Gated Communities in America: Walling Out the World?

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Abstract

Gated communities—enclaves of homes surrounded by walls, often with security guards—are becoming increasingly popular in America. This article introduces and analyzes findings of a Fannie Mae Foundation–sponsored panel on gated communities held at the 1997 Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning annual conference. A key finding is that many people choose to reside in gated communities because they believe that such places reduce risk, ranging from the mundane (e.g., unwanted social exchanges) to the high stakes (e.g., declining home values).

In many ways, gated communities deliver what they promise, by providing an effective defense against daily intrusions. However, some of their benefits entail a high social cost. A sense of community within gated communities comes at the expense of a larger identity with the region outside. Gated communities manifest and reinforce an inward-focused community culture, where the tension between the individual and society tilt toward self-interest.

Keywords: Community; Suburban; Land use/zoning

Introduction

> Before I built a wall I'd ask to know
> What I was walling in or walling out,
> And to whom I was like to give offense.
>
> (Frost [1930] as quoted in Poirier and Richardson 1995, 39–40).

Robert Frost's famous lines from the poem "Mending Wall," which in 1930s New England signaled a tension between the individual and society, seems an almost quaint concern given the modern practice of city building, where walls are meant to give offense. The individual in Frost's poem has given way to whole groups of individuals who collectively wall themselves off from society in private enclaves. In the current development parlance,

such places—referred to as "gated communities"—have a precise sense of whom, or more accurately what, they seek to wall out: uncertainty.

Why are Americans increasingly resorting to walls and gates as a solution to perceived social problems? Perhaps they are reacting to a general societal angst or a direct concern for their personal safety. Whatever the cause, gated communities are certainly gaining in popularity. Consider that nearly 40 percent of new homes in California are behind walls (Blakely and Snyder 1997).[1]

Gated communities represent a major reordering in the physical, social, legal, and civic arrangements by which Americans live (Stark 1998). The conversion of public to private space, inherent in gated community development, drives the process. Because gated communities are private, community associations within them can exercise tight control over residential life.[2] Community associations regulate much more than a development's physical infrastructure, like the color of homes. They also have the right to intervene in such personal affairs as the number of guests one invites to a party, or even how much one's dog weighs.

To explore key issues concerning gated communities, the Fannie Mae Foundation sponsored a panel discussion at the 1997 Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning conference held in Fort Lauderdale, FL. The session gathered leading experts on the topic, including Edward Blakely (University of Southern California) and Mary Gail Snyder (University of California, Berkeley), authors of the recently published *Fortress America: Gated Communities in the United States*. Gary Pivo (University of Washington) and David Prosperi (Florida Atlantic University) also participated. The back-and-forth between the panelists and the audience was lively and informative. We were sufficiently impressed with the quality of thinking generated by the panel that we provide an edited transcript of the discussion, which follows. First, however, we offer some background and thoughts as a context for this discussion.

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[1] Nearly 19,000 gated communities currently exist in the United States, containing more than 3 million households and nearly 8.5 million residents (Blakely and Snyder 1997).

[2] Community associations are by no means limited to gated communities. Rather, gated communities form a subset of community association developments. Blakely and Snyder (1997) estimate that gated communities constitute only a fifth of the 190,000 community associations.

In part, gated communities represent a reaction to the postwar evolution of suburbia (Danielsen and Lang 1995). Suburbs seem much less "suburban" today than when they were largely bedroom communities. The suburbs now have it all: business, retail, entertainment, sports arenas, and, increasingly, low-income housing and minority populations.[3] Suburbs have morphed into a new urban form that features all the elements of a traditional city, but in a low-density cityscape (Fishman 1990; Sharpe and Wallock 1994). Gated communities also typify sunbelt urban growth: the very places where America's new urban form first emerged. Gated communities offer their residents the perception of a safe haven in the new, often chaotic metropolis.

Sunbelt suburbs that contain many gated communities are booming. For example, Henderson, NV—home to one of the nation's largest gated communities, Green Valley—experienced the largest growth rate (88.4 percent) of any big city in the country between 1990 and 1996 (El Nasser and Overburg 1997).[4] The next four big cities with the highest growth rates are Chandler, AZ; Pembroke Pines, FL; Palmdale, CA; and Plano, TX.[5] All of these "suburbs" feature a substantial number of gated communities.[6]

Literature review

For several years, journalists have provided fascinating accounts of life inside gated communities. Most of these took a critical perspective on the issue. A good early example of such work is David Guterson's piece in *Harper's Magazine*, November 1992, titled "No Place like Home: On the Manicured Streets of a Master-Planned Community."[7] Guterson's tale of Henderson's

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[3] Recognizing the last points, politicians such as Myron Orfield (1997) seek to build coalitions between low-income suburbs and the inner city.

[4] The census's informal definition of a "big" city is one with a population of 100,000.

[5] Chandler's growth rate for 1990 to 1996 is 54 percent, Pembroke Pines's is 53.5 percent, Palmdale's is 51.6 percent, and Plano's is 50.4 percent (El Nasser and Overburg 1997).

[6] Three of these suburbs are mentioned in Blakely and Snyder's book.

[7] Journalist Joel Garreau includes a section on gated communities in his book *Edge City: Life on the New Frontier* (1991). See pages 183 to 208, which examine such gated communities as Sun City, AZ, a retirement community outside Phoenix. See also Guterson's other piece on gated communities, "Home, Safe Home" (1993).

Green Valley considers what motivates middle-class Americans to "incarcerate" themselves in their new walled city.

He finds that in Green Valley walls dominate the landscape and are "the first thing visitors notice" (Guterson 1992, 59). The walls provide residents with much more than physical protection: They offer psychological protection as well. Their message is subliminal and at the same time explicit. Controlled access is as much a metaphor as a reality. Controlled access is also a two-way affair, because "both coming and going are made difficult" (Guterson 1992, 59). The social purpose of these walls are not what Robert Frost had in mind in another famous line from "Mending Wall," "Good fences make good neighbors." In gated communities, the walls are there to sharply delineate status and provide security, rather than signify a collective understanding among equals.

What erects these walls, as emerges from Guterson's interviews, is a free-floating anxiety about the world beyond them. According to one couple with children who moved to Green Valley from San Diego, "there were these … forces, if you know what we mean. There were too many things we could not control" (Guterson 1992, 59). These unspecified forces were sufficiently distressing to compel this family to trade their life in California for the security of Nevada's desert.

Guterson sees Green Valley as corporatizing and regimenting social life—what has been disparagingly referred to by some as suburbia with a logo. Its residents have purchased a tightly defined lifestyle that leaves very little room for individual interpretation. He argues, "If the traditional American town of the past existed to produce a commodity—shoes, bath towels, sheet metal, whatever—then in Green Valley and other master-planned towns of today the community is a commodity" (Guterson 1992, 60). Gated community developers work hard to create a "brand name," using the same marketing principles that any other company uses to sell a product.

