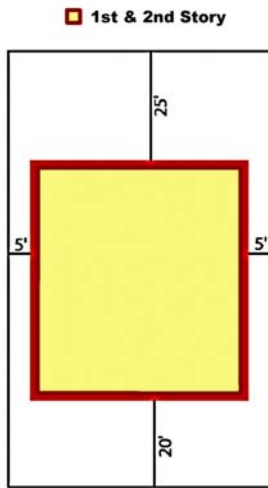
The Value of Small Single-Family Homes

Another central aim of the McMansion regulations was to control the size and bulk of new homes. In Mission Ranch and Glenmoor Gardens this was done through the adoption of special neighbourhood zoning standards R-1-8-MR (for Mission Ranch) and R-1-6-GG (for Glenmoor Gardens). These standards increased the front, rear, and side yard setbacks and reduced permissible building heights and floor-to-area ratios (FARs). In Glenmoor Gardens, the standards forbade the construction of any new two-storey homes—a restriction favoured by Glenmoor Gardens home owners' association (HOA) officials who publicly spoke about their distaste for the 1.5-storey limit contained in their existing CC&Rs. In Mission Ranch, two-storey homes were permitted, but a maximum FAR of 0.3 was set that was 40% less than the citywide standard and 10% less than for one-storey homes, to encourage residents to expand out rather than up. Taken together, these new standards reduced the maximum allowable square footage of Mission Ranch homes from around 7000 to 3100 square feet for two-storey homes and 4100 square feet for one-storey homes, and in Glenmoor Gardens from around 5600 to 3600 square feet (Figure 6).[6] Residents were permitted to add on to their homes, but only in ways that maintained their relatively modest size and enhanced the single-storey character of the neighbourhoods.

These standards explicitly responded to opponents' complaints about the height and bulk of new homes. McMansion opponents claimed that the new

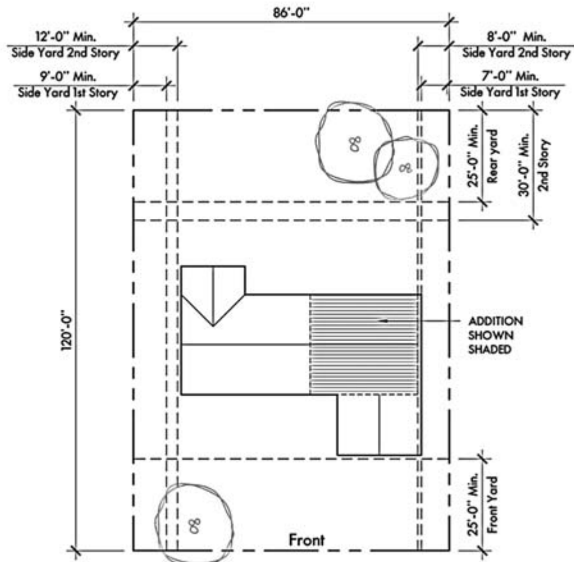
Downloaded by [Willow Lung-Amam] at 19:14 13 April 2013

2006 Development Standards
R-1-8



Maximum two-story SF: 6,960

2010 Development Standards
R-1-8-MR



Maximum two-story SF: 3,099

Figure 6. Under its new R-1-8-MR zoning designation, Mission Ranch's development standards reduced the build-out by more than 50%, for two-storey homes on the typical 8000 square foot lot. They increased setbacks and reduced height limits and floor-to-area ratios, especially on two-storey homes. Images published in Fremont Planning Department (2006) and Hardy *et al.*, (2009b).

homes were out of scale with the existing small, single-storey homes. Many said there were plenty of other neighbourhoods where one could purchase two-storey homes. "If you want a McMansion move up on the hill", wrote one Mission Ranch resident in response to a planning questionnaire about the new regulations (Anonymous, 2010). Others argued that neighbourhoods that were built as single-storey should be required to remain that way to protect the "integrity" of the neighbourhood.

The new standards, however, made few concessions to McMansion supporters, who argued that the increased size of the homes served several purposes. First, larger homes helped residents realize the value of their investment. Many felt that their home was first and foremost an investment—both in their children's future (giving them access to Mission San Jose schools) and in their own financial futures. Building their homes to the maximum allowable size and with the most modern features quite simply maximized their resale value.

