

Chapter 1 - An Introduction to Gated Communities

Americans have long sought shelter in safe and comfortable surroundings. As early as the latter part of the eighteenth century, individuals fled from the duress and disorder of the inner city, marking the start of a long process of out-migration to areas on the urban fringe. Since that time the suburbs have undergone a transition no less impressive than have the cities themselves. Suburbs are no longer capable of sheltering the masses from the intrusion of problems historically confined to the inner city. Accompanying the redistribution of America's population from central to peripheral locations has been the spread of contemporary problems such as theft, vandalism, rape, and murder away from old downtown. In defense, America's newest form of residential development is sweeping the landscape: gated communities.

1.1. What is a gated community?

Before proceeding, a working definition of the term "gated community" must be established. All gated communities share a key characteristic that defines and identifies their existence: restricted and/or controlled access. Barricades are placed at roadway entrances to these communities to *control* access. Access is *restricted* in the sense that few entry points provide passage to the community. Most often, access to gated communities is both controlled and restricted. Regardless of the method employed or the exact number of entryways, gated communities are residential developments that present a barrier to entry in an attempt to exclude those lacking membership or an invitation. In essence, gated communities allow only residents of the community to enter freely, while access to the general public is denied in the absence of explicit resident permission.

Gated communities come in a variety of shapes and sizes. No predetermined formula or standard exists to determine whether or not a collection of access-restricted residences constitutes a gated community. In fact, the number of residences bounded by a gate or similar barrier may range from double digits to well into the thousands. Likewise, "they come in a variety of packages—planned-unit developments, town homes, and condos—to suit individual tastes" (Spira 25). Gated communities are defined only

by their peripheral characteristics, leaving the community inside the gate open to interpretation.

Despite their namesake, a gated community need not be hidden behind a gate at all. While the name evokes an image of a development caged in by a fence, a number of different devices appear at entrances to gated communities. Some gated communities lie behind walls that prevent both physical and visual penetration of community boundaries. Many gated communities employ guards that interrogate individuals seeking entry to the community. Guards are sometimes armed and stationed at an entryway gatehouse or guardhouse. These guarded, gated communities have become so popular that “the number of private security guards has doubled since 1970 to 1.5 million—nearly three times the number of public police officers” (Clark 787). Figure 1.1 shows a typical entrance to a guarded, gated community. Notice that travel lanes are divided with separate lanes for residents (right) and visitors (left).



Figure 1.1. Gated entrance to the Weston Hills neighborhood of Weston, Florida

Among the many other devices controlling access to gated communities are mechanical arms that lift when triggered by “a computerized card attached to the inside of (a) vehicle’s windshield” (Baron 96). Still others require residents to enter an access

code in order to open a retractable gate. Some authors (Blakely and Snyder 1997; Andrew Stark 1998) describe neighborhoods that place berms, concrete barriers, and/or strips of vegetation such as dense shrubbery across travel lanes once open to car traffic. These neighborhoods use barriers in an effort to reduce traffic volumes and discourage entry by nonresidents. “In other developments, most notably bunkerlike security developments for the rich, there are such niceties as laser sensors, security gates with tire spikes, electronic locks, and an elaborate system of television monitors and automatic alarms linked via computer” (McKenzie 141). Obviously, gated communities are mass consumers of a wide range of devices that seek to sort-out residents from the “over-the-wall-crowd”. Nonetheless, the term “gate” will be used generically throughout this paper rather than referencing any one particular device.

1.2. Reasons for gated communities

Now centuries beyond medieval times, gated communities provide a bit of proof to the claim that history repeats. Today these developments are undergoing an impressive resurgence, and America is playing host. According to Edward J. Blakely and Mary Gail Snyder, perhaps the leading experts on gated communities and authors of the most complete study to date, gated communities debuted in England and were erected by occupying Romans around 300 B.C. (Fortress America 3). In 1831, Samuel Ruggles created what is regarded as America’s first experience with a gated community. In that year, Ruggles “drained a swamp in Manhattan and ‘laid out a square in London fashion, and surrounded it with an eight-foot fence, with gates to which residents in the neighborhood have keys.’ He called it Gramercy Park, and he placed title to it in the hands of trustees for the benefit and use of those who owned the sixty-six surrounding residential lots” (McKenzie 34).

St. Louis was the next American city to see gates surrounding residential development. In the mid-1850s “St. Louis developed a sizeable network of private gated streets for its beer barons...most of them still exist” (Dillon 10). Near the end of that century, the upper-income gated community of Tuxedo Park was built in New York. The early 1900s saw gated communities arise as the development of choice for the rich and famous in elite neighborhoods from Hollywood, California, to Miami, Florida. In the

1960s America witnessed the rise of master-planned, gated retirement communities such as Leisure World in California. Then, “(I)n the 1980s, heavy real estate speculation, combined with a fear crime, led to the gated explosion that has increased dramatically ever since” (Owens 1132).

As Owens suggested, crime stands as one of the most cited reasons for the proliferation of gated communities. The 1980s marked a time of the highest rates of crime ever recorded in the United States. As a nation, rates of violent crime (consisting of murder, rape and sexual assault, robbery, and assault) peaked in 1981. The frequency of those crimes has substantially “declined since 1994, reaching the lowest level ever recorded by the National Crime Victimization Survey in 2000. Property crime (burglary, theft, and motor vehicle theft) continued a 26-year decline” (United States Dept. of Justice) that began in 1973. Considering the unparalleled rates of crime that prevailed in the early 1980s and the common view that gates offer protection from crime, the timing of the initial gated community boom seems quite logical. These more recent crime trends demonstrate the ironic nature of their continued development since crime rates have begun to decline. The chance of being a victim of crime is now less than at any time in recent history. Nevertheless, fear of crime lingers, leading people to places they perceive as being safe and secure. Gated communities happen to be one such place.

Real estate constitutes the single most significant investment for many individuals and families. Attempts to protect that investment are only rational, and protection seems assured within gated communities. Future development and land use patterns, traffic volumes, and other physical conditions that impact real estate values are uncertain and potentially threatening beyond the gates. Inside, control appears to be at hand, providing a sense of security to those fearful of change. Local governments often cannot and will not promise protection from change. Meanwhile, the ruling governments of gated communities (homeowner associations) employ covenants, conditions, and restrictions (CC&Rs) that would be unbearable if enforced by a traditional public regime. These CC&Rs perpetually provide conformity, control, and stability by warding off the forces of change. Hence, gated communities stand firm in their efforts to protect the status quo while municipal governments seek ways to accommodate change. For those seeking stability, gated communities offer much appeal.

In recent years, the stability of America's social fabric has been challenged by a mass influx of immigrants. As a direct result, the face of America is dramatically changing and will likely continue to do so throughout the foreseeable future. But many of our nation's longstanding citizens appear not to welcome this demographic transformation. Blakely and Snyder find that "(T)he states where gated communities first took root, and where they are now most widespread, are also those where foreign immigration has been highest" (Fortress America 152). This association could certainly be the result of sheer coincidence. However, this finding suggests that residents affiliate gated communities with immunity from the forces of change taking place in America's cultural landscape. While gating may intend to segregate on the basis of income, race and economic status are closely related in our multicultural society. Gated communities are perhaps an indication that racism persists in America, particularly in the selection of housing.

As with any commodity in our capitalist economy, adequate demand induces the supply of goods by producers that stand to gain economic returns. In the housing market, developers serve as the producers/suppliers of gated communities. Their provision of these developments implies that profits are to be made. Time is money in the construction industry, and the fact that some "builders report faster sales in gated communities" ("The Gated Community Debate" 52) signifies their profitability. Some speculate that gates enhance builder profits by increasing the value of housing units within gated developments. If profits were not possible, supply would not be made available and gated communities would fail to exist regardless of the prevailing market demand. Thus, the relationship between developers, profitability, and market mechanics also comes to the fore in understanding why we have gated communities.

Since the onset of their explosion in the early 1980s, gated communities in the United States have arisen as an icon of both contemporary residential development and American culture. Statistics indicate that these communities house an increasing number of homeowners and renters alike each passing year. For instance, Helsey and Strange professed that "approximately 4,000,000 people lived in 'closed-off, gated communities' in the U.S. in 1994" (81). Just two years later in 1996, Kaufman stated that "(H)ousing experts estimate that as many as six million Americans live in private, gated

communities” (51). Blakely and Snyder suggest that the number of gated residents jumped to 8.4 million in 1997 (Fortress America 180), distributed among “as many as 20,000 gated communities, with more than 3 million units” (Fortress America 7). By comparison, the number of gated communities stood at just 12,000 in 1985 (Kanaracus 2). These figures reflect an increase of 8,000 gated communities (66%) in only 12 years. More current numbers are not available due in part to the rapid proliferation of gated communities in recent years. Nonetheless, the latest counts would certainly be much greater considering that gated communities continue to represent “the fastest-growing residential communities in the nation” (Owens 1128).