Some early academic works on gated communities also offered harsh critiques, depicting them as symbols of America's lost sense of community life. A good example of this writing is Evan McKenzie's (1994) *Privatopia: Homeowner Associations and the Rise of Residential Private Government*. McKenzie, a political scientist, looked at the broader issue of private government but highlighted gated communities as exemplars of the trend toward "privatopia."

Privatopias, according to McKenzie, are private, quasi-governmental corporations that are historically rooted in Ebenezer Howard's physical plan for Garden Cities (Howard [1898] 1965). However, "in place of Howard's utopia is privatopia, in which the dominant ideology is privatism; where contract law is the supreme authority; where property rights and property values are the focus of community life; and where homogeneity, exclusiveness and even exclusion are the foundation of social organization" (McKenzie 1994, 176).

McKenzie finds it disturbing that there is no real legal oversight for these organizations, save modest regulation passed in a few states. Gated communities barely raise an eyebrow, partly because local governments benefit from an enhanced tax base without providing much additional service. McKenzie concludes that restrictions within gated communities exist only for maintaining property values, not for nurturing civic values.

The current politics of increasing privatism and local autonomy plays well in gated communities. Fittingly, McKenzie finds that the first organized call to arms emerging from gated-community homeowners is a demand for tax relief: They want their association fees to be as fully deductible as municipal property taxes. Gated-community residents often see themselves as victims, claiming to be doubly taxed, since their maintenance fees often cover many of the same basic services, such as trash collection, that local taxes do.

Not all academic treatments are critical of the community associations found in gated communities. Some view them as micro-governments that provide a more direct service to their residents than most municipal governments. These works typically link community associations to traditional governments in both form and function. Stephen Barton and Carol Silverman (1994), editors of *Common Interest Communities: Private Governments and the Public Interest*, offer such a perspective. They find that, "with the power to provide collective services, legislate, enforce the rules, and tax its involuntary members, the common interest homeowner's association is a private organization that looks very much like a local government" (p. xi).

The literature on gated communities is now moving toward more systematic and objective research. Edward Blakely and Mary Gail Snyder's 1997 book *Fortress America* exemplifies this trend and provides the basis for the panel discussion that follows.[8]

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[8] For a more detailed review of their work see Lears (1997).

Blakely and Snyder combine survey and field work to provide a complete picture of life in gated communities. They also offer a typology that places gated communities into three categories: lifestyle communities (centered on recreation), prestige communities (focused on enhancing and maintaining real estate values), and security zones (which include urban neighborhoods that have been refitted for greater security). The typology illustrates how diverse the gated-community movement has become. Far from their elite roots, gated communities now include residents across the income and lifestyle spectrum, although minorities remain dramatically underrepresented.

The literature on gated communities should grow as more Americans "gate" or "fort" up. These developments are clearly here to stay and represent suburbia's future along with other key postwar innovations, such as the enclosed shopping mall and the office park. Gated communities should interest not only urban planners and political scientists, but any student of American culture. Much scholarly work remains to be done on the topic. For example, there has yet to be a deep ethnographic study of a gated community of the type Herbert Gans (1967) undertook in his classic work on Levittown.

Discussion synopsis

Our panelists pick up on many themes raised by the gated-community literature and add many more. Blakely and Snyder expand on the symbolic nature of gated communities by arguing that they offer residents only the perception of safety. They note that gated-community residents may become lulled into complacency and leave themselves open to property crime by, for instance, leaving a garage door open. Blakely and Snyder find that most residents quickly come to understand that the wall and gates provide little real security from crime. Yet the walls and gates effectively ward off many daily intrusions, such as unexpected visitors at the front door. It is this security from nuisance that gated-community residents apparently cherish most. The proliferation of rules and controlled access create an environment with few of the surprises or random encounters characteristic of traditional urban life.

On a related theme, Blakely and Snyder find that those living in gated communities seem reluctant to confront one another on relatively trivial matters. For example, one woman would rather have a security guard ask children to stop playing basketball than confront them directly. This aversion to conflict may

represent a larger suburban behavioral pattern. In an ethnography of a New Jersey suburb, Mary Pat Baumgartner found that third parties were used to resolve virtually every dispute between neighbors (Baumgartner 1988). In gated communities, such third-party interventions are made remarkably efficient when handled by a community association with the right to fine people who do not act according to community standards. In the past, suburbanites used gentle nudges to prod neighbors to act responsibly—when their grass grew a bit too high, for instance. Now a representative from the community association comes by to precisely measure grass and, for a fee, will mow lawns that have grown unruly. The whole process formalizes a social exchange that has historically been informal.

Gary Pivo argues that gated communities, despite what many critics may conclude, provide a real sense of community. Developers take great care to market gated communities to people in search of a particular lifestyle. When they gather in these developments, residents find they have a good deal in common, which forms a key basis for community. As empirical evidence of social solidarity, Pivo notes, as does Blakely, that many neighbors in gated communities vote in blocs, not unlike the urban ward politics of the past. He also warns that residents of gated communities may act to further their self-interest by, for example, gaining seats on school boards in districts where none of their children are enrolled in an effort to derail new spending and thus lower their taxes. These actions highlight another of Pivo's concerns: that a sense of community within gated communities comes at the expense of a larger identity with the region outside the walls.

Pivo also makes a counterintuitive point: Gated communities may slow the pace of exurban growth by giving people the alternative of gaining control over their local environment with walls, rather than simply moving further away from places they deem dysfunctional. If true, such a trend could have important implications for policy thinking on a regional level. Gated communities can increase the heterogeneity of municipalities even as they increase the homogeneity of the population within their walls. Thus, the spatial distance between rich and poor may lessen as pockets of wealth become more concentrated and interspersed among less affluent areas.

Historian Robert Fishman finds that such a strategy kept the rich living within the heart of London during the 19th century, even as their peers were fleeing the core of Manchester (Fishman 1987). The mid-19th-century London square,

which featured a gated park surrounded by a ring of upscale town houses, is the clear predecessor of the modern gated community. Fishman argues that this adaptation slowed the suburban growth of London. Perhaps gated communities will retain the rich and middle class in the parts of suburbia they now occupy, thereby slowing the demand for housing in ever more distant suburbs.

Pivo notes that new gated-community development along major arterial roadways drastically changes land use patterns. Previously, lower-income housing was built on land next to interstates and other major roads, because that land was generally considered undesirable—lots of noise and other disamenities. However, because gated communities are walled, developers can now build expensive homes right up to the road. This new pattern results in a significant loss of potential space for affordable housing.

Pivo also considers the symbolic impact that gated communities have on children who pass through the gate on a daily basis. He is concerned that symbolic distinctions between life within the walls and life outside will produce adults who disengage from civic participation in the larger community. He also raises an interesting sociological question concerning whether children raised in gated communities will develop a sense of very hard lines between their class and others.

David Prosperi remarks that the gated-community phenomenon is nothing more than a developer's marketing device designed to create the appearance of security as an amenity. In addition, he states that many individuals who choose to live in gated communities are really viewing their decision as a wise investment. They are aware that the resale value of their homes will increase in a short time. Indirectly, this suggests that at least some percentage of gated-community residents are more concerned with the financial benefits than the "ready-made" amenities gated communities offer.