McMansion supporters also argued that larger homes accommodated greater household densities. Chinese immigrant families commonly respect joint-family systems customary in Asia and invite parents and other extended relatives to live with them. According to the 2010 US Census, 9.6% of Fremont's Asian-headed households included three or more generations, compared to only 3.7% for non-Hispanic whites. These numbers are probably low, given that many of the Chinese immigrants said their parents live with them for only part of the year (for periods from as short as a few weeks to as long as 10 months out of the year) because of their parents' temporary visa status. Jin Huang (2008) lamented that if he was not

Downloaded by [Willow Lung-Amam] at 19:14 13 April 2013

able to build a second storey onto his existing home in Mission Ranch he might have to send his parents to a senior home. "We are not looking to build a fancy house", Huang told the city council, "we just need a functional house [where] we can take care of each other at home. A home carries hope and happiness. We want [the] ability and options to create a better home the way we need it to be." During interviews, many McMansion supporters underscored the importance of their ability to build two-storey homes to provide space for two master suites—one for their parents on the first floor and one for themselves on the second. In Mission Ranch, the new regulations made such configurations virtually impossible, permitting only what some residents referred to as "submarine homes", where the bulk of the house is on the first floor and only a small room on the second.

In addition, supporters argued that the size of the new homes reflected the modern middle-class standard. In 2007, Anthony Lai, an immigrant from Taiwan, presented studies to the city council showing that in the San Francisco Bay Area, new homes typically ranged from around 2200 to 3700 square feet. Homes built in the 1950s and 60s to accommodate small nuclear families, Lai (2007) argued, were simply too small to support modern professional families, who required space for home offices, gyms, guest bedrooms, and kids' playrooms.

Preserving the Historic and Unique Elements of a Neighbourhood

One of the more contested aspects of the new design guidelines and standards was their special application within the two neighbourhoods whose residents were most vocal and active in opposing large-home development. City officials defended their actions based on the need to preserve the "historic" and "unique" features of these "treasured" Fremont neighbourhoods. Comparing Fremont to Palo Alto, which had adopted similar design guidelines to protect post-war homes built by renowned architect Joseph Eichler, councilmember Anu Natarajan (2006) argued, "Although we don't have Eichlers, some of our ranch-style homes are as symbolic and need to be preserved." The design guidelines for Mission Ranch and Glenmoor Gardens placed great emphasis on defining and preserving their historic elements. To draw up the design guidelines and standards, planners hired an architectural historian to study the neighbourhoods and assist their urban design consultant in identifying their "distinctive elements".

McMansion opponents also placed great emphasis on preservation. "Mission Ranch is a unique and treasured neighbourhood, and we want to preserve its integrity, its ambiance, and the quality of our life here", reads the Preserve Mission Ranch website (http://home.comcast.net/~ missionranch/). "Leave it to Beaver Style Forever!" wrote one resident in response to a neighbourhood survey about the new guidelines and standards (Anonymous, 2010). For some, it seemed that architectural preservation was entangled with a way of life they enjoyed and which McMansions threatened. For others, architectural preservation was simply a tool to maintain the existing character of the neighbourhood.

The guidelines' focus on historic preservation, however, did not respond to the McMansion supporters, who said they did not consider older homes particularly valuable. Instead, McMansion supporters described old homes as headaches—prone to multiple problems that cost them valuable time and money. The Chens claimed that the reason they planned to tear down a substantial portion of their Mission Ranch home was that a structural engineer had said it would be

Downloaded by [Willow Lung-Amam] at 19:14 13 April 2013

just as costly to add on to their old house as to build a whole new one (Fernandez, 2006). For immigrant professionals who often work late into the evening or whose H-1B visa status requires them to maintain employment for US residency, taking time off to do home repairs was considered very costly.

The guidelines also failed to respond to McMansion supporters' desires for modern, new homes. "One thing you need to understand about the Chinese is we prefer to live in new homes", explained one Fremont resident (DelVecchio and Pimentel, 2001). Every Asian family interviewed agreed. Both Chinese and Indian immigrants commonly described new homes as a practical means of creating wealth and stability in a new place. Many claimed that new homes gained in value quicker than old homes, required less maintenance, and were better suited to (or could be customized to suit) their modern lifestyles and multigenerational households. McMansion supporters tended to see the design guidelines as attempting to freeze the neighbourhoods in time and refusing to embrace the current times and modern design values.

Downloaded by [Willow Lung-Amam] at 19:14 13 April 2013

Aesthetic Critiques of McMansion Design

Fremont's new regulations also placed great emphasis on housing and landscape aesthetics. The new citywide design guidelines stress aesthetics in various elements, including massing, articulation, and materials. The guidelines, for instance, warn against square or "blocky" homes with minimal architectural detail and the "relentless, dull, and overwhelming appearance" created by the use of a single material (City of Fremont, 2007, 4). The Mission Ranch and Glenmoor Gardens design guidelines suggest that aesthetic quality should be measured by how well a property fits with its existing surroundings. For instance, the guidelines recommend traditional ranch-style home practices like painting front doors in signature colours, while cautioning against properties that attract "undue attention" and elements found in new homes like copper gutters and simulated-stone roofing that is "coarse, conspicuous, and lacks subtlety" (Hardy, Anderson, and Minor 2009b, 22).