A review of residential construction trends from across the country further proves the popularity of gated communities. In San Antonio “(O)ne in three new single family houses...was built in a gated community, according to a February 1996 study” (Shen B5). Dillon claims that the same rate holds true for new communities developed around Phoenix, the suburbs of Washington, and in many parts of Florida (8). According to Edward J. Blakely “(A)lmost 40 percent of the residential housing in California is now behind security-guarded gates” (qtd. In Planning in the Americas 878). Richard Damstra states that “(O)ne California construction company indicated a demand for gated communities three times greater than that for nongated communities, and fifty-four percent of southern California homebuyers in a 1990 survey desired a home in a gated community” (530). Speaking of California’s San Fernando Valley, Jim Carlton reports that “there are 100 gated communities in the Valley, compared to almost none 10 years ago” (53). Perhaps the best indicator of the gated community craze comes from Florida, “where 90 percent of all new construction includes some kind of gate” (Kanaracus 2).

Historically, gated communities have been associated with America’s most successful and well-to-do. Today, gated communities represent the latest marketing strategy of developers. These developers capitalize upon the profitability of gated communities in all segments of the housing market. According to Blakely and Snyder “the majority (of gated communities) today comprise middle- to upper-middle-class households” (“Places to Hide” 22). In New Colony Village, a gated community of 416 houses in Elkridge, Maryland, new single-family homes sold at a starting price of only \$94,990 (Shen B1). Shen also alludes to Greenbrook Manor, a gated development in

Greenbelt, Maryland, where new gated condominiums and townhouses sold for between \$80,000 and \$100,000 (B5). Speaking of many of the new gated communities being build in the San Antonio metropolitan area, Smith, et al, states that “their houses all cost around \$100,000” (424). Obviously, gated communities are no longer reserved exclusively for the super rich.

Just as gated communities have spread to all segments of the housing market, so too have they spread across the American landscape. Mary Gail Snyder “says the only state where she hasn’t tagged them is North Dakota” (Spira 24). Baron claims that “every major metropolitan area has at least one or two” (94). While widely distributed, gated communities “are most popular in the Sun Belt states of California, Texas and Florida, as well as in New York City, Chicago, Phoenix and several other southern cities” (Lewis E12). Figure 1.2 illustrates the geographic distribution of gated communities in the United States.

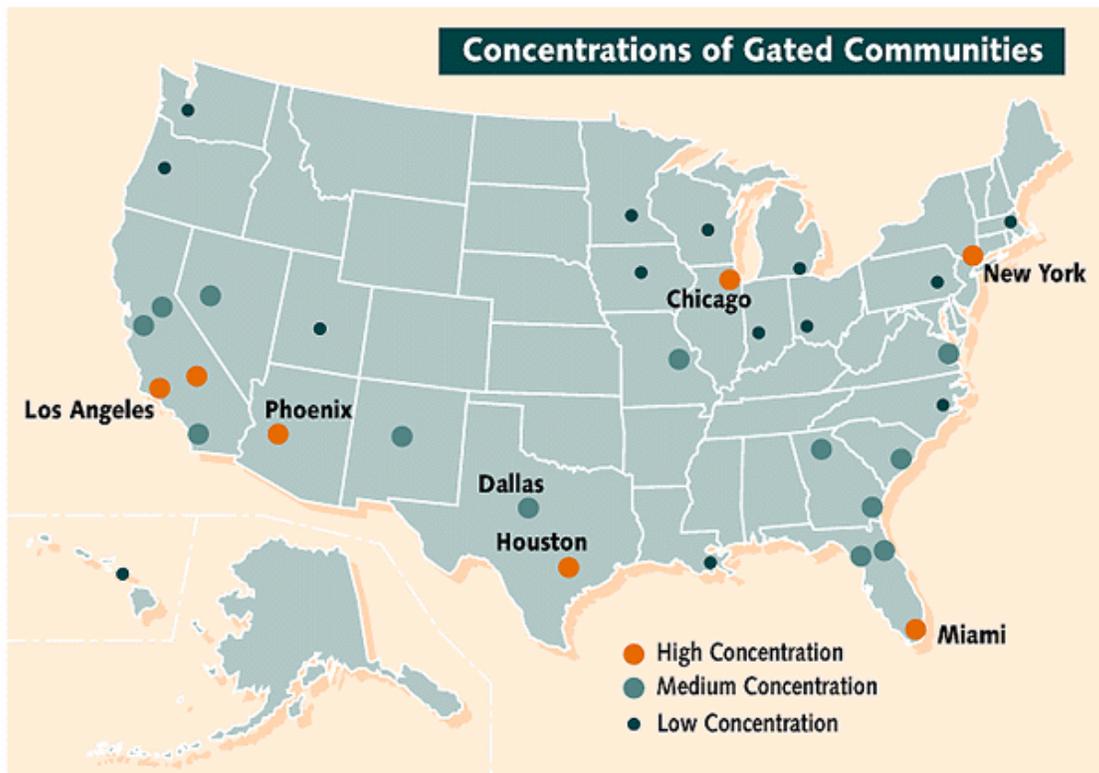


Figure 1.2. Major concentrations of gated communities in the United States

Source: Land Lines 1995.

Much of the residential construction in America continues to take place in the suburbs. Though gated communities comprise a bulk of current suburban construction, to think of these developments as a strictly suburban phenomenon is jaded. In fact, gates and similar obstacles are increasingly found stretching across points of entry to inner-city neighborhoods. Laura Raines contends that “a new trend is to take advantage of small, in-fill tracts much closer to the city” (HF25). At the national level, estimates go as high as to indicate that “(E)ight out of every 10 new urban projects are gated” (Tucker 23), leaving only 20 percent to publicly accessible neighborhoods. Many longstanding neighborhoods in cities across America are being gated in an attempt to control traffic and thwart crime, amongst other reasons. Nonetheless, gated communities remain most prominent in the suburbs as a direct result of their explosive rate of suburban growth that began in the 1980s.

1.3. Purpose of gated communities

Blakely and Snyder developed a series of labels for different varieties of gated communities. These names reappear throughout the literature on gated communities and prove particularly helpful for understanding and describing the objectives that gated communities are intended to accomplish. However, some of these developments demonstrate a combination of elements that are associated with only one type of gated community. Hence, the most appropriate classification for a particular gated development will not always be perfectly clear and/or indisputable.

The first of three major types of gated communities is the lifestyle community. These communities use barriers to secure both personal property and local amenities. Above all, the objective of these communities is privatization. By having control of local services and facilities the lifestyle community allows residents to make their own decisions without the hassle and complications of approaching a government institution. In turn, residents are ensured a predictable community environment that spurs no unwanted surprises, as well as neighbors that have similar interests.

Blakely and Snyder identify “three distinct types of lifestyle community: the retirement community; the golf and leisure community; and the suburban new town” (Fortress America 39). Recreational spaces such as a golf course, tennis facility, or an

equestrian center are central to the leisure community. Recreational facilities are often the focus of retirement communities as well. The suburban “new towns” are master-planned developments featuring gated residential areas that either encompass or are located adjacent to non-residential land uses. Each of the lifestyle communities emphasizes local amenities, and “security measures are designed primarily to provide distance from unwanted guests and control of amenities...rather than protection against crime” (Fortress America 47).

Blakely and Snyder consider prestige communities, the second primary class of gated communities, to be the fastest growing of all residential developments in the United States (Fortress America 40). Prestige communities are moderately concerned with protecting space and maintaining real estate values. Most important is the image and stature projected by the community. To the residents of prestige communities the communal gate stands as a sign of their entrance into the upper echelon of society. Prestige community residents very much desire that the gate portray their elite socioeconomic status. For this reason, many prestige communities hide behind ornately decorated barriers and display names that allude to wealth and nobility. Unlike the lifestyle community, recreational amenities are generally absent in the prestige community, leaving little more than a typical high-end residential subdivision within the peripheral gates. The various types of prestige communities include “enclaves of the rich and famous; developments for the top fifth, the very affluent; and executive home developments for the middle class” (Fortress America 41).

Security zone communities are the final major division of gated enclaves. These communities have retrofitted barriers to their boundaries as opposed to being gated from the community’s inception. Security zone communities are most often in a state of decline due to the infiltration of crime and other negative influences. Fear of crime and/or the desire to regain control of the community constitute the primary motivations for gating in these communities. Blakely and Snyder sometimes refer to these as “perches”, and further identify them as urban/city or suburban depending upon their geographic location.