Tensions and paradoxes

Blakely and Snyder raise the question, "Can there be a social contract without social contact?" We respond by noting that gated communities operate by an implicit social contract—they serve to minimize unsolicited social contact. Gated communities represent the continued evolution of an Anglo-American movement toward private environments that originated in mid-19th-century Britain (Fishman 1987; Lang 1995). The paradox of how

suburbanites form a social consensus around so anticommunitarian a belief as privacy is captured in Lewis Mumford's observation that "suburbia is a collective effort to lead a private life" (Mumford 1938, 412).

Blakely and Snyder identify several of what they refer to as "tensions" inherent in gated-community life:

> Gates and fences around neighborhoods represent more than simple physical barriers. Gated communities manifest a number of tensions: between exclusionary aspirations rooted in fear and protection of privilege and the values of civic responsibility; between the trend toward privatization of public services and the ideals of the public good and general welfare; and between the need for personal and community control of the environment and the dangers of making outsiders of fellow citizens. (p. 3)

To Blakely and Snyder's list of tensions we add several paradoxes below that emerged in the panel discussion.

Gated communities promote both civic engagement and avoidance

High political participation and voter solidarity within gated communities demonstrate civic engagement. However, this local commitment comes at a cost: Civic life and interests inside the gate reduce the need for civic engagement outside. Such behavior can adversely affect the larger community when school taxes are not appropriately raised or all new development proposed in town triggers a NIMBY ("not in my backyard") debate.

Gated communities promote both deregulation and hyperregulation

As Blakely and Snyder observe, "While at the national and state levels the public is asking for less government, at the local level people are creating more governance institutions" (p. 24). Residents of gated communities want government outside the gates "off their backs," while at the same time they willingly impose strict regulation on themselves.

Gated communities promote both integration and segregation

Gated communities may slow white flight to outer suburbs, thereby maintaining or increasing integration on a municipal scale. Yet on a neighborhood scale, gated communities contribute to hypersegregation by reducing access and excluding individuals on the basis of social class.

Gated communities promote both vigilance and negligence toward crime

In the community of fear that underlies every gated community, perception is often more important than reality. Gated-community residents believe that high-tech security, security guards, and gate improve security and ensure their safety. Yet the appearance of security devices or security guards with little police power may lull inhabitants into complacency, which actually attracts crime rather than deterring it. Over time, such reasoning could intensify a siege mentality among gated-community inhabitants.

Authors

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"Planning in the Americas" Conference
Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning
November 6–9, 1997
Fort Lauderdale, FL

Friday, November 7, 1997, Panel Session: "Gated Communities in America"

MODERATOR: Edward J. Blakely, University of Southern California

PANELISTS: Gary Pivo, University of Washington
David Prosperi, Florida Atlantic University
Mary Gail Snyder, University of California at Berkeley

The following is an edited version of the panel discussion:

BLAKELY: This panel is being recorded by the Fannie Mae Foundation and parts of it will be published.

I'm Ed Blakely, and I will be a participant in the session as well as the chair. Other panelists are Mary Gail Snyder, who is finishing her doctorate at the University of California at Berkeley in the Department of City and Regional Planning; Gary Pivo, who is at the University of Washington in the Department of Urban Design and Planning; and Dave Prosperi, who is at Florida Atlantic University in the Department of Planning.

The subject today is "Fortress America." Eight million people have selected residential living situations behind bars and gates in the United States. And by "residential living situations," we mean single-family homes, primarily. We are not talking about apartment blocks. We are not talking about co-ops and condos that have traditionally had doorpersons and other people who control access and offer some degree of security. We're talking about the typical suburban single-family dwelling that is now behind a gate in a wall, typically with a security guard and limited access, and some of these are quite extensive. In some instances, the guards escort you to the place you're going, and in almost all instances, you have to be announced. In other instances, all the service people who come in and out are bussed in

and out. In some cases, they're frisked on the way in and frisked on the way out to make sure they haven't taken anything that doesn't belong to them. And in a few instances, armed guards patrol the premises and in one case, there's one of these bolsters that if you're the wrong car, something punctures your tires and makes sure that you can't gain access to this kind of place.

So we're talking about a rising phenomenon. Almost 40 percent of the residential housing in California is now behind security-guarded gates.

Residential choice is declining in California and other suburban communities. Less than a quarter mile from this place [the Marina Marriott in Fort Lauderdale, FL], the first right turn you come to is a gated community with armed guards and exclusive entry. There are also in this area gates that have no guard but that give the facade of security systems. So the perception of need for gates and gated communities is pretty clear.

My first question regarding gated communities is, Are you walling something in, or are you trying to wall something out? Everyone knows now a little bit about what this is about, even if you have not been in a gated community. And the way we want to run this is, I want to give you just a little context to show you where they are, and then we'll turn to our panelists and what's going on.

Here is a map of gated communities around the country (figure 1). The large dots represent the high-concentration areas: Los Angeles, Phoenix, Houston, Miami, Chicago, New York. These are the areas that are having the most rapid in-migration. And the in-migration, particularly of people of color, has led people to say, "I've got to set a boundary. No longer can I just move out now. I'm going to put my stakes down here, and I'm going to control my territory."

What are people looking for? Well, they perceive these places as being friendly. They perceive these places as having more community feeling. So we want to ask the people who are here, Are they getting what they're looking for?

David, there are a lot of gated communities around here. What is this paradise? What are people finding there? Are they finding more community?

Figure 1. **Gated Community Concentrations**
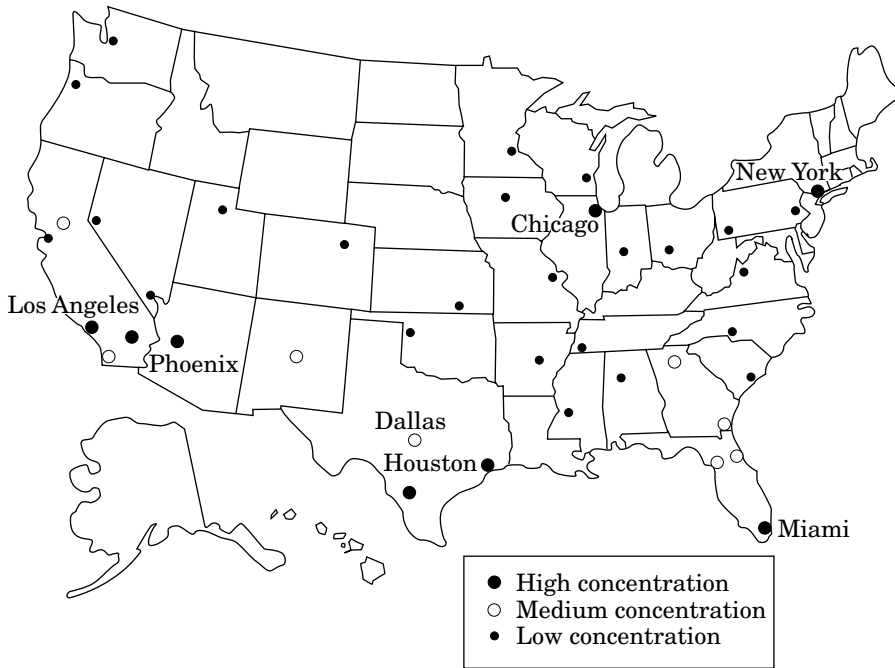
Source: Blakely and Snyder 1997. Used with permission from the Brookings Institution Press.