These aesthetic guidelines respond to McMansion opponents' concerns that large homes were in poor taste, "tacky", and "outlandish". And indeed, the planning commission's report urging the city council to adopt the neighbourhood guidelines argued that regulation was necessary to address the negative impacts of large homes on opponents' "aesthetic sensibilities" (Fremont Planning Department, 2010).

Notably absent from the report is a concern for the aesthetic sensibilities of McMansion supporters, who said that they preferred the look and function of modern-style housing. "We strongly welcome more new homes to be built", wrote supporters in a group letter to the city council, "so that we can live in modern and more beautiful communities" (De Benedetti, 2007). In China and Taiwan, such modern (and ironically, European-inspired) housing styles are commonly associated with the rising middle and upper classes and are well regarded as attractive and desirable (Chang, 2006; Zhang, 2010).

A Man's Home Is His Castle

Another social and cultural norm embedded in the new regulations concerns the issue of privacy. According to the new citywide guidelines, "back yards are

typically private and more personalized. These should be designed for privacy from neighbors" (City of Fremont, 2007, 4). They suggest plantings in front of windows and, in Mission Ranch and Glenmoor Gardens, locating windows "to minimize visual intrusion into adjacent properties" (Hardy, Anderson, and Minor 2009b, 19). Visual distance was further established by increasing the required setbacks to adjacent properties from 5 to 9 feet on the first floor and from 5 to 12 feet on the second.

Privacy concerns were paramount to McMansion opponents. Many complained about McMansions' security cameras and second-storey additions providing views into their back yards. "We want to maintain the privacy afforded us by the single-storey homes that surround us. This privacy, that we value highly, is destroyed by a two-storey home or addition", reads the Preserve Mission Ranch website. Some spoke of their privacy as an inherent right of homeownership.

Among McMansion supporters, however, the issue of privacy was generally regarded as far less important than the equality of their property rights. McMansion supporters argued that, like all previous owners, they should be able to build what they wanted as long as it fell within the existing regulations. Mission Ranch resident He-Ping Zhang (2010) argued that the restrictions constituted "a fundamental violation of the constitutional rights of individual freedom". Other McMansion supporters argued that imposing strict regulations and standards on some neighbourhoods and not others placed an unfair and disproportionate burden of time and money on new residents. "Taking away the right to add additional living space with two-storey homes", wrote Anthony Lai in a letter to the city council, "simply violates the basic rights for others as part of the American dream" (De Benedetti, 2006).

Downloaded by [Willow Lung-Amam] at 19:14 13 April 2013

The Value of the Great Outdoors

A final area in which Fremont's new design guidelines and standards favoured the views expressed by McMansion opponents involves the use and value of the outdoors. The new citywide design guidelines state that, "independent of the setbacks required by each zoning district", each lot shall be provided with a "reasonable flat usable rear yard area" of no less than 15 by 20 feet (City of Fremont, 2007, 9). In addition to the increased setbacks, the design guidelines for Mission Ranch suggest that second stories be located and configured to retain existing views to and of the hills, which "add to the value and enjoyment of each property and contribute to the neighborhood's very distinctive sense of place" (Hardy, Anderson, and Minor 2009b, 21).

These guidelines reinforce claims made by McMansion opponents that outdoor space is intrinsically valued and valuable. The guidelines quite explicitly respond to opponents' complaints that McMansions cast shadows over their existing properties, impair views to the bay and hills, and reduce access to sun. More implicitly, they responded to opponents' claims that the emphasis of the original neighbourhood design on outdoor space should be respected. The Preserve Mission Ranch website contrasts the value placed on the outdoors in McMansion and ranch-style homes:

> With more space and amenities inside, and smaller yards outside, the entire "value" of newer homes is inside the home. Significant amount of value for ranch style homes is outside the home—in the large, private

backyards, and the openness and warmth of the neighborhood. And that is what goes away when you put 4000 + sf homes on relatively small (about quarter acre or less) lots.