A variant of the security zone community is the barricade perch. Barricade perches represent the fastest-growing type of security zone community. These

communities are not completely walled or fenced, as some entrances remain unobstructed. The gating of perches represents a bold move on the part of residents, who often resort to gates in a final effort to preserve and protect their neighborhood from the intrusion of socially and economically destructive forces.

1.4. Effects of gating on safety and security

Liberation from crime appears to be of grave importance to residents of gated communities. Blakely and Snyder conducted a national survey in 1995 in an attempt to identify the forces driving the explosive growth of these developments. The survey was mailed to approximately 7,000 Community Associations Institute (CAI) member associations, and about 2,000 responses were received. Of these, roughly 19 percent were from gated communities. According to the results of that survey “nearly 70 percent (of participants) indicated that security was a very important issue in their decision to live in their gated communities. Security was not an important motivation for only 1 percent” (Fortress America 126) of the survey participants. The magnitude of these measures confirms that residents flock to gated communities in hope of finding an environment that is safe and secured from the “crime-ridden” world beyond.

The perception of current and prospective residents alike suggests that gated communities deliver the benefits of safety and security. For instance, speaking to the results of their 1995 survey, Blakely and Snyder write that “(R)esidents told us repeatedly that they want to protect themselves from crime, reduce traffic, and control their neighborhood. And they believe that the gates work. More than two-thirds of the respondents believed there was less crime in their developments than in the surrounding areas. Of these, a full 80 percent attributed the differences to the gates” (Fortress America 126-7). A *Washington Post* article confirms this perception, quoting one potential buyer as saying “Nobody’s going to walk in and walk out with a TV set, with the gates” (Shen B5).

Current and prospective residents alike obviously see much promise in the ability of gated communities to defend against crime. But should they? Are gated communities truly benefiting their residents by preventing crime? By and large, the body of literature on gated communities reflects the contentions of Blakely and Snyder that “crime inside

the gates is only marginally altered by barricades” (“Fortress Communities” 2). However, over 20,000 gated communities exist in this nation, and each can tell its own story of crime. To make such a broad generalization denies the success that many communities have experienced following the installation of gates. The effects of gating on crime are spotty and far from providing any definitive answers. While gates sometimes prove to be an effective deterrent to crime, the communities they surround sometimes continue to be plagued by criminal activity. Generally speaking, the outcome seems anything but predictable. These all appear to be well-known facts to the developers of gated communities, who refrain from advertising their developments as crime-free or even effective in preventing crime for fear of the liability that accompanies such claims.

To demonstrate the argument that gates have an inconsistent effect on crime, consider the following examples. Perhaps the most detailed account of gating arises from Five Oaks, an inner-ring suburb of Dayton, Ohio. The community of Five Oaks “is located one mile north of downtown and is bordered on the east and west by two major commuting arteries” (Donnelly and Majka 193). A major interstate lies just one block away from the area, which is a half-mile squared and overlain by a traditional grid street system. Five Oaks covers 10 full blocks, boasts nearly 5,000 residents, and contains approximately 1,800 homes that date to the early 1900s. The gating of streets throughout the neighborhood began in August of 1992 in response to rising traffic volumes and problems with an assortment of specific crimes.

Planning studies and the development of a stabilization plan for Five Oaks occurred over a period of 12 months prior the installation of gates. This effort involved the collaboration of residents, a local neighborhood association, city officials, and consultant Oscar Newman. The project was completed in November of 1992 at a cost of \$693,000 (Donnelly and Kimble 498). A total of 35 streets, 11 of which previously provided access from surrounding neighborhoods, and 26 alleys were closed with a series of brick columns and metal gates. As a result of gating, the community now contains “eight mini-neighborhoods of three or four streets each. Each mini-neighborhood has only one entrance point, the rest of the internal streets being closed with automatic gates.

None of the feeder streets are continuous from one border to another” (Fortress America 117). All pedestrian and bicycle pathways leading into the community remain open.

Within one year of the project’s completion, “(V)iolent crime in Five Oaks declined by 40%” (Donnelly and Kimble 500). “Other crimes, predominantly nonviolent offenses, decreased by 24% between 1992 and 1993 in Five Oaks. The largest decreases among the more common offenses occurred in burglaries (39%) and larcenies (25%)” (Donnelly and Kimble 500). Incidences of vandalism also declined within the first year. Though benefits still prevailed in the second year after project completion, their magnitude began to erode, and some minor offenses actually increased. Table 1.1 allows a thorough examination of crime in Five Oaks immediately before and after gating.

Table 1.1. Crime in Five Oaks, 1990-1994

<i>Crime</i>	<i>1990</i>	<i>1991</i>	<i>1992</i>	<i>1993</i>	<i>1994</i>	<i>Percent Change, 1992-93</i>	<i>Percent Change, 1992-94</i>
Homicide	2	2	1	1	1	0	0
Rape	5	6	6	14	6	133	0
Robbery	33	40	67	35	47	-48	-30
Aggravated Assault	20	40	45	21	19	-53	-58
Subtotal Violent Crime	60	88	119	71	73	-40	-39
Other Assaults	207	207	225	200	212	-11	-6
Burglary	118	168	181	110	103	-39	-43
Larceny	209	222	251	189	182	-25	-27
Auto Theft	83	58	61	52	62	-15	2
Arson	8	7	12	2	5	-83	-58
Vandalism	194	138	188	148	167	-21	-11
Carrying Concealed Weapon	3	7	6	9	4	50	-33
Prostitution	10	22	14	8	3	-43	-79
Narcotics	14	23	13	11	20	-15	54
Intoxication	2	0	7	0	0	-100	-100
Misc.	65	78	84	88	79	5	-6
Subtotal Other Crime	913	930	1042	817	837	-22	-20
Grand Total	973	1018	1161	888	910	-24	-22

Source: Donnelly and Kimble, 1997.

Interestingly, Donnelly and Kimble state that “(O)f the eight police sectors in the surrounding area, five saw increases in crime in a range of 2% to 20% between 1992 and 1993. Three sectors experienced declines in the range of 11% to 14%. Overall, the eight sectors had a 1% net decline in crime, which mirrored the 1% decline experienced by the whole city in 1993” (500). Though the overall rate of change among the surrounding localities was consistent with that for the city at large, these findings suggest that crimes might have been deflected away from Five Oaks at the expense of surrounding communities. The evidence is inconclusive, however, so no final conclusion seems possible.

Furthermore, the findings presented in Table 1.1 lead us to question the ability of gates to maintain crime prevention benefits throughout the distant future. The results from Five Oaks seem consistent with Blakely and Snyder’s argument that “the long-term crime rate is at best only marginally altered” (“Places to Hide” 22). Nonetheless, most local residents and law enforcement officers consider the gating of Five Oaks a huge success in securing and improving safety in the neighborhood. Given the immediate results, their sentiment seems quite reasonable.

Potomac Gardens, a public housing complex that resorted to gates in its battle against crime, also experienced a reduction in crime. The 252-unit complex consists of multiple faded-brick buildings, all of which are clustered upon a full Capitol Hill block. Potomac Gardens was regarded as one of the most dangerous and drug-infested public housing complexes in Washington, D.C., before an eight-foot iron fence arose in June of 1992. Even so, many tenants opposed the idea of erecting an eight-foot barrier to conceal the complex. But opposition turned to favoritism within a few months when the “measures dramatically reduced drug dealing and vandalism” (Fortress America 102).

Much of the benefits at Potomac Gardens relate to reduced drug activity. Santiago O’Donnell reports that 41 drug arrests were made in a span of three months the year before the fence was erected at Potomac Gardens (DC1). During the same three-month period the following year officers made only seven drug-related arrests (DC2). Again, the gains in this example seem much more than “marginal”. As in Five Oaks, gating appears to have provided Potomac Gardens with newfound vitality, hope, and

success in its fight against crime. However, the experience of all gated communities has not been so fortunate.

Neighborhoods throughout Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, began gating their streets in the 1980s. High rates of crime and mounting automobile traffic had long plagued the residents of these Ft. Lauderdale neighborhoods. Residents considered gating to be a solution to their problems. Interested in the effect on crime, police in Ft. Lauderdale decided to compare the crime rates of barricaded and non-barricaded neighborhoods. Crime rates in barricaded neighborhoods (those with barricades present for a full year) declined only seven percent on average from 1987 to 1988. The rate of crime in open, non-barricaded neighborhoods declined by an average of nine percent over that same period. Crime citywide dropped by an average of 11 percent in 1988 from the 1987 rate. By comparison, gating apparently failed to produce any truly favorable results.