PROSPERI: I'm not sure. I tend to interpret gated communities as really a marketing device. It's a little bit of crime prevention through environmental design, which I'm not truly convinced works. But the appearance is of the gate, and the appearance of security is important. I don't sense that there is any increased sense of community. The folks I know who live behind gates don't know their neighbors any more than I know my neighbors.

I also sense that there are some pretty savvy people living in gated communities, who know that three years after construction is done, or if you can get in at the first phase and get out, you can make some money to go to the next upscale gated community.

BLAKELY: Gating up.

PROSPERI: Gating up. Fortressing up. I sense that in terms of the real estate market, this is the high end. They are on the fringes of development around here, although there are some

Eastern communities where they don't fit your definition of single family. There are some gated town house communities in the East and in South Florida. We're trying to reduce the pressure on the Everglades and bring people back to the East and build up what we traditionally think of as an intersuburban kind of land use pattern. But I don't sense the community. I think the community thing is largely oversold.

And while the folks I know who live in gated communities don't have to deal with pickup trucks, they do complain about their neighbors' patio furniture. And even though there are single-family houses, they are dense.

The other thing I sense in these communities is that by being like a planned unit development, there is some sense of place once you get in there, unlike in tract developments. Yet the sameness of architecture is boring to the point where you are never quite sure which driveway you're supposed to go up, because every house looks the same. But the density does give people a sense of place. You know you're in there, and I think that's what I'll use to start off with.

BLAKELY: I want to throw it out to the other panelists and all of you. This search for community. What gives the sense of community? Is it a name? Is it a wall? Where do we find community? Is it the boundary? I mean, territoriality is very important. You know, those of us who do community development work talk about the territory.

It might be a freeway, or it might be a lake, or it might be a river. Does this give us any more sense of territoriality? Does it make sense that we just wall in America to give people a sense of community? The present system's been doing this with not very good results, but maybe it'll be better if you buy it rather than having it forced on you. Gary?

PIVO: I grew up in a suburban tract development that didn't have an open-and-close gate at the front, but it had a wall all around it and a very nice boundary marker at the entryway. It was just a precursor, I think, to the next phase, which was to put up the actual gate and the guard. And my brother, who lived in Irvine, CA, for many years lived in a gated community. So I have some personal experience with them.

I think they may very well increase community inside at the expense of decreasing community outside. And by that I mean I

do think people respond to signals about territory and commonality and a sense that other people are like them. These things tend to increase people's sense of association and willingness to take that first step, to talk to another person, because they're inside the wall and therefore they must be safe.

I think a lot of these communities also have common open space and replace private yards with more public playgrounds and open spaces and people interact in those places. I don't think they tend to be associated with schools, which would further reinforce that sense of exclusive community, but I do think they have some increase in the sense of community. People probably would report a greater sense of neighborliness and so forth inside gated communities.

But gated communities also give people an excuse or an opportunity to turn inward and recognize that that's their tribe, more so than their city is or their region is. I think to the extent that people lose a sense of responsibility to their city or region, they tend to stop voting for services that support other communities. This can have a detrimental effect on community cohesion in the larger region.

BLAKELY: I want to throw it out to the audience. If these places bring a better sense of community or neighborliness, maybe we, as planners, should be advocating them, because we're supposed to be building communities, right? Shouldn't we be advocating gated communities?

BACOW: Larry Bacow, MIT. I was just thinking that we have been advocating gated communities for hundreds of years, because we've been looking at least to walled communities, walled cities, the Italian hill towns, Jerusalem, other places, as examples of places where community works, where there is a density, where there's a sense of place. And when I think of my own city of Boston, one of the things that makes Boston the vibrant community it is, is that you have well-defined neighborhoods in which people have an identity. And they do turn inward, and as a result they are exclusionary. But I think the challenge is to find a balance. As I look at this phenomenon, I'm asking myself what it is that I really find offensive about this. Is it the gate? Or is it the wall?

PROSPERI: The use of the word "community" is an interesting one.

SPEAKER: Almost all of these advertise themselves as communities. That's in the title.

PROSPERI: Right, but "community," as Larry just said and as Ed started to talk before, to me means something more than 269 units. The 269 units or 300 units is too small to be called a "community." I have a hard time figuring out the sense of purpose of this community. The Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning (ACSP) is a community. What is the sense of the Boca Bath and Tennis Club? What does that community exist for, other than to show up at night? And open spaces I've seen in gated communities are just as underutilized as open spaces anywhere else.

SPEAKER: But they're underutilized by people who want them to be underutilized. I mean, this is purposeful. This is not a mistake. Those fields are empty because of the wall.

PROSPERI: But the other thing is that inside the gated communities, down here where you can still have your pool, the very first thing you do after you buy the house is screen your backyard from your neighbor.

LANG: Robert Lang, Fannie Mae Foundation. I have noticed a pattern among high-immigration communities, such as those in the sunbelt, where gated communities emerge because of anomic social relations. By contrast, in, say, Boston, where there is a high degree of residential stability and social cohesion, residents have a form of social control over a neighbor that you don't have in the desert Southwest, because they have been living together for so long. So if, for example, somebody lets the grass grow a little too high, you can walk up and lightheartedly say, "Hey, what's that jungle in your yard? You ought to do something about that." But in the case of high-immigration corporate migrant communities, where people are moving around the country from place to place and job to job, they can't risk relying on informal controls. They don't have the time to make that connection. Instead, what they do is invoke a formal social control that implies that they can't count on a neighbor to do the right thing. In that sense, it's really a coerced community. If it were a true community, they wouldn't have to worry about whether or not a neighbor puts a car up on blocks or fails to mow the lawn. There would be a consensus over such things, and they wouldn't have to worry about the selfish interests of a single individual getting in the way of their paradise. But instead, what they've done is gone ahead and created a formal community.

They've substituted formal social controls for informal social controls, and they've also made a good bet as far as their investment. Let's say a family moves from the suburbs of Atlanta to the suburbs of Denver, and they're carrying their house equity with them from place to place. They can bet at least that in a gated community they don't make that wrong call and move in next to that one troubled neighbor who puts in a chain link fence and a car up on blocks and a dog in the yard. The next thing you know, their house is worth $10,000 or $15,000 less than it would be three houses over. They're making a pretty secure bet, and it's kind of a jaded sense of community, if it's a sense of community at all.

BLAKELY: Interesting comment.