McMansion supporters did not completely disagree. Several Mission Ranch Chinese immigrant residents said that neither they nor their children use outdoor space as intensively as their white neighbours. Rather, they desired homes with playrooms, piano rooms, and rooms for entertaining guests, which they considered more important than lawns, landscaping, or views. Many also perceived the requirement of maintaining greenery as both time and energy intensive. Anthony Lai (interview with author, Fremont, CA, 1 August 2011) said that Chinese immigrants will often let their lawns die because of the time and expense of maintaining them, and added that this practice was more "environmentally friendly" than maintaining a lawn. In a further rebuttal of ecological critiques of McMansions, Lai noted that newer homes that are well insulated, with new windows and upgraded systems, might be just as energy efficient as older homes. Though not brought up in the Fremont debates, during the "monster home" controversies in Vancouver, Chinese immigrants claimed that *feng shui* was an important reason for limiting green space and cutting trees that obstructed their *qi* (or life force according to Taoist beliefs) (Ley, 1995). Shenglin Chang (2006) found that *feng shui* was an important factor in home selection and design among Taiwanese immigrants in the Silicon Valley.

Fremont's McMansion debates provide a lens into the social and cultural politics of suburban development and regulation, especially in neighbourhoods impacted by the new global economy and immigration. While McMansion opponents claimed that respectful neighbouring included conformity to the existing form and character of development, supporters claimed a right to different priorities, uses, values, and meanings of the home. While McMansion opponents spoke about the value and beauty of their small homes designed for single-family nuclear households, supporters argued for the value of large homes to accommodate multigenerational households and provide access to Mission San Jose's esteemed schools. While McMansion opponents spoke of the importance of their historically rooted design practices, supporters claimed the need and desire for new and modern housing and its aesthetic. And in contrast to many McMansion opponents' ideal of a community in which the values of privacy and green space were commonly held, supporters claimed that the neighbourhood should respect their private property rights and different uses and meanings of open space (Table 2).

Downloaded by [Willow Lung-Amam] at 19:14 13 April 2013

Planning Processes and Marginalized Minority Voices

Why were established residents able to gain such a strong foothold in this debate? Leonie Sandercock (2003) argues that planning processes and professionals often work to marginalize minority voices and their participation. Following Sandercock, it can be argued that city officials, planning professionals, and the public process gave established residents the upper hand in the debate for three principal reasons. First, in a city which, by 2010, was largely Asian American, both the city council and planning commission were still majority white, established residents. Second, even non-white planners and policy makers tended to express professional planning and design values that supported established residents'

Table 2. The arguments of McMansion opponents and supporters were often expressed in the public debates as different social and cultural ideas about the value and use of homes and neighbourhoods.

	McMansion opponents	McMansion supporters
Character	Respect and retain a neighbourhood's existing character	Neighbourhoods as dynamic and providing access to good schools
Size	Value of small, single-family homes	Homes as investments and for multi-generational households
Preservation	Preserve the historic and unique elements of neighborhoods	New homes as means to wealth and stability
Aethestics	New homes as ugly and tasteless	New homes as modern and beautiful
Privacy	A right to privacy	Property rights as paramount
Open space	Views, lawns, and sun as valued and valuable	Homes for busy, modern families

Downloaded by [Willow Lung-Amam] at 19:14 13 April 2013

view that "good design" was grounded in spatially homogeneous, relatively static and stable neighbourhoods. And finally, the public process favoured organized and vocal residents who understood the importance of the established system and easily worked within it.

Some city officials might have been inclined to agree with the views of established residents because they too were long-time Fremont residents. In an Asian-majority city, three of the five members of the 2010 city council, which fought hard for regulations, were white and had lived in the area for at least 35 years. One had grown up in Glenmoor Gardens. All these members showed their support of the McMansion opponents early on. In 2006, mayor and city councilman Bob Wasserman (2006), a long-time Fremont resident, explained that his support for new regulations rested on the principle that "people should be allowed to do things that fit the neighbourhood, and they shouldn't be allowed to do things that distort the neighbourhood." Similar views pervaded the comments of many of those on the planning commission, of which four out of seven members were long-term white residents.

Another important factor in both the city council's and the planners' support of established residents' positions was their adherence to professional planning and design norms, especially those regarding preservation and maintaining a neighbourhood's existing character. The planning director at the time, Jeff Schwob (2009), argued that the basic principle underlying new design guidelines and standards ought to be "to make sure that everything we build fits in the neighbourhood". Such ideas about what characterized good and appropriate design held true even for many non-white city council members and planning commissioners. Anu Natarajan, who was born in India and was the only foreign-born resident on the council, was trained as an urban designer and planner. In 2006, Natarajan stated that her support for the regulations rested on the premise, "If it does not fit, do not permit"—a common urban planning maxim. Suzanne Chan (interview with author, Fremont, CA, 1 July 2011) an American-born Chinese councilmember, said that the council's main concerns when adopting the guidelines and standards were to ensure that the new homes "honour the character of the neighbourhood" and "maintain the feel of the ranch style", but not infringe on residents' right to adapt their properties. The former goal appeared to receive more emphasis in the new guidelines and among planners than the latter.