But the tables seemed to turn in a favorable direction for the barricaded communities in 1989. In that year, the barricaded communities averaged a greater reduction in crime (3 percent) than did both non-barricaded neighborhoods and the City of Ft. Lauderdale at large (1 and 2 percent, respectively). Hence, the gated communities of Ft. Lauderdale provide an example of both success and failure depending upon the point in time at which a final conclusion is drawn. Overall, however, gating produced no substantial crime prevention benefits. Table 1.2 on the following page reflects the findings from Ft. Lauderdale as reported by Blakely and Snyder. Much like Five Oaks, the situation in Ft. Lauderdale indicates that rates of crime in gated communities are not forever constant.

Table 1.2. Crime Rate Trends in Ft. Lauderdale Neighborhoods, 1988-1989

<i>Neighborhood Type</i>	<i>Percent change from previous year</i>	
	1988	1989
<u>Barricaded</u>		
River Park	-18	9
Sunrise Intracoastal	-6	-2
Tarpon River	-3	-8
Edgewood	0	-8
Average	-7	-3
<u>Non-Barricaded</u>		
Coral Ridge	-15	0
Coral Ridge Isles	-8	-4
Croissant Park	-10	-6
Dorsey Riverbend	-18	6
Ft. Lauderdale Beach	-9	-5
Lauderdale Manors	-1	-11
Melrose Manors	-9	14
North East Ft. Lauderdale	-9	-2
Nother East Progresso	-11	-18
Poinsetta Heights	-2	-6
River Oaks	6	-9
Riverland	-7	-2
Shady Banks	-13	15
South Middle River	-18	-2
Victoria Park	-13	9
Average	-9	-1
Citywide Average	-11	-2

Source: Fortress America 1997.

While the full effects of gating remain unclear, there is evidence that gated communities calm resident fears of crime. Blakely and Snyder proclaim that residents of gated communities report “that they feel their developments are safer and that the gates are responsible” (“Places to Hide” 22). A resident of Sandstone, a gated community in Kelowna, British Columbia, Canada, asks, “Where else can a widow go out for a midnight stroll and feel safe?” (Anthony 25). These are indications that the true effect of gates may be less important to residents than the peace of mind and sense of security they feel while inside. Gates may be little more than a placebo, but that appears to be of little

concern to the residents of gated communities. The ability of gates to allay fears may alone produce favorable results by enticing residents out of their homes and into the community. As a result, encounters with both those that belong and those that do not may reflect positively upon the long-term rates of crime within gated communities.

To this point, the logic behind gated communities has been largely neglected. Chapter 2 will present the crime prevention theory known as “defensible space” in an attempt to illustrate why gating is thought to be an effective way to safeguard communities from crime. The chapter will then proceed with a critique of the assumptions underlying defensible space theory, using gated communities as the means of analysis.

Chapter 3 will present several additional crime theories. These theories will be detailed and their implications for gated communities discussed. The theories should be particularly useful in reaching an understanding of why the effectiveness of gating with respect to crime prevention is inconsistent and spotty. The true effect of gates and/or their ability to sort those who belong from those who do not will also be addressed. Several brief case examples will be used to support the discussion, as appropriate.

Chapter 4, the final chapter of the paper, will begin by looking beyond matters of crime in gated communities. At this point the focus will turn to other common concerns about gated communities, particularly as seen from the standpoint of planning practice and objectives. Thereafter, the chapter will include a discussion of issues surrounding gated communities that are ripe for further research. Attention to these issues will further our understanding of gated communities and answer many questions that remain unresolved. The chapter and paper concludes by summarizing the findings, providing personal opinions on gated communities, and offering recommendations for future practice.

Chapter 2 – Defensible Space and the Justification for Gated Communities

2.1. What is defensible space?

An individual's ability to protect him/herself from harm is generally thought to be a function of human strength, self-defense skills and training, personal experience, individual awareness, and, among other things, prevailing conditions of the immediate surroundings. The latter is the focus of the crime-prevention theory known as defensible space. This particular theory was popularized by Oscar Newman, author of the infamous 1972 book entitled "Defensible Space". Defensible space theory contends that crime and the physical design of our urban living environments are often times directly related. In other words, the theory holds that patterns and instances of crime often correlate with particular features of the man-made environment, particularly those relating to architectural character and physical organization.

Newman sees the physical design of our built environment as exerting a strong influence upon human behavior. Though the design of our surroundings is conceivably limited only by man's creativity, Newman claims that some built environments are accommodating to criminal interests. To Newman, crimes are often committed as a result of designs that present the criminal with an opportunity to misbehave, as "(M)uch crime is crime of opportunity rather than premeditated" (Newman 205). This view holds that convenience plays a significant role in explaining the occurrence of crime.

By designing our environment in a manner that makes criminal conduct more risky, more challenging, less rewarding, and less appealing, Newman argues that the convenience of committing crime will be lost and safety improved. Newman further contends that certain design features allow residents to maintain control over their surroundings, in effect discouraging acts of criminal behavior. Through the application of several underlying principles, defensible space aims to create "a living residential environment which can be employed by inhabitants for the enhancement of their lives, while providing security for their families, neighbors, and friends" (Newman 3). The concept has been refined and expanded in recent years and is sometimes referenced as Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED), among others. Today, cities

from Toronto to San Diego apply the concept's many principles and apparently reap benefits in the form of modest rates of crime.

2.2 Facets of defensible space

Defensible space theory consists of three primary facets. The first among these is surveillance. Surveillance concerns the ability to see and be seen within the built environment and is described by Newman as "(T)he capacity of physical design to provide surveillance opportunities for residents and their agents" (Newman 78). Not only must an environment allow those who belong to be seen, but the same is true for those who do not belong. Environments that conceal the would-be criminal put rightful users at risk and fail to challenge criminal activity. Newman assumes that criminals fear being seen, as his/her purpose is to commit crime without being held accountable.

To be seen is to risk getting caught, and being seen is most difficult to evade in environments that provide a high degree of surveillance. Risk is thought to be unwelcome by criminals, leading high levels of risk to reduce the likelihood that a crime will be committed. Furthermore, areas receiving a lot of surveillance tend to be accommodating and inviting to lawful activity. The increased use of space by wanted users and for the intended purposes provides a heightened level of surveillance. In turn, heightened surveillance improves the chances that a wrongdoer will be confronted, caught in the act, or discouraged all together.

Surveillance is often classified into two distinct categories: natural and physical. The former refers to the surveillance offered by human users of space. Newman agrees with Jane Jacobs' claim "that the surveillance provided by the casual passerby on foot or in a car is important as a deterrent to criminal activity" (Newman 25). Consider a situation in which parents chaperone their children to the community park or playground. The parents effectively stand watch over the space and its immediate surroundings by simply going about their own business. The presence of rightful users introduces risk of an encounter and complicates the criminal's ability to perform an act of wrongdoing without be seen, heard, or otherwise noticed. Hence, human use of space offers surveillance naturally without resorting to additional measures. At the same time, the use

of security personnel serves as a source of natural surveillance despite the fact that he/she is present by assignment.

When reliance upon human users of space is supported by additional measures, those additional measures provide physical surveillance. Physical surveillance measures supplement the observation of space that is afforded by random human activity. These measures commonly include the use of electronic devices such as security cameras and closed-circuit television. Each serves to monitor space and provide the sensation as if someone is watching in an attempt to identify and discourage threatening and/or inappropriate behavior.

The second facet of defensible space is known as territoriality. Territoriality concerns the division of space into areas that are private and those that are open for public use. Newman finds this to be no less important than adequate surveillance, for “improving visual surveillance opportunities may be a pointless task if the resident is viewing activity taking place in an area he does not identify with” (Newman 50).

Territoriality is thought to deliver several benefits. For one, demarcation indicates that criminals and other outsiders are not welcome in certain spaces. As a result, a message is sent that intrusion is inappropriate and prohibited, in effect discouraging unwanted persons and activities. Second, the division of space is thought to generate a sense of ownership and belonging amongst residents. These feelings establish community pride, leading residents to act as a collective in their effort to battle crime. In other words, the boundaries of their own space are clear and leave no confusion over the limits of space to be defended. Through the messages and feelings established by territorial measures, perceived risk is heightened and the appeal of committing crime greatly reduced.