BONNELL: Gene Bonnell, University of Wisconsin. I was going to call you on the contradiction in terms. Maybe we should be advocating for these gated communities everywhere since, in fact, that defeats the whole purpose, it seems to me, of the exclusivity of these communities. I mean, you are trying to wall people out. The thing that intrigues me about it is the degree to which this move toward highly regulated environments goes against the flow in the rest of America's society, which seems to be saying, "We don't want any rules, and we want freedom and unregulated environments, unrestrictive zoning." Yet within these privatized communities, you accept a level of regulation that would be otherwise intolerable.

BLAKELY: The city council could never pass a regulation like that.

BONNELL: It's much more restrictive than anything that zoning or public regulation would ever presume to do, and I don't think people realize that. Of course, the illusion is that this is democratic, that this is a community and these rules are private. But as Evan McKenzie has shown in his book *Privatopia,* the origins of the regulations and the restrictions often precede the residents. And so you are living with rules that in fact you didn't have anything to do with. That's a contradiction. I've also been intrigued at the way the restriction of entrance to major developments, of one way in, goes against the whole notion of public safety and of the insistence on multiple access for emergencies— ambulances, fire, and so on. And I've seen these developments built on locations that geographically make it impossible for there to be any other way in and out. I guess the answer is, of course, that they're not often relying on public safety. They have their own police forces and maybe their own fire departments.

But it does raise public safety issues in the context of reviewing developments that seem to go counter to things that have been accepted as necessary in the public interest for a long time.

BLAKELY: Yes, I want to turn to that. You drive a few blocks on a public street and turn right, and all of a sudden the street turns into a private street. All the people on the private street can go onto the public street, but I can't go onto the private street. Now this is one-way justice here—I want to turn right, but all of a sudden I can't. The people who live there can turn left or right, go wherever they want, but I'm restricted in my movement because of them.

In some places in Southern California, these gates are everywhere, and in order to move around, you have to know the map, because you just can't move from one place to another. Gary, what do you think?

PIVO: Well, the Supreme Court, of course, has pointed out that there's a right to freedom of movement in our society. And I think a lot of people do expect this. They see public streets as giving them the right to access different places. This is then juxtaposed against what I think a lot of people consider to be the right to maintain a safe and decent neighborhood. And while that might not be considered a constitutional right, I suspect a lot of citizens consider it a fundamental right. You end up with a struggle over territory and neighborhoods—in this case the appropriation of what used to be public space for private space.

You see the same kind of thing going on with the privatization of open space. You see this written about in the literature as well.

I'd like to bring up another important issue here: affordable housing. Gated communities are conceivably driving up the price of housing in a couple of important ways, which furthers the problem of opening up the suburbs and maintaining a more integrated society. First of all, this is all about creating a market. It's all about creating demand for spaces through a marketing trick. I think that even a lot of the people buying into it don't really believe they're safer.

BLAKELY: Well, they're safer from public housing. They're safer from affordable housing. They're safer from all the rules and regulations the general government would say you have to comply with. They're safer from any burden. There's one development in Southern California that's opted out of the rule requiring recycling. They say, "We're not going to recycle. That's your problem, not ours."

PIVO: They may very well be exempted from a lot of things.

BLAKELY: They're not exempt. They just opted out.

PIVO: They may have opted out, but my point is that a lot of folks are buying into this in the hope that it's going to deliver a lot of good things for them. And, presumably, the market is responding. Because of the packaging, because of the total image, people are willing to pay more, and others therefore can't afford to get in.

Also, when you spend $5 million on an entrance system, that has to be capitalized into the price of lots and houses. If I added $5 million in infrastructure expenses through exactions to a development, I'd hear all sorts of complaints about affordability and how that cost is multiplied in the price of the unit when the developer has to add on their profit and so forth and so on.

And another thing has a consequence for affordable housing. In the past, the frontage of blocks on arterials was a source of more affordable land because of the disamenities of being on busier streets or close to the other land uses that are across the street. That's why planners often would zone there for apartments, or you would see less expensive single-family homes going up there. Now what you see is a very busy arterial with a wall that separates the property from it so that you can build more expensive housing right up to the wall.

And when you add this up throughout an entire county, as you can see going on in a place like Orange County, CA, you're losing mile after mile of property that would otherwise be available for more affordable development.

All of these things can, I think, have the consequence of driving up prices and increasing segregation at the neighborhood scale.

Interestingly, I wonder whether walls are facilitating the preservation of integration at the city scale. By that I mean that perhaps walls are replacing flight as a strategy for avoiding disamenities or undesirable neighbors. In fact, in the tape [before this discussion the audience viewed a videotaped report on gated communities], we heard one man say, "I don't think I would live here if it weren't for the wall." In other words, he would probably have chosen to move to a more remote location, and you'd end up with people perhaps voting more with their feet to isolate themselves into suburbs that are more wholly exclusive. From the point of view of just mixing land uses, if not

mixing social groups and income levels, gated communities might provide a strategy for us to make it a little more palatable to put housing next to industry, next to malls, and so forth.

On the one hand, they might be increasing segregation at the neighborhood scale while, on the other hand, giving us a strategy for decreasing separation of land uses at the city scale.

BLAKELY: Some people argue that this is the best strategy to maintain the cities, that if we could put walls up in the cities, the white flight would slow and the middle-class flight would slow. So some planners in some very big cities are proposing walls as a way of stopping the flight.

TOULAN: Nohad Toulan, Portland State University. I think there is another dimension to gated "communities," and I would like to go back to the examples of the walled cities of antiquity. Let's not forget that the only place where there were no walled cities was Egypt, when the authority of the state was clearly established for more than 5,000 years. When you don't have the authority of the state, you go to self-protection. For instance, these communities are really communities of fear.

What we are facing here is a situation where people are saying, "You cannot do it for us, so we are going to do it on our own." I wonder what the future of our county authority, our state authority, will be if we are all living in communities where we manage ourselves and we don't care about everybody living outside our boundaries.

So I think that while there are some merits to the question of whether we use gated communities for land use planning or integrating land uses, there is a much greater issue: What is it going to do to us as a civic community? What is it going to do to us as a community or as a society that has many things in common that we have to maintain? If all of us live in individual institutions, you and I have nothing to talk about. I think we know what the future will be.

BLAKELY: I want to turn to Mary Gail, because this is a question that we looked at in our research—this whole issue of security. People are seeking all kinds of security. One of them is from crime, and I'd like Mary Gail to talk about crime in just a moment. Do people find these places to be genuinely more secure? Is there less crime?

SNYDER: Is there less crime? No. Do people feel them to be more secure? Yes, until they've actually moved in. That's the short answer to that question. Fear of crime—physical security concerns—is one of the primary motivations for people moving into gated communities, but it's not the only motivation. When people are talking about how secure they feel in their gated communities, they're talking about freedom from exposure to canvassers or strangers of any sort.

BLAKELY: Politicians.

SNYDER: Politicians. They don't want Ed coming in and campaigning [Blakely is currently running for mayor of Oakland, CA]. Any stranger, anyone you do not know, invites a possibility of crime. And in a gated community, you have this automatic effect that any car, any person you see on the street, you can assume has some stamp of approval by some other resident. So they fall out of that category of stranger and therefore a threat. People feel more comfortable, and in fact that causes problems. We talked to security people in gated communities in many areas of the country who told us that people became far too relaxed and left their garage doors open and had everything stolen.