In a direct response to a question about the extent to which the planning commission should address the issue of multi-generational families, commissioner Rakesh Sharma (2010), one of two Indian Americans on the commission, sharply dismissed the claim, stating that "The issue was whether someone could go into the established neighbourhoods and destroy their character because of their economic decision."

Another critical factor in the outcome of the debates was the planning process. Anti-McMansioners led a highly organized and sophisticated campaign against the building of large homes. In Mission Ranch, opponents established a website to distribute information about McMansions and upcoming city council and planning meetings and held regular neighbourhood informational sessions. Preserve Mission Ranch members monitored applications for new building permits in the neighbourhood, researched the history of the neighbourhood and policies adopted in other areas, and shared their findings with city officials. They consistently showed up in large numbers at all the city council meetings held between 2006 and 2010, and sponsored several letter-writing campaigns to city officials. And they prepared their members to speak in the two minutes allotted for individual public comments at city council and planning commission meetings and spoke eloquently about their position. Their sustained efforts were aided by the fact that several of the regular public meeting attendees were retired, and most were American-born, long-term residents who understood the public process. McMansion supporters argued that opponents also had more political clout because established, older residents in Fremont, as elsewhere, are the most likely residents to attend public meetings and vote.

McMansion supporters, however, lacked similar levels of organization and sophistication in the mobilization efforts as opponents. For the first two years of the debate, Anthony Lai was among the only residents who spoke out against the city's plans at public meetings. It was not until 2008, when city officials began to push for a single-storey zoning overlay, that Lai was able to organize other McMansion supporters to voice their opinions at public meetings. But McMansion supporters' efforts were short-lived. By 2010, when the final guidelines were passed, Lai had left his lead-organizing role and the movement struggled to maintain its momentum. Not a single McMansion supporter was present at the final city council meeting to adopt the Mission Ranch and Glenmoor Gardens guidelines and standards, even though a petition signed by 100 residents declaring their opposition was submitted to the city council for their consideration.

Lai and others said that they faced several barriers to organizing. First, the majority of residents opposing the regulations were Chinese immigrants who were unfamiliar with the public process and often afraid to speak publicly on the issue. One Mission Ranch supporter told me that she supported the cause financially, but never spoke at a public hearing because she was too shy. For others, language was a significant barrier. While Lai said that he tried to prepare residents to speak at the public hearings, the transcripts showed that McMansion supporters were far less articulate and organized in their comments than their opponents. A final barrier was time. Many of the pro-McMansion residents were professionals in Silicon Valley and had two-parent working households. According to organizers, many simply did not have the time to participate in the campaign in any sustained way.

Fremont's large home policies tended to reinforce the dominant social and cultural norms regarding the design of homes and neighbourhoods expressed by

Downloaded by [Willow Lung-Amam] at 19:14 13 April 2013

established residents because of their active mobilization efforts, planners' and city officials' personal and professional norms, and the public processes by which design and development decisions are made. While city planners and council members tended to be sympathetic and active listeners to the concerns of established residents, Chinese immigrants struggled to find a place and voice in the process.

Design as Social and Cultural Politics

Fremont's McMansion debates offer many lessons for design and planning policy, scholarship, and practice in today's increasingly diverse surburbs, especially those undergoing rapid demographic changes. First, McMansions are not solely about bigness and bling. They express and embody important place identities; they are spaces through which ideals about homes and communities are materially constructed and imagined. With so much focus on critique and regulation, scholars often overlook the value and meaning that residents invest in these homes. In contrast, scholarship focused on the multiple uses and users of these homes can offer new lenses into and approaches to the "problem" of McMansions that can better meet the needs of new residents as well as old.

Moreover, this case exemplifies that nationality, culture, and ethnicity matter to the ways in which residents develop a sense of meaning and value in their homes and communities. As many of Fremont's Chinese immigrants expressed, both publicly and in personal interviews, their visions of what it means to be "at home" and part of a "community" are fundamentally different from that of many established, white residents. Policies are needed for McMansions as well as other types of suburban development that give greater weight to spatial uses, values, and meanings beyond those of white, middle-class and elite residents and of the planners and designers themselves. For design policy to pay more attention to such social and cultural differences, a wealth of new research is needed on the spatial preferences, meanings, and values of underrepresented groups, especially regarding concepts such as home, community, and neighbourhood.

Further, scholarship needs to focus on how planning and design practices and policies impact not only poor and working-class minorities but also those of means. In particular, this study has underscored the need to counter the presumed neutrality of design guidelines and standards that often elide issues of social and cultural difference while simultaneously asserting what ought to be considered "appropriate" design and development. In an era of increasing globalization and immigration, when the number of economically and spatially mobile minorities who are able to cross the historically hardened boundaries of middle- and upper-class suburban neighbourhoods has increased, it is not only class exclusion but also white cultural hegemony that keeps minorities on the margins of suburban life.

Developing design and planning policies that are more sensitive and responsive to questions of difference and diversity also requires scholars and practitioners to consistently question the means by and purposes for which policies are adopted. For many established residents, McMansion and other restrictive design and development policies can serve as tools to protect their neighbourhoods from unwanted social and spatial changes, including those brought about by a globalizing economy and residents with new sources of capital and tastes for large, modern, and highly stylized housing. As Smith and Logan (2006) argue, planning in the form of managed growth is often brought in as the

Downloaded by [Willow Lung-Amam] at 19:14 13 April 2013

solution to "a threat of change that is undermining the long-time residents' sense of place and spatial identity" (58). In suburban landscapes historically created by practices of racial and ethnic exclusion, such measures often help to sustain and naturalize the privileges of older, established, and most often white residents—even when, as was the case in Fremont, minorities are now in the majority and among the cities' most prosperous residents. Instead of simply giving into established residents' efforts to curb development and neighbourhood change, policy-makers need careful and critical metrics to assess the impacts of regulations on vulnerable groups, including indicators regarding the suitability of homes to residents' needs and their sense of place and belonging.

By giving attention to the city officials, planning professionals, and public process behind the regulations, this research has shown that it is not necessarily racist intent but rather embedded institutional practices that often perpetuate minorities' unequal ability to shape the meaning, value, and form of the built environment. The barriers that Chinese immigrants faced to their full and equal participation in the planning process underscore the need for more open and flexible processes to foster democratic decision-making, debate, and dialogue. In well-established literatures on community participation, advocacy planning, and diversity in planning and design, scholars like Sandercock (2003) have argued that to address the gulf in participation among underrepresented groups requires a wider range of participatory methods and planning venues, greater diversity within planning profession and decision-making bodies, and on-the-ground engagement with hard-to-reach communities to assist them in clearly voicing their concerns. What is needed is not necessarily new research, but city officials' and planners' commitment of time and resources to creating more democratic, equitable, and tangible outcomes.

Beyond the planning process, planners and designers need to cast a critical eye on their professional norms and values about "good" suburban neighbourhood planning and design. These norms often rely on precedent and established community practices that tend to place a premium on spatially homogeneous and socially stable neighbourhoods. However, in suburban neighbourhoods historically protected from change by various mechanisms of exclusion, planning and design controls can also often hinder social integration and diversity. Efforts to promote diversity and equity must honour residents' different place values and support their desires for different housing styles and choices. This need not imply *carte blanche* acceptance of McMansion development practices, by Chinese immigrants or others. However, it does suggest that need for greater efforts on the part of planners, designers, and policy-makers to challenge the assumptions that residents of all backgrounds should fit in socially or spatially. Instead of obliging new residents to adopt the dominant design and practices, norms, and values of established suburban development, more equitable planning and design might instead search out better ways to allow diverse spatial values, meanings, and forms to coexist.

Notes

1. This paper refers to these properties as teardowns, large homes, or McMansions. The term McMansion can refer to large homes built in subdivisions of similarly scaled properties or in existing neighbourhoods (Nasar and Stamps, 2009). The latter is the definition used in this paper.
2. For a review of the literature on the Vancouver debates, see Rose (2001).

Downloaded by [Willow Lung-Amam] at 19:14 13 April 2013

3. In 2010, the census block group boundaries for the Mission Ranch neighbourhood changed, making it difficult to compare 1990 and 2010 data. However, these figures are consistent with the larger Mission San Jose area.
4. Based on a survey of the names of property owners and residents in Mission Ranch, in 2008 four out of the five residents of the properties had Chinese last names. In one case, the property owner did not have a Chinese last name, but was not listed as the occupant of the home. Several residents reported that this home was occupied by an Asian family.
5. In this paper, though most references are based on the Mission Ranch guidelines and standards, similar, if not exactly the same, wording is also contained in the Glenmoor Gardens guidelines and standards.
6. In 2007, Fremont adopted a maximum citywide FAR of 0.7 for all residential properties. These numbers compare the maximum build-out in 2006, the year that the controversy over these properties began in Fremont and before citywide FARs were imposed, and 2010, the year that new development standards were passed.

References

Anonymous. 2010. *Mission Ranch questionnaire*, 17 May. Fremont, CA: Fremont Planning Department.

Baker, George [pseudo]. 2010., Testimony given at Fremont Planning Commission meeting, Fremont, CA, 10 June.

Bruegmann, Robert. 2005. *Sprawl: A Compact History*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Chang, Shenglin. 2006. *The Global Silicon Valley Home: Lives and Landscapes within Taiwanese American Trans-Pacific Culture*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Chang, Shenglin E., and Willow Lung Amam. 2010. "Born Glocal: Youth Identity and Suburban Spaces in the U.S. and Taiwan." *Amerasia Journal* 36 (3): 29–52.

Chen, Paul [pseudo]. 2008. Testimony given at Fremont City Council meeting, Fremont, CA, 23 September.

City of Fremont. 2007. An Overview of City of Fremont Planning Policies and Regulations Relating to Construction of New Two-Story Homes and Second-Story Additions to Existing Homes. Planning Division, 17 March.

City of Fremont. 2009. Building Permit with Site Plan and Architectural Review: Second Story Preliminary Review. Community Development Department, Planning Division, September.

Danielsen, Karen A., Robert E. Lang, and William Fulton. 1999. "Retracting Suburbia: Smart Growth and the Future of Housing." *Housing Policy Debate* 10 (3): 513–540.

De Benedetti, Chris. 2006. "Fremont Housing Report: Size Matters.", Inside Bay Area, *Argus*, 21 December.

De Benedetti, Chris. 2007. "Megahome Supporters Fight Back: Fremont Residents Say that Houses Will Increase Jobs, but Opponents Aren't Sold on Idea.", Inside Bay Area, *Argus*, 12 February.

DelVecchio, Rick, and Benjamin Pimentel. 2001. "Asians Bring Change to Fremont, Milpitas: Fremont, Milpitas Ride Immigration Wave—Asian Influx, Technology Create Big Changes in East Bay Cities.", *San Francisco Chronicle*, 26 March: A1.

Devlin, Ann S. 2010. *What Americans Build and Why: Psychological Perspectives*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Duncan, James S., and Nancy Duncan. 2004. *Landscapes of Privilege: The Politics of the Aesthetic in an American Suburb*. New York: Routledge.

Fernandez, Lisa 2006. "Growing Pains in Fremont: Homeowners Argue over Building Rules—or Lack of Them." *San Jose Mercury News*, 18 December: B1.

Fine, Adrian S., and Jim Lindberg. 2002. *Protecting America's Historic Neighborhoods: Taming the Teardown Trend*. Washington, DC: National Trust for Historic Preservation.

Fremont Planning Department. 2006. *Consideration of Large Home Policies*, Prepared for the City Council Work Session, December 19.

Fremont Planning Department. 2010. *Planning Commission Staff Report*, Prepared for the Fremont Planning Commission, 10 June.

Hardy, Thomas R., Robert B. Anderson, and Woodruff Minor. 2009a. *Design Guidelines and Standards for Alteration and Construction of Single-Family Homes in Glenmoor Gardens*, Prepared for the Planning Division Community Development Department, City of Fremont, 12 May.

Hardy, Thomas R., Robert B. Anderson, and Woodruff Minor. 2009b. *Design Guidelines and Standards for Alteration and Construction of Single-Family Homes in Mission Ranch*, Prepared for the Planning Division Community Development Department, City of Fremont, 12 May.

Harris, Diane. 2006. "Race, Class and Privacy in the Ordinary Postwar House, 1945–60." In *Landscape and Race in the United States*, edited by Richard Schein, 127–156. New York: Routledge.

Downloaded by [Willow Lung-Amam] at 19:14 13 April 2013

Hinshaw, Mark L. 2002. "Monster houses? No." *Planning* 68: 25–27.
Huang, Jin [pseudo]. 2008. Testimony given at Fremont City Council meeting, Fremont, CA, 23 September.
Jackson, Kenneth. 1985. *The Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States*. London: Oxford University Press.
Kendig, Lane. 2004. *Too Big, Boring, or Ugly: Planning and Design Tools to Combat Monotony, the Too-Big House, and Teardowns*. Washington, DC: American Planning Association.
Knack, Ruth E. 1999. "Cutting Monster Houses Down to Size." *Planning* 65 (10): 4–10.
Knox, Paul L. 2008. *Metroburbia, USA*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
Lai, Anthony [pseudo]. 2007. Testimony given at Fremont City Council meeting, Fremont, CA, 27 February.
Lang, Robert, and Karen Danielsen. 2002. "Monster houses? Yes! No!" *Planning* 68 (5): 24–27.
Lefebvre, Henri. 1991. *The Production of Space*, translated by D. Nicholson-Smith. Oxford: Blackwell.
Ley, David. 1995. "Between Europe and Asia: The Case of the Missing Sequoias." *Ecumene* 2: 185–210.
Li, Wei, and Edward J. Park. 2006. "Asian American is Silicon Valley: High-Technology Industry Development and Community Transformation." In *From Urban Enclave to Ethnic Suburb: New Asian Communities in Pacific Rim Countries*, edited by Wei Li, 119–133. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
Lowe, Mei-Zhen [pseudo]. 2008. Testimony given at Fremont City Council meeting, Fremont, CA, 24 June.
Lung-Amam, Willow. 2013. "'Dumb White Kids' and 'Asian Nerds': Race and Ethnic Relations in Silicon Valley Suburban Schools." In *Transcultural Cities: Border-crossing and Placemaking*, edited by Jeffrey Hou, 177–190. London: Routledge.
McMillen, Daniel P. 2006. "Teardowns: Costs, Benefits, and Public Policy." *Land Lines* 18 (3): 1–5.
Miller, Karen [pseudo]. 2010. Email correspondence with Fremont City Council, presented at the Fremont City Council Meeting, 10 June.
Mitchell, Katharyne. 1997. "Conflicting Geographies of Democracy and the Public Sphere in Vancouver, BC." *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 22 (2): 162–179.
Nasar, Jack L., Jennifer S. Evans-Cowley, and Vincente Mantero. 2007. "McMansions: The Extent and Regulation of Super-Sized Houses." *Journal of Urban Design* 12 (3): 339–358.
Nasar, Jack L., and Arthur E. Stamps III. 2009. "Infill McMansions: Style and the Psychophysics of Size." *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 29 (1): 110–123.
Natarajan, Anu 2006. Testimony given at Fremont City Council meeting, Fremont, CA, 19 December.
National Trust for Historic Preservation. 2008. http://www.preservationnation.org/information-center/sustainable-communities/teardowns/additional-resources/teardowns_states_and_communities.pdf "Teardowns by State and Community."
Nicolaides, Becky M., and Andrew Wiese, eds. 2006. *The Suburb Reader*. New York: Routledge.
Parker, Carol [pseudo]. 2008. Testimony given at Fremont City Council meeting, 23 September.
Rose, John 2001. "Contexts of Interpretation: Assessing Immigrant Reception in Richmond, Canada." *The Canadian Geographer* 45 (4): 474–493.
Sandercock, Leonie. 2003. *Cosmopolis II: Mongrel Cities in the 21st Century*. London: Continuum.
Schwob, Jeff 2009. Testimony given at Fremont City Council meeting, Fremont, CA, 28 April.
Self, Robert O. 2003. *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
Sharma, Rakesh. 2010. Testimony given at Fremont Planning Commission Meeting, 10 June.
Smith, Christopher J., and John R. Logan. 2006. "Flushing 2000: Geographic Explorations in Asian New York." In *From Urban Enclave to Ethnic Suburb: New Asian Communities in Pacific Rim Countries*, edited by Wei Li, 41–73. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
Stocking, Ben 1999. "Cupertino Adjusts to Influence of Immigrants: Reconciliation of Old, New Still Emotional Debate." *San Jose Mercury News*, 15 April: A1.
Szold, Terry S. 2005. "Mansionization and its Discontents: Planners and the Challenge of Regulating Monster Homes." *Journal of the American Planning Association* 71 (2): 189–202.
Wang, Edward [pseudo]. 2008. Testimony at Fremont City Council meeting, Fremont, CA, 23, September.
Wasserman, Bob 2006. Testimony given at Fremont City Council Meeting, Fremont, CA, 19 December.
Weinberg, Paul J. 2001. "Monster Homes: How Big a House Is Too Much?" *Zoning and Planning Law Report* 24 (17): 17–21.
Zhang, He-Ping [pseudo]. 2010. Email correspondence with Fremont City Council, Fremont, CA, 22 June. Submitted as information correspondence to City Council meeting, 27 July.
Zhang, Li. 2010. *In Search of Paradise: Middle Class Living in a Chinese Metropolis*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Downloaded by [Willow Lung-Amam] at 19:14 13 April 2013