Levittown: Increasing Density and Opportunity through the Accessory Dwelling Structure

This project reconsiders planning and construction possibilities for the first ring post-suburban neighborhood of Levittown. When treated as flexible, and not sacred ground, first-ring suburban lots can be rezoned to allow the accessory dwelling structure. Allowing additional dwelling on existing lots gives residents options to offer accommodation to extended family or to earn additional income through renting. Redefining traditional notions of setback, orientation, density and infrastructure allows for a community that offers more to this generation and the next.

Proposal: Maximizing Cultural Sustainability
The lower and middle class children who grew up in Levittown can no longer afford to buy into the same American Dream as their parents. Land value has driven the cost of a 900ft house on a quarter acre upwards of $400,000. Simultaneously, the population of these neighborhoods is rapidly aging, and with increased operational costs and a dependency upon a social network, certain homeowners are looking for ways to maximize the profitability of their land and house without having to move. In an age where developable land is scarce, middle to low income families looking for a house in an active community can have an option other than remote 5th 6th or 7th ring developments.

Proposal: Energized Density
In this dense post-suburban setting, landscape is still maintained as the conventional boundary between residences. Landscape will still be the accepted boundary between these single-family houses, but the language shifts from that of yard and fence, to that of garden room and utility zone. While doubling the density of the first ring suburbs, the ecological footprint is reduced by incorporating diverse technologies in a new approach to infrastructure.

Proposal: Modular Diversity
Instead of relying on the traditional agents of suburban development -- timber, labor, machinery, time and cost -- this proposal collapses these variables by exploiting the advantages of the modular building industry. House construction is considered as an assembly of rooms, that expands and contracts according to individual needs. Specifically designed modular units can be configured in numerous ways to accommodate different scales of expansion and new construction.

Result: Through a scheduled framework for growth, homeowners can buy into a new structure for living in first-ring post-suburban neighborhoods.
Rezoning: Permitting dwelling in the accessory structure and increasing the allowable built footprint in the rear yard provides additional living space, density and possible income from renting. The garden apartment is made suburban.

Infrastructure: Utilities are run in place of existing fences run at property lines. Necessary circulation provides for community paths as occurs in Venice California.

Modular Construction: Allows for cost effective construction, diverse arrangements, non-invasive installation and ecologically responsible building arrangements.

Expansion takes place through this structured framework for growth. Homeowners can expand as needed and desired.
Aerial neighborhood view showing a timeline of development from fences to dwelling units along the existing utility corridors. The units are positioned to allow full summer and winter sunlight into the site. The new structures have PV arrays on the stair tower roofs which help offset the increased utility demand. Stormwater management principles dictate the use of pervious tile pavers and the new foundations shall be constructed on concrete piers. New drywells shall be constructed for each development.

Section through a 1000sqft one bedroom dwelling. A unit like this could be constructed and installed for $100,000. This would give parents the option to have their children move back to the neighborhood. As the young families grow this unit can be expanded with a kit of prefabricated parts. Alternately parents could move into this smaller home and the growing family could inhabit the street front residence.