The gated communities are absolutely not high security. They're very easy to get into. That's one of the reasons that people don't feel they're reducing crime once they've moved in, because they know how easy it is for them and their friends to get in at any point they want to, and how easy it is for vendors, tradespeople, and others just to tailgate in after other cars.

When you have guards at the gate, it's slightly more difficult, but guards are rarely hired full-time because of the expense, and when they are hired full-time, they are just private security guards. We're not talking off-duty policemen, again because of the expense. So you have relatively minimal security. The part-time guards are usually hired to be there at night, because that's when people feel most insecure. But most residential burglaries happen during the day. So….

BLAKELY: Usually by a neighbor, by the way.

SNYDER: Yeah, the gated communities are very much set up to make people feel better. Everywhere we went, all the residents we talked to were very enthusiastic about how well their gated communities did that for them. They were very happy with them. None of them would have given up the gate. At the same time, they were very realistic about the fact that the gate wasn't

actually doing much for them, but they felt better. They were very up front about this, which was interesting, and most said that they would move to another gated community if they moved again.

BLAKELY: It's interesting, this perception issue. As a matter of fact, we found that, because people felt so comfortable, they lost track of who most criminals are—usually the young person who brings another young person, who's a friend, into the place. There's a gated community in Southern California we were in with a population of 30,000 people and a crime rate that is slightly higher than in other cities of 30,000.

One of the reasons is that when you're behind the walls, you can commit an awful lot of crimes undetected, because there are no police roving around. The police know who the bad people are, but once the bad people get past the gates, the police can't see them. One of the more interesting stories in our book is about a guy who dresses up like a jogger and gets past the gates, and, of course, when the cops come, he looks like a regular jogger. But the cops found out otherwise, because the same cop came twice and wondered, "Why is this guy in the street every time I'm coming for a burglary? Now how is it that this guy happens to be riding a bicycle here or jogging here and points me to the right direction?"

Now fortunately, the cop was smarter than the burglar in that instance, but that happened right here in Florida. Most residential burglaries are committed by people who live within a mile of the residence. So you don't get much benefit from the gate, but you do get this sense of security that allows a few more burglaries. So if you were a smart burglar, you'd go to a gated community, because you know the garage is likely to be open, or the back door is likely to be open, and there's likely to be something of value. You could figure this is a good place to spend your time, since for a burglary, you do the same jail time, two to five years. You might as well go someplace where you can get something rather than a place where you might not get anything. So the sense of security leads to probably a little more action.

But to be quite frank, there are fewer crimes directly against people. You don't get mugged on the street, and auto theft goes down because it's harder to get the automobile out past the gate.

But residents drive their automobiles out, so you might as well steal it in the shopping center. Wait until it gets out from behind the gate. Why penetrate the gate to steal the automobile? So

auto thefts don't go down in the region, but they might go down in the gated area. And many people feel that as soon as they come home—and we heard this over and over again—"I really, really feel relaxed here." And that very relaxation is cause for problem. But, Chin, you had a problem.

CHIN: Gil Chin, Michigan State University. Very interesting to look at these transient gated communities while we have been talking about globalization and the global village.

And we would say easily, "Yes, I'm a member of the global community," but in the meantime, in our local community, we are building walls. And I think to a certain extent this reflects American politics and foreign policy. I have observed increasingly that the United States as a nation is building a wall around itself. This is the country that is most difficult for foreigners to get into. And with the conservative politics of some people, I think people in the community may feel it is okay to have our own wall around us. So gated communities reflect national politics.

BLAKELY: The observation Gil just made about closing down, I want to bring this to all the panelists. We found that people develop what we called an "in-look" that is stronger than the "out-look," that gradually people stop voting for bond issues, for schools, for public parks. In the Palm Springs area, it's hard to locate a park. The city tries to locate a park and everyone says, "Well, we don't want it near our gated community." And when most of the place is gated, you can't put in a public park for the people who don't live in a gated community, because the people who live in the gated communities are going to vote against it. Now this in-look takes on a politics, that all of a sudden, you have a group of people who have a whole territory to protect. The homeowners association becomes a political group and can, in some cases, practice a kind of stealth politics. They've gotten people off the school board who don't have their politics, very extreme right-wing politics. But you can get—and I'm learning this more and more as I get into politics—this kind of telescoping of your voter.

You get a certain group of voters, you get 300 or 400 or 500 or 2,000 voters to go out and vote against something, you have a very powerful group, if they'll all vote the same way every time.

And you can just go from association to association, and if you get the entire association to vote in the same way, you can kill any bond issue. You can determine things for the people who

don't live behind the gates. People who live in the general territory may want additional police patrols. Gated-community residents can vote it down. They can change tax rates and things like that for the people who don't live behind the gates. This has been a tremendous problem with school issues in these gated communities, because the people there usually elect to send their kids to private schools. So not only do they attempt to control the private schools, but they also attempt to control the public schools by voting down bond issues, by putting their candidates on the school board. In one community, these candidates have decided there are certain things that kids shouldn't read, like *Uncle Tom's Cabin.* And these people on school boards come from the gated communities, because they've got a block of voters behind them. Think about it. This block voting is an enormous phenomenon.

PROSPERI: But how is that different from "condo commandos" and other things? And, again, the question is, How big are these communities?

BLAKELY: Well, some of them are quite big. Some of them have 4,000 or 5,000 people. But it's easier to organize these people in 269 housing units through their community association than it is to go door to door and try to organize people in any other place. It's a lot easier.

PIVO: There's an example of the kind of conflict you can get into in the city of Mill Creek in Snohomish County, about 40 minutes north of Seattle. A master-planned gated community was put into a city with many existing homes, so it wasn't a separate jurisdiction. All sorts of interesting conflicts came up, but one of the important points is that about half the city's population lives inside the walls and half lives outside the walls. So if you can organize the population inside the walls more easily, because the community association facilitates that, then the people inside the walls have a political advantage over those outside. And the people inside the walls do have a demographic character distinct from the others. Their tastes and preferences differ, and they do vote for things that go against the interests of those outside the walls—like restricting school bus access from the school through their community, when the school district wanted to build an access road to make it easier for the school bus to get to the nongated part of town.

This notion that being inside the walls and having a community association makes you more politically powerful or more easily organized is evidence that there is community going on inside

the walls. These associations probably do enhance community, a certain kind of community, one that turns its back on outsiders.

In Mill Creek and in other places, one of the debates that come up is whether people outside the walls should have access to the open space and parks inside the walls. Should planners insist on that as a condition of approval of these plans? Are there certain facilities that people should have access to regardless of where they live? In that case, they ended up going through the process of making sure that everyone would be allowed to use the parks and open spaces inside the walls.

And now we do see in a lot of other master-planned communities in Washington State, developed by the more sophisticated development corporations like the Weyerhaeuser Real Estate Company, promises made to allow the residents outside the walls access to the recreational facilities—the golf courses, the pools, the parks, and so forth—as a condition of approval, as a condition of political acceptability. Planners should think about whether we shouldn't be requiring that everywhere.

Also, it seems to me that if we do recognize that these places are more organized, then it changes the balance of power. I guess being organized and telescoping your voice in American politics is a good thing, so you can articulate what you want.

That's good for democracy. On the other hand, if you're better able to do it because of a new social organization you're participating in, others are left behind and it changes the balance of power. This suggests that in some of these communities, planners may want to set as a greater priority community development or community organizing in other places outside the walls in recognition of the fact that without that a disadvantage has emerged. Like it or not, that disadvantage could be problematic for those who are less organized and less able to articulate their voice and thus are treated unequally in the democratic process.

BLAKELY: On some of these bond issues, the people in the gated communities often hear only one side, and you can't leaflet. The association puts out its newsletter and gives one side of the debate because that's what's in the interest of the association. They say that people can buy the newspaper to get the other side. They have a perfect right to do that.

ANGOTTI: And they're very effective. They're effective enough that some people will not walk in certain areas of the upper east side of Manhattan. They're very effective politically, not because

they live in physically isolated buildings—and by the way these are not small. Some of them are 300, 400, 500 units, which, compared with the gated communities you're talking about are . . .

BLAKELY: Much bigger. Many people in the gated communities say, "Look, we're doing the city a favor. We are providing our own security, so we should have lower taxes. We are providing an awful lot of services: We are paying for our own sewage system; crime rates are relatively low here; we are taking control of open space. So we should pay less in taxes, so what are you guys worried about? And we vote. Many of those *other* people don't. So the city should be proud of us."

PRESTLEY: Julie San Prestley, St. Louis University. St. Louis is the home of the American Gateway or American gated community. We've talked a lot about discrimination and gates, but we haven't talked about how inner-city communities, some of them in St. Louis, in low-income or diverse-income communities, are beginning to use gates as a marketing mechanism and also to attract a variety of people back into the inner city. I was hoping each of you would talk a little bit more about that.

BLAKELY: That's true. St. Louis has one of the earliest gated communities, and its purpose was to maintain integration. And it's worked. In several other communities, in St. Louis and in Dayton and other places, this has worked to maintain integration, but for most of those gated communities, access is not as limited as for the gated communities we're talking about.

When I went to St. Louis, we didn't have an armed guard escort us around. As a matter of fact, it was only the appearance of limiting access, but there wasn't the impossibility. You didn't have to give your name and all this kind of thing to get in, but it did limit access for automobiles, and a quick thief could not get in and out very easily. So I think we're talking about a different scale, defensible space versus defended space. These are the areas we were talking about, particularly the suburban areas, the defended space versus defensible space.

I do think there is a place for limiting access and movement to reduce crime and to reduce automobile movement and get people back on the street. And that's defensible space, and that is very good planning. It makes a lot of sense. Some cities did it by accident, like Berkeley, CA, did in order to just limit automobile access, but it's had a nice effect on keeping the community fairly well integrated.

In our book we devoted an entire chapter to how you can create defensible space, but defended space has another, almost perverse tendency. Many African Americans won't live in a place with an armed guard. It brings up the wrong kind of symbols. When we visited places, the African Americans who lived there were generally athletes or movie stars who needed defense. But upper-middle-class African Americans tend not to like going, and I always felt queasy going through those gates.

It felt very uncomfortable, just going through the gates. So I think you don't have the mixing by class that you think you might, because African Americans who could afford to live in these places tend not to, and many Hispanics tend not to, because it brings up all the wrong symbols for them. I'd like some of your reactions to the symbolic nature of this as well as the actual, physical.

LEGATES: Richard Legates, San Francisco State University. I guess I came to this panel with a knee-jerk dislike of gated communities. Nothing here has made me like them any better, particularly, but I have been educated. It's much more a symbolic issue than I had thought. It seems to me the objections I had to gated communities were primarily around class segregation, racial segregation, private appropriation of public space, and then just sort of a cultural dislike of privileged, scared, conservative communities. I think those impressions have been borne out. On the other hand, the gate seems to be almost irrelevant in a lot of ways.

BLAKELY: It is.

LEGATES: It seems to me the really severe class and race problems and private appropriation of public goods that we've seen really have to do with whole communities. Piedmont, CA, in the middle of Oakland, has its own school system and police force and so on, just carved out of the city. It seems to me that a lot of the objections that have come up really have to do with affluent developments, whether or not there's a gate. What I'm coming away with is that this is a symbolic issue. I don't like them any better, but I'm not sure that the real issues aren't the deeper ones around it.

BLAKELY: Well, it's a bit like school segregation. Busing was meant to facilitate integration, but of course people found a way around that very quickly. Now that we have open housing and many states have passed open housing rules and regulations,

and fair housing rules and regulations as far as affordable housing, people find a way around that, too.

There are other kinds of gates, and we talk about this a little bit in the book. Land use controls can form gates as well. Many of the cities in California now have no-growth regulations that are driving out low-income people. And that was the intended purpose of the no-growth regulations. If you go to Santa Cruz, which used to be largely Hispanic, it isn't anymore.

The regulations are so tight that only 200 or 300 new homes a year are allowed. The home prices keep going up, so the low-income people keep moving farther and farther away, and pretty soon there are none. So there are a lot of ways of putting up gates, and in our book we talk a lot about the symbolism here and the intention here, because there's a march toward destiny in America, this notion of social and economic equality. Not everybody's bought it. Not everybody's into this game.

CHANDLER: Mittie Chandler, Cleveland State University. As you've been talking, I've been thinking about a community that is a suburb of Cleveland—a friend of mine just moved into it. It's Beechwood. And Beechwood is in Cuyahoga County and has a school district that spends the most per child, over $10,000 per child. And it's a fairly well-off community in other ways.

I think Nordstrom's just opened there, and there are a number of other signs of affluence. So getting to the issue of symbolism, it seems to me that this gated community that my friend just moved into is a gated community only symbolically. There is the gate with the guard at the front, but there's also a rear exit where residents can come in that does not have a guard. There are also various places where it seems to me somebody could get in by foot if they chose not to drive in. Then, there are also three types of structures there. There are town houses whose average price is around $250,000. There are larger houses running up to half a million dollars. And then there are apartments, where people pay $700 and $800 per month. And there's a sort of classism that's going on within the gated community, because of these apartments being there and problems being attributed to the renters as opposed to the owners. So whatever exclusivity the gated community might have provided seems to have been abated somewhat by the fact that you have these three types of development there. But I'm also wondering about housing values in this type of community. Might there be some sort of premium that people attach to living in a gated community, even if it's in a well-off community? And do the prices appreciate more than those outside the gated community?

BLAKELY: I don't know if we should tell you. This is one where you should really read the book. We do have that data. It's in the book—chapter two.