According to defensible space theory, territoriality is achieved in one of several ways. One such way is through the use of barriers. Barriers establish boundary limits and come in two forms: real and symbolic. Real barriers are physical objects that surround a given space and include such devices as walls and fences. Symbolic barriers, on the other hand, are features that interrupt a normal sequence or pattern from recurring in the built environment. Symbolic barriers create change that is indicative of a transition from public to private space. Change is accomplished through paving materials, height

of walkways, landscaping, lighting, signage, etc. “Both serve a common purpose: to inform that one is passing from a space which is public where one’s presence is not questioned through a barrier to a space which is private and where one’s presence requires justification” (Newman 63).

The arrangement of buildings also comes to play in creating territoriality. Buildings oriented toward one another or a common space suggest private ownership. Scale of development is also important since excessively large spaces exceed human capacity to survey and defend space. Therefore, excessively large spaces lead to a poor sense of ownership. No matter how territoriality might be achieved there is a strong reliance upon the science of human psychology. Underlying territoriality is the assumption that individuals are both rational and responsive to perception.

Access control is the third and final of the three primary facets of defensible space. In the event that the psychological behavior assumption happens to fail, access control becomes particularly important as a defense against crime. Access control, sometimes referenced as target hardening, is the idea that unwanted activities and individuals can be excluded by physically restricting entry for those not welcome. Hence, access control entails the use of real or physical barriers to protect space and prohibit the entrance of undesirables.

Physical barriers play upon the defensible space notions of challenge, risk, and appeal. From the criminal’s viewpoint obstacles increase the effort required to enter an environment and later commit a crime. Effort beyond that required to commit a crime equates to greater challenge. From the standpoint of defensible space theory, additional challenge diminishes the appeal of unlawful activity to the would-be criminal. In turn, crimes occur with less frequency.

Breaching a physical barrier also requires that criminals invest time. Time improves the probability of exposure and exposure lends itself to being caught. Therefore, barriers heighten the risk of being caught and should reduce criminal misconduct. At large, access control is thought to keep criminals away from opportunities while heightening the inconvenience of committing crimes against those found inside the bounded area. Combined, all of these principles are said to make “(A)ny

intruder...anticipate that his presence will be under question and open to challenge; so much so that a criminal can be deterred from even contemplating entry” (Newman 3).

2.3. Links to gated communities

Though defensible space theory was not formally established by Oscar Newman until 1971, the ideas it proposes were certainly considered long before. Recall that tycoons of the beer industry gated some inner-city neighborhoods of St. Louis in the 1850s in order to create a buffer against the uncertainty of outside activity. This demonstrates that barriers have long been viewed as a means of offering safety, security, and freedom from crime. That same sentiment appears to persist this very day in light of those resident perceptions cited in the previous chapter. For gated communities past and present, defensible space theory provides an excellent lens through which the logic of these developments can be explained and understood.

The link between gated communities and access control is perhaps most obvious. By blockading streets and encompassing residential units, barriers complicate accessibility for those lacking membership. Barriers conceivably secure the perimeter against trespass and provide sense of mind that everyone inside belongs and/or has the approval of another resident. Whereas “strangers of any description are an automatic inducement to fear and distrust” (Fortress America 100), the gate seems a way to exclude strangers and rid residents of such uneasy feelings.

Gated communities also seem justified in light of their enhanced surveillance capabilities. The typical non-gated community is accessible from a roadway network that includes multiple feeder streets. These streets often penetrate communal boundaries at several different points and effectively disperse traffic across a broad geography. Through the employment of access control measures, gated communities funnel traffic through relatively few (most often 1) points. A limited number of entryways concentrates surveillance at these points and allows residents to “distinguish (their) neighbors from strangers” (Newman 177).

Considering the notion that criminals fear being seen, defensible space theory contends that the latter scenario will discourage attempts to gain unauthorized entry. Gated communities that post guards at their point(s) of entry take surveillance even

farther. Entry to these guarded communities mandates human contact. If being sighted by the residents of a gated community is risky and unappealing to the criminal, the surveillance afforded by guards would certainly seem to hinder a criminal's ability to enter unnoticed. The additional surveillance provided by security guards leads the criminal to identify greater risk and find even less appeal in his/her attempt to commit crime in the guarded environment. For these reasons gates and guards act as a shield, stopping criminals and denying them access to the community that lies beyond.

Gated communities and territoriality are linked in that gates clarify and clearly define communal boundaries. In this sense gates automatically provide membership to the communal fraternity and create a common bond amongst those living inside. Community and membership are generally desirable from the standpoint of homeowners, as they represent benefits in addition to those afforded by homeownership. Membership and community also suggest cooperation, support, social opportunity, and camaraderie; attributes that weigh heavy in the hearts of most anyone. Newman suggested that these qualities alone could be beneficial in reducing crime, for "(W)hen people begin to protect themselves as individuals as not as a community, the battle against crime is effectively lost" (Newman 3).

2.4. Critique of assumptions

The question that arises at this point is the following: Are these outcomes simply possibilities or are gated communities truly providing their residents a near perfect living arrangement? From the standpoint of defensible space theory the latter seems the correct answer. From a more realistic point of view the latter appears to be far from the truth. Perhaps more so than any other form of development, gated communities provide the opportunity to assess the assumptions underlying defensible space theory. Overall, reality appears to turn the theory of defensible space on its head.

To begin, recall the idea that access control devices complicate efforts to gain entry. Assuming that complication leads to risk and risk reduces appeal, the barriers surrounding gated communities should deter criminal attempts to enter and effectively prevent crime. However, this scenario seems not to always prevail in light of the outcomes in Five Oaks, Ft. Lauderdale, and many other gated communities that are

addressed in the literature. While crime dropped appreciably in the case of Five Oaks and Potomac Gardens, it did not drop to a level that reflects an outright absence of crime. This suggests that barriers are in fact breached. Hence, gates might not be quite as inconveniencing to the criminal as defensible space theory would have them be. The allegation that gates are breached by criminals will be supported with examples in the following chapter.

Gated communities also challenge the relationship between surveillance and crime. Surveillance is said to introduce risk that in turn impedes the convenience and attraction of criminal misconduct. Defensible space theory accepts surveillance as a given so long as there is human occupancy of space. However, gated communities appear to present the unthinkable scenario in which human presence does not automatically provide surveillance. Blakely and Snyder find that “(B)ecause of the security measures, people assume that everyone they see inside their development belongs there” (Fortress America 71). This suggests that comfort reigns within the gates, and to some extent, that surveillance is neglected. While surveillance can deter criminal conduct, it does only so long as individuals are conscious of who the criminals really are. With their gates and guards, gated communities make a challenge of distinguishing those who do and do not rightfully belong within the gate until criminal activity is spotted. This potentially diminishes the proactive response to crime that is advocated by defensible space theory.

Gates are certainly an effective way to demarcate space and show ownership. Yet the assumed effect that demarcation has on crime is debatable. The fact that most all gated communities have a crime rate greater than zero tells us one of two things, if not both. For one, the barriers of gated communities do not deter all criminals living outside the gates. This does considerable harm to both the science of psychology and the argument that gates (and guardhouses) are a psychological deterrent to crime. Secondly, the sense of community created by gates is apparently not strong enough to prevent all on the inside from committing crimes. Since there is little assurance that all criminals are gated out by the communal gate, this brings the inhabitants of gated communities into question and illustrates the danger of assuming that criminals are not actually being gated in rather than out.

By and large, gated communities do considerable damage to the theory of defensible space. Access fails to be fully controlled in reality, surveillance is neglected due to the perceived benefits of the gate and guards, and the true strength of community that is built by the gate is in question. Gated communities might further serve as evidence that the individual facets of defensible space theory are in conflict with one another. Diane Zahm, for instance, contends that “(T)he perimeter wall is a good way to define public and private space, but the wall also eliminates opportunities to see and be seen” (77). While quite logical, defensible space theory proves that logic is not always as sound as it might seem.

Defensible space is far from the only theory to address the subject of crime. The next chapter will introduce the reader to some of these additional crime-related concepts and theories. An examination of additional crime theories seems particularly appropriate in light of the failure of defensible space theory to demonstrate why gated communities are not completely free of crime. Whereas defensible space theory seemingly defies logic, the intent of this next chapter is to explain why that logic sometimes fails and how defensible space theory is shortsighted. At large, the material presented in the following chapter will demonstrate how and why gated communities often disprove the contentions of defensible space theory.

Chapter 3 – Alternative Views of the Gate: Theoretical and Practical Considerations

Similar to defensible space, other crime theories argue that a relationship exists between crime and the environment. Literature that examines this relationship falls into one of two basic categories. The first category focuses on the target or victim and relates the criminal event to issues of planning and design. Defensible space is the primary theory in this particular area. The second category examines the influence of context on the offender's behavior and is distinguished from defensible space in two ways. First, these theories focus on offender behavior rather than the target or victim of crime. Second, these theories consider a broad array of environment variables that can influence criminal conduct. Examples of the latter include laws, regulations, policies, economic conditions, personal networks, the physical environment, and so on.