PIVO: Can I say something here about children and symbolism, because I'm concerned about the wall and the gate as a physical symbol? I've recently been reading the work of some childhood development people on the problem of porno shops in neighborhoods.

What they were talking about in particular is how kids use images to define the kinds of people that are okay and not okay and how they use their neighborhood territory quite a lot for collecting these images. I'm afraid that children who are raised going through a gate four times a day with their folks in the car will develop a much stronger "in-crowd, outside-group" mentality.

When I was growing up, the farmer's market was my main image of my community, in Los Angeles. There were all kinds of hubbub and all kinds of folks, and it was a very different image from the one presented to kids growing up in these gated communities. I don't know if anybody's looked at this, but I would be concerned that we are reinforcing a phenomenon that we already see in kids who grow up in exclusive suburbs, the sense of very hard lines between their class and others.

BLAKELY: We did look at that, and it was interesting. We interviewed some kids. And the kids have a strong sense of who lives inside and who lives outside. Sometimes the kids on the outside pick on them because they live on the inside. But the smart developers are now trying to create open space where kids can come together. You've got a hole in the wall so the kids can get there, because they're seeing this phenomenon among the kids. This is very dangerous for them, because if these kids start getting beaten up at school and so on, then the parents start complaining to the developers.

So the developers are pretty quick to pick up on this and try to create some social mixing. This is also a threat to the parents, though, because the parents don't really want their kids mixing with "those" kids.

PIVO: That reinforces my point, then, because I can't imagine a more powerful way for a kid to grow up hating those other kinds of people than to have them pick on you or beat you up when you're a kid.

BLAKELY: The last question to all three of the panelists and all of you: Can we have a social contract without social contact? America is a place where the social contract counts an awful lot. Many of us choose where we live and where we send our kids to school and so forth to reinforce a social contract of mutual aid, understanding across races and across income groups and so forth, building a stronger nation, because we're all immigrants here. But when you limit the social contact, what happens to the social contract?

PROSPERI: One of my favorite subjects. I think the social contract is falling apart. I don't sense it. I don't feel it. Perhaps that's left over from the 1980s' generation, which I was never part of. But I sense that there is *civitas* out there. And I don't sense that it depends on where you live. I think there's a larger region that is important as opposed to where you live.

BLAKELY: You can build that without having the smaller region?

PROSPERI: I think so. I mean, we live in this region, or some of us live in this region. Some of us live in the Boca Bath and Tennis Club. I think most of us live in the region. And where we go home at night, given the society and given the lifestyles of people who can afford these kinds of things, is an upscale phenomenon. It's a way to, I think, conserve land. As opposed to spending $600,000 to buy your acre in suburban Atlanta, you spend $600,000 to buy your acre inside your house. But I'm not sure where you go home at night really makes a difference.

BLAKELY: I wonder if a kid who grows up in one of these kinds of areas would say the same thing? Gary?

PIVO: There are all kinds of social contracts, so it's not so simple for me. The first social contract is if you work and don't revolt, you'll get a nice house and a good neighborhood. In a way, this preserves that contract during a time when it's tougher for a lot of people to feel like they're getting ahead. You put up a wall. All of a sudden, artificially, your sense of value of your property goes up and you're willing to drive once more to work through the traffic, because you're getting something for your trouble.

Also, if you believe that community starts at home and that you learn how to be a regional citizen by engagement in your neighborhood, then perhaps gated communities can act as a bridge to participation in the larger community.

But I am deeply concerned that they are really shifting our sense of whom we are responsible to and whom we share problems with. It says to people that you share problems mostly with people in your own neighborhood and that those are the people with whom you should work to solve problems. Yes, I recognize that people do travel in their daily commute and that their territory involves more than just the area inside the walls. But it might be that that is considered more a space walk today than actual participation in those places. You go back into the cocoon, and you're left alone. So I have mixed feelings, and I don't know what the outcomes are, but I think that it's troubling.

BLAKELY: I just have one response to that. The interesting thing in most of these communities is that people hire people to solve problems with their neighbors. They don't talk to them. They go to the association. In the example that someone gave, you don't go to the neighbor and say, "Don't put the car out." You go to the association, and the association tells the neighbor not to put the car out. In one case, a kid's playing basketball, and the patrol comes up and says, "The lady next door is sick. Stop playing basketball." So you've got an armed guard asking the kid, instead of the husband or the other kid coming out. You've got an armed guard saying, "Stop playing basketball here." You know, there used to be a little neighborliness. Boy, a gun really helps that.

LANG: Robert Lang, Fannie Mae Foundation. Ed, this is what I was saying earlier. You used to say to somebody, "Please cut your grass." Now a letter comes in the mail with a $50 fine and somebody's out there mowing it for you. And if that's community, …

BLAKELY: You pay for it.

LANG: … it's community by cost and community by third-party proxy.

BLAKELY: There's a bit of a metaphor here: that what may be going on in our entire society is being acted out here in a more restricted pattern. The Oakland Police Department gets a million calls a year now, when they used to get 300,000 or 400,000 calls on the same population base. People call the police to go and talk to their neighbors about cutting their lawn. And people call the police department to say, "My neighbor slipped in the bathtub. Would you go and help her?" Well, usually, you'd go help her. You know, that used to be the deal. And when I was a kid, you know, if I saw someone carrying groceries down the street, if I didn't help them, somebody would help my backside.

But if you touch a kid today, you're in trouble. So people do use other means. The reason nobody talked to your kid was because they were afraid to, because you might retaliate. So this is a deeper phenomenon. We admit this in the book. There are deeper phenomena going on in American society that are separating us and segregating us. This is a metaphor for people not being able to control their destiny, not having a good feeling about what might happen next.

Mary Gail, do you want to add anything?

SNYDER: I was struck when David said how many of us feel identified with, say, the Boca Bath and Whatever-It-Is Club. It sounds bad. Most of us are not people of a region. And I, for one, am not. I live in San Francisco in a neighborhood and I identify very strongly with that neighborhood, and the rest of the San Francisco Bay Area is a rather foreign place to me. So in some ways, I'm in my own restricted territory. It has no gates or walls.

Most people won't come in it, because they're afraid of gangs and other things. It's a working-class neighborhood, and it has some troubles, but I don't feel that there's that same level of exclusion, and the contact is still there.

One can go in and out at any time, and people do. It's the leaving that can be difficult, and that's where the symbolism of the gated communities has a very real impact that's not symbolic at all. I do believe that contact is critical. It may not let anyone get along. It may not ever reduce discrimination or segregation, but it is certainly one step that's going to have to be taken.

BLAKELY: I just want to finish this by saying that as planners we somehow took a fork in the road where we allowed people who were in the private development business to call themselves community developers. And they have decided the nature of community and are presenting it to us like any other commodity. These walls and gates are almost a symbol of our own failure to do what we have been employed to do, and that is to build not places, but communities, social structures.

Social structures have embedded institutions in them, which require mutual aid. We became fascinated with regulation and fascinated with place and maybe design, but we lost our fascination with people. And being around developers a lot, they know how to market. We'd better learn how to market, or we'll lose our way. Thank you.