This second category is generally referenced as environmental criminology. C. Ray Jeffery proposed the original theoretical model of environmental criminology in his book "Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design" (1972, 1977). Much theoretical development has taken place in this area since Jeffery's original work was completed. These developments include opportunity/rational choice theory, routine activity theory, pattern theory, situational prevention, and "offensible" space theory. Each of these theories is examined and their implications for gated communities discussed below.

3.1. Gates and crime in crime prevention theory

Opportunity Theory

The opportunity theory of crime follows a rational choice approach to explain criminal behavior. Opportunity theory assumes the criminal to be a rational creature who weighs effort, risk, and reward in the process of selecting targets. Central to this theory is the notion that "the opportunity makes the thief" (Fattah 246). At times when high aspirations and promising opportunities converge, opportunity theory contends that the criminal is likely to pursue those opportunities that maximize gains and minimize loss.

An underlying assumption of gated communities is that their barriers increase the

effort required to gain entry. In turn, gates heighten the risk of being noticed and reported. According to opportunity theory, however, the gains or rewards available to the criminal can serve to counterbalance the effort and risk associated with gates. To illustrate this point, consider the following hypothetical scenario.

Imagine a gate that surrounds a single dollar bill. Now imagine the same gate surrounding a massive pile of hundred dollar bills valued at many millions of dollars. The latter is unquestionably the more attractive of the two options to the rational criminal. Hence, the rational criminal will identify little reason to expend effort and risk being caught in order to obtain the single dollar. But as the potential reward increases in value, the relative amount of risk and effort is reduced by the heightened gains. This is to say that effort, risk, and reward is not fixed. Rather, the criminal will measure each in proportion to the one another when selecting targets. Hence, the perceived amount of effort, risk, and reward can increase or decrease depending upon the circumstances of a given situation. For gated communities this implies that gates are effective at preventing crime only so long as criminals must expend much effort to surpass the gate, a high level of risk is involved in attempts to breach the gate, and there exist few rewards inside. In the event that rewards are comparatively high, the gate is little more than a welcome challenge.

Opportunity theory also leads us to question the effect of gates that successfully thwart crime. If gates effectively secure criminal opportunities found inside, will criminals not simply prey upon opportunities on the outside? The displacement of crime from gated to non-gated areas seems a distinct possibility. Accordingly, the level of safety that prevails *outside* the gates may be diminished as a result of their installation.

Routine Activity Theory

Similar to opportunity theory, routine activity theory focuses “upon the circumstances in which (offenders) carry out predatory criminal acts” (Cohen and Felson 588). The movement of offenders and potential victims/targets is a primary focus of routine activity theory. According to the theory, crime results when a motivated offender, suitable target, and the absence of a capable guardian converge in time and

space. The theory contends that capable guardians are often absent as a result of routine human activities.

Routine activities are defined as “any recurrent and prevalent activities which provide for basic population and individual needs, whatever their biological or cultural origins” (Cohen and Felson 593). Such activities are far too numerous to inventory in a comprehensive list. Common examples include work, school, and church or worship; all of which are conducted at scheduled and predictable times. As we go about these activities in the course of daily life we are removed from our roles as guardians of people, property, and space.

Juvenile delinquency and victimization serve as prime examples of the consequences of routine activity. The highest rates of both juvenile offending and juvenile victimization occur during the hours immediately after school. At these times, many children are left unsupervised due to parental work arrangements. Parental absence allows the child to be mischievous and leaves him/her vulnerable to a predatory attack. Accordingly, the *way* in which we live determines our susceptibility to criminal events and behavior more so than where we live. In the words of Lawrence Cohen and Marcus Felson, “the opportunity for predatory crime appears to be enmeshed in the opportunity structure for legitimate activities to such an extent that it might be very difficult to root out substantial amounts of crime without modifying much of our way of life” (605).

Routine activity theory seems quite helpful in explaining why gating sometimes fails to liberate communities from crime. Gated communities of old were inhabited largely by the elderly and rich. These are relatively stationary populations that typically have few routine obligations. The one worker household in which mothers and wives stayed home to tend the home and children was also quite common in years past. Today, however, different socioeconomic conditions prevail. Gated communities are now home to the common man, woman, and child that are separated from their homes by work, school, and other routine activities. Paul and Patricia Brantingham find that “within a city there are concentrations, or ‘hot spots’ of property crimes, frequently, but not always, associated with areas of a city where employment rates are high” (“Nodes, Paths and Edges” 8). Furthermore, Edward Blakely found that “most residential burglaries (in gated communities) happen during the day” (qtd. in Lang and Danielsen 888). The

demographic makeup of modern gated communities entails high rates of employment, which leaves them vacant and unguarded throughout much of the typical day. These findings add a bit of credibility to routine activity theory and suggest that gates are a poor substitute for human presence. Gates, walls, and other barriers are little help if no one is around to monitor, report, and stand guard against criminals.

Pattern Theory

Pattern theory of crime addresses the physical movement and activities of perpetrators in familiar geographic settings. This theory views “crime occurrence as the result of and knowledge about the surrounding environment” (“Nodes, Paths and Edges” 4). Criminals commit crimes in places that provide a sense of comfort and that afford the criminal an awareness of probable outcomes. Further, criminals seek “environmental elements that give the offender the feeling that he (or she) belongs to the setting and does not stand out as ecologically incongruent and is consequently unlikely to be noticed by anyone who might intervene” (“Nodes, Paths and Edges” 5). These attributes are most often gained through repeated exposure to a particular environment.

Quite logically, the area immediately surrounding one’s home is where he/she will find the most comfort and familiarity. Paul and Patricia Brantingham refer to such places as an individual’s awareness space, and “(C)riminal targets are usually picked from within this awareness space” (“Nodes, Paths and Edges” 10). The Brantingham’s also suggest that “people who commit crimes know a city largely from legitimate, routine activities and seem to restrict most of their criminal behavior to these legitimately known areas” (“Nodes, Paths and Edges” 9). Considering these discoveries, gates seemingly provide no defense against criminals that live *within* the gated area.

Rates of crime in gated communities may reflect the presence of criminal residents. This assertion is supported by the Brantinghams’ finding that “(M)uch residential crime is committed by *insiders*, that is, many people commit offences in areas they know well, to which they have legitimate access and to which they belong in a social and cultural sense...Insiders have a better awareness of the area, of the routine daily activities of individuals and families and of who is actually home than outsiders are ever

likely to develop” (“Nodes, Paths and Edges” 20). Criminal-minded residents obviously hold the upper hand in their communities, be those gated or not.

Pattern theory also provides a reasonable explanation for the inconsistent effects of gating on crime. Aside from the home and its immediate surroundings, individuals also become familiar with nodal points and areas along normal routes of travel. The Brantingham’s found that “many property crimes occur on or near the main roads that carry lots of traffic or major public transit stops and therefore fall into the awareness space of a large number of people, including potential offenders” (“Nodes, Paths and Edges” 17). Activity centers draw all types, ranging from the most honorable to the least lawful. These facilities increase the number of potential offenders that might attempt and succeed at transcending communal gates.

The regional shopping mall provides an excellent example of an activity center. Masses of people from throughout the area are drawn to these facilities. As trips to the mall are repeated, visitors become familiar with the center and surrounding area. Individuals also become familiar with areas lying adjacent to roadways taken to access the mall. In other words, both the mall and the surrounding environment become part of the awareness space of visitors. Consequently, some gated communities might be disadvantaged in comparison to others. Those located in close proximity to centers of human activity and other dynamic locations might be predisposed to crime based solely upon their geographic disposition.

Situational Prevention

Situational prevention is the least conceptual and most methodical of the crime theories being discussed. Some might hesitate to consider it a theory at all, though that argument is beyond the interest and purpose of this paper. Situation prevention is a framework that “comprises opportunity-reducing measures that are, (1) directed at highly specific forms of crime (2) that involve the management, design or manipulation of the immediate environment in as systematic and permanent way as possible (3) so as to increase the effort and risks of crime and reduce the rewards as perceived by a wide range of offenders” (Clarke 4). Similar to defensible space theory, situational prevention focuses heavily upon surveillance, target hardening, and environmental management.

Yet situational prevention goes beyond defensible space theory and endorses common-sense strategies “that can be utilized within any organizational or management structure and that is open, not just to police, but to whoever can muster the resources and energy to tackle the problem in hand” (Clarke 7).

Situational prevention is quite broad in that it considers precise targets of crime, public policy, private business operations, business management, and environmental design during the problem solving process. Situational prevention strategies provide a response to crime, thereby allowing full information to be collected and analyzed before resorting to drastic measures. Advocates of the theory stress the importance of conducting a thorough evaluation of place-specific problems and characteristics before selecting a course of corrective action. In other words, “(S)ituational measures cannot be applied wholesale; they need to be tailored to the particular circumstances giving rise to specific problems of crime and disorder” (Clarke 28). Most appropriate measures are identified and assessed through the following five stages of a situational prevention project (Clarke 5):

- 1) collection of data about the nature and dimensions of the specific crime problem;
- 2) analysis of the situational conditions that permit or facilitate the commission of the crimes in question;
- 3) systematic study of possible means of blocking opportunities for these particular crimes, including analysis of costs;
- 4) implementation of the most promising, feasible and economic measures; and
- 5) monitoring of results and dissemination of experience.

From the standpoint of situational prevention, the use of gates at newly constructed communities represents a generic solution to a complex problem. The theory holds that crimes are a result of context, which must be studied and understood before resorting to preventative measures. Specific problems need to be addressed in a manner that best suits place-specific problems and characteristics. Without first conducting the preliminary steps in the process detailed above, the true result of strategic measures will include few if any benefits at all.

Situational prevention holds that gates must be a reactive response to criminal activity and the most appropriate solution to the problem at hand if the crime prevention objective is to be achieved. For this reason, advocates of situational prevention will argue that gates are many times not needed since there is no crime for gates to be responding to prior to their installation. Considering that gates have often not been identified as an effective means for addressing crime, those same advocates will be little surprised by the fact that gates so often fail to protect the communities they surround.

By and large, the experience of Five Oaks provides a degree of credibility to situational prevention theory. Problems with crime in Five Oaks spurred a thorough analysis of the situation, which ultimately led to the “legitimate” use of gates. In the end, the process produced favorable outcomes in the form of reduced crime. Coincidence or not, an approach quite similar to the one advanced by situation prevention led Five Oaks to success in its crime prevention efforts.

“Offensible” Space Theory

By twisting the most basic assumption underlying common thought and perception, the little-known theory dubbed “offensible” space presents the unthinkable. Randall Atlas contends that “(D)ealers and criminals have intuitively understood the concepts of creating territory, surveillance, and access control. Drug dens and criminal hot spots incorporate the CPTED principles for the illicit purpose of creating a safe or defensible space to conduct crime” (3). While we tend to identify gates and barriers as a means of deflecting criminal behavior and activities, is it not possible for criminals to use these devices to their own benefit? Could we be building communities that in fact protect criminal interests and advantage criminal misconduct?

Randall Atlas argues that those questions are correctly answered with a ‘yes’, stating that “(C)riminals are using access control, surveillance, and territorial strategies to obstruct law enforcement and ensure the security of their illegal businesses” (4). Gates can shield criminals from the forces of good, “slow down police entry and prevent drug thefts” (Atlas 4). This aids the criminal by increasing reaction time, allowing dispersion, and all together providing the ability to avoid apprehension. Just as gates might protect law abiding residents from harm, so too might they shield the criminal and create an

environment that produces opportunities for crime. Contrary to what defensible space would have us believe, offensive space theory demonstrates that the benefits of gating might not be one sided. Criminals, too, can reap benefits from communal gating.

Offensive space and the other crime theories prove helpful in explaining the occurrence of crime behind gates and the motivations to defy discouraging barriers. However, these theories do not demonstrate the ways in which criminal outsiders gain access to gated communities. Coupled with our knowledge of historical fort towns, the term “gated community” conjures thoughts and mental images of a development that hides behind a stout and persuasive barrier. Yet Chapter 1 illustrated that the devices fronting today’s gated communities are not always as durable as the stone walls that surrounded forts of old. Gated communities do not stand behind a peripheral membrane that seals immediately upon passage by a rightful owner or welcomed guest. Inevitably, unwelcome visitors will find opportunities to enter.

3.2. Realities of gated living

Simply put, the devices employed by gated communities fail to make entry physically impossible for those lacking membership or invitation. Criminals find ways to penetrate the barriers of gated communities and are committing crimes once inside. The following discussion illustrates some of the unconventional methods used by wrongdoers to overcome communal barriers. At the same time, this discussion demonstrates why the residents of gated communities are not quite as secure as they often hope, think, and/or feel.

Tailgating, the practice in which one vehicle follows another at close distance, plagues many drivers on a daily basis. Aggressive drivers identify tailgating as a means to frustrate other drivers. Frustrated drivers sometimes allow the aggressor to pass freely and uncontested. Felons also practice tailgating as a means to bypass the entryway barriers of gated communities. Upon being triggered, gates retract and remain open long enough to allow authorized vehicles to enter. To prevent vehicles from being damaged, gates often do not close until some time after the authorized vehicle has cleared the entryway. This window of time presents an opportunity for unauthorized vehicles (and hence criminals) to gain entry by sticking closely to the authorized vehicle directly ahead.

The residents of gated communities seem most capable of preventing criminal access by way of tailgating. After passing through the gate, simply coming to a stop until the gate reaches its fully-closed position effectively eliminates the ability to enter by way of tailgating. However, residents of gated communities rarely perform this practice. Such behavior is apparently identified as an inconvenience, and inconvenience has no place in the gated community package. This behavior (or lack thereof) seems proof enough that gated residents want it all, yet are willing to expend little individual effort to achieve it.

Entry gates sometimes serve as targets for vandalism. Pictures throughout the body of literature display fences that have been cut, bent, and even razed by criminals in order to create a point(s) of entry. Criminals can reduce insubstantial barriers by crashing through with the aid of his/her personal automobile. Mechanical arms and other flimsy devices are often little competition for the gate crusher. When it comes to a battle of car versus barrier, the barrier most often sustains the greatest injury and loses the fight. Thereafter, a gaping hole remains through which criminals can enter.

Select points along the perimeter of gated communities often provide uncontested access. Fully enclosing a development with most any barrier is generally cost prohibitive to both developers and consumers alike. Estimates for simple entry gates and fences alone range from \$60,000 (Baron 96) to \$125,000 (Shelton). Full enclosure requires additional materials, and additional materials increase project cost. To minimize project receipts, developers and residents compromise by gating strategic points along the community perimeter. These points are most always located at roadway entrances to the community. Hence, criminals can often sidestep barriers and gain access at points other than primary (gated) entryways.

The gated community of Blackhawk, California, located approximately 38 miles east of San Francisco, proves that criminals can access gated communities at unobstructed points along the perimeter. Blackhawk “suffered four burglaries in one week in July. In the fourth instance, the burglar broke into a home shortly after midnight and stole \$150,000 in jewelry. Two other crimes netted \$24,000 in merchandise. The criminal entered the gated community through the rear, which backs up to unprotected open space” (Budd 2). Like most other gated communities, Blackhawk demonstrates a

bias against automotive access by blockading only roadway entrances to the community. This form of gating neglects the non-automotive means by which criminals can gain access, as well as areas that offer uncontested access.

While rare, some gated communities (most often those that have retrofitted barriers to their boundaries) are fully enclosed by fences, walls, and/or other formal barriers. Even so, the height of these barriers rarely hinders climbing or jumping. The fence surrounding Potomac Gardens reaches a maximum height of only eight feet. That particular barrier seems relatively tall, as most others referenced in the literature reach a height of only six feet. This height is certainly within reach of the average man, woman, and criminal. Hence, gates can often be breached with a quick climb or swift jump. A resident of a gated community in San Antonio agrees, alleging that “anybody who wants to jump the gate could jump the gate” (Low 53).

Communities standing behind gates that require an access code are equally accessible. Many of these communities have found that “(K)eeping the codes a secret can be a problem. Residents give their codes to pizza deliverers, florists, housekeepers—anyone who needs to get in” (Budd 4). An infinite number of persons could be added to this list (such as mail carriers, newspaper delivers, garbage collectors, landscapers, gardeners, housekeepers, current and former boyfriends/girlfriends, etc.). The trouble lies in the uncertain background of these persons and others to whom they may give the code. One resident acknowledges that “the first teenager living in the community who throws a party—the whole high school knows how to get in” (Payne E12). While many instances could be cited, releasing the code to just one nonresident can start a chain effect. In turn, the number of individuals having access to the community effectively nullifies the very purpose of the gate.

The following serves as a prime example that gates and access codes are ill equipped to seal out crime. Georgia resident Mary Blash chose a home within a gated development due to her desire for security and safety. Blash now realizes that gating and safety are not synonymous. However, it took a frightening experience at the expense of a neighbor for her rosy outlook to be warped by reality. “She moved to the Wellington Point Apartments in south Cobb County in part because it was protected by a gate that supposedly would keep out anyone who didn’t know the security code. But on March 18,

a woman there opened her door to find a gun-wielding man. He apparently intended to rob her, but when she screamed, he shot her” (Payne E12). Following the event, the respect and regard Blash once had for “security gates” quickly turned to disappointment. As have many others, Blash now realizes that a gated community is many times “not as safe as it appears to be” (qtd. in Payne E12).

The opening pages of this paper identified the most common access control technologies used by gated communities. Though great strides have been made in recent years, many technologies have yet to reach perfection. Those used by gated communities make the list. Gates malfunction, which the author witnessed for two full days during a stay in Weston, Florida. During those early days of January 2002, all of the gates pictured in Figure 1.1 (Chapter 1) remained open, allowing unobstructed access to residents and nonresidents alike. Gates also endure significant levels of wear and tear that leads to unpredictable mechanical failure. Residents themselves may cause gates to fail, as “gates have a way of being hit by impatient drivers--and the gates rarely make a full recovery” (Budd 5).

In reality, “(G)ate malfunctions are so widespread that Trea Sparrow, vice president of Irvine-based Mercury Management - which manages 250 Southern California homeowners’ associations - said she could not think of one that has not had problems” (Carlton 57). Gated communities remain gated only so long as their gates are functional. In times of failure, any benefits of access control are denied, and criminals can slip in and out with no less difficulty than those that rightfully belong.

The use of guards would seem to solve many of these problems. While the sheer presence of guards might discourage some from attempting entry, guards can also monitor, identify, and pursue unlawful entrants. Yet guards are only human, and humans err by our imperfect nature. A guard has little more than his/her own instinct and personal experiences to rely upon when approached by persons seeking entry. Thus, guards can be deceived by those with an honest appearance and bad intentions. This reality is proven by the following brief case examples.

Weston, Florida, is a master-planned community built on the edge of the Everglades. Best described as a suburban new town, the community is located approximately 20 miles to the southwest of Ft. Lauderdale. Like so many of Florida’s

newest communities, select residential areas of Weston are gated and guarded. But the gates and guards are failing to keep Weston a crime-free utopia. One resident reported that “twenty-one robberies occurred in his development in a single two-week period” (Fortress America 84). This is despite that fact that a gatehouse manned by at least two (and sometimes more) security guards stand watch over the single entrance to his Weston neighborhood at all hours of every day. Residents of Weston also fell victim to “a professional thief who simply rode his bike past gate guards. He was white, well dressed, and passed for just another resident” (Fortress America 87).

Pembroke Pines, Florida, located immediately south of Weston, also features numerous communities that are both gated and guarded. Yet “a criminal entered a gated community in March--on more than one occasion--and stole about \$4,700 in items from one home alone, including a camera, computer, and jewelry. Once inside, he knocked on doors. If someone answered, he warned them about a wild dog in the neighborhood. If no one answered, he broke into their homes through their patio doors. The criminal entered the community by talking his way past the gate guard” (Budd 1). These examples from Weston and Pembroke Pines demonstrate that guards are sometimes no better at distinguishing delinquents than are residents themselves. This leaves one to question the worth of guards and gates in the fight against crime.

The examples from Weston and Pembroke Pines seem nothing more than an honest case of mistaken identity and human error on the part of gated community guards. However, there is little assurance that the guards themselves are well intentioned. Is it not possible that the guard him/her self might be a criminal or an accomplice to criminal activity? While guards might be a familiar face to the residents of gated communities, an old saying rings true: you can't judge a book by its cover. Just as criminals can deceive guards, guards can deceive the very populations they are employed to serve and protect.

Any gate, no matter how strong, is only as good as its rightful users. An encounter by Blakely and Snyder demonstrates that residents of gated communities may be their own worst enemies and the very source of criminal entry. Blakely and Snyder mention that “a resident in the exit lane even stopped to tell us the entry code, politely sparing us the trouble of calling in to our hosts for admission” (Fortress America 140-41). Successful gates require a degree of responsibility on the part of residents. Sharing codes

and otherwise providing access to strangers accomplishes little good and leaves the gate wide open for the potential criminal. It is nothing less than ironic that the residents of gated communities proclaim a desire for safety, security, and distance from strangers, yet at times act as doorman to the unknown.

3.3. Future Implications

The body of literature on gated communities repeatedly reflects the argument of Blakely and Snyder: barriers are successful at keeping the honest man out but fail to bar the dedicated criminal. Snyder claims that “gated communities aren’t hard to get into. If criminals want in, they’ll find a way” (Spira 27). She and Blakely attest to this by detailing their own encounters and suggesting that the experience of true criminals is likely no different. They mention being “intimidated at first by the gates, guards, and the process of asking permission to enter and confirming our identities when expected by a resident. Quickly, however, as we got used to the pattern, we realized that ease of entry was largely tied to guards’ perceptions: a tie, a suit, and a nice car were often enough to be waved past” (Fortress America 140-41). While the latter scenario requires an honest appearance, disguise is certainly among the many skills of the accomplished criminal.

Blakely and Snyder’s experience suggests that a degree of comfort seems to be at play. Is it not possible that our society is becoming insensitive to gates and guards as their numbers proliferate and their existence more commonplace? Repeated exposure to most any experience causes fatigue, loss of interest, and waning attention. Gated communities may do little more than peak the curiosity of criminals by projecting the image that something worth hiding and protecting lies within. In addition to committing the crime itself, a criminal may appreciate the added thrill of penetrating the gate. Security personnel standing guard at the entrances to gated communities might be criminals themselves, acting as accomplices to criminals that victimize unsuspecting residents. Worse yet, gated communities might be gating-in criminals, concealing them amongst their residential populations and allowing them to commit crimes at their leisure. Possible explanations are endless, yet answers remain unavailable.

With so much faith, reliance, and attention focused upon the gate and guards, perpetrators appear to have free reign once inside. Gates might lead residents to assume

that everyone inside has a right and/or reason to be there, causing them to be much less observant of their surroundings and far less critical of strangers than are residents of non-gated communities. The example from Pembroke Pines seems to suggest just that. If gated communities create community and neighborly environments, how is it that no one in Pembroke Pines noticed the thief or questioned his identity? We are left with more questions than answers.

The theories examined above help clarify some of our confusion and offer answers to questions that were previously unclear. Opportunity theory tells us that gates alone will not always serve to remove communities from the list of rational targets. This is especially true when barriers are easily penetrated and/or rewards inside are highly desired. Since simple barriers abolish neither the importance nor the benefits of surveillance, routine activity theory suggests that gates do little good when the communities they surround lie vacant. Pattern theory indicates that gates are not synonymous with isolation, as gated communities can fall within the path of criminal outsiders. Criminals seek comfort, and gated communities might lie within a space that offers the criminal just that. In conjunction with pattern theory, offense space warns that gates offer no defense against criminal residents. Gates might not even be necessary according to situational prevention, and their use does nothing to ensure that crime will be prevented in all community environments.

In reality, gated living is not crime free. While the future is unpredictable, it seems only logical to suggest that crime will continue to be an issue for gated and non-gated communities alike. Certainly there are other ways to battle crime than erecting gates, fences, walls, and other barriers to complicate illegitimate entry. Those other methods must be pursued if the battle against unlawful neighbors is to be won, for gates do nothing to obstruct criminal residents.

Nonetheless, barriers and gated communities will continue to arise throughout the foreseeable future. Though gates might be “like having a big dog in your yard--it gives criminals one more thing to think about, one more obstacle to overcome” (Budd 2), deterrence offers no assurance that a community will be free of crime. What is assured is that criminals will continue to overcome obstacles and breach the barriers of gated communities, leaving unsuspecting residents at risk.

Most unfortunate is that the risks associated with gated communities are not confined to matters of crime alone. While the desire for safety, security, stability, and comfort seem honest enough, honest attempts do not always produce favorable results. In fact, unforeseen consequences are at times a byproduct of honest endeavors. Gating seems to be no exception. As the next chapter explains, the risks associated with gated communities might impact many more than just those electing to live within their confines.

Chapter 4 – More Than Just a Gate: Long-Term Implications of Gated Communities

As the preceding chapters have indicated, crime represents a primary issue of concern for scholars and the residents of gated communities. Yet concerns relating to gated communities reach far beyond matters of crime alone. A discussion of gated communities would be incomplete without highlighting these other issues of contention. Hence, this chapter first addresses issues other than crime that give rise to concern about, and debate over, the prevalence of gated communities. Areas for continued research are also identified. Attention to these matters will better our understanding of gated communities and their larger societal implications. The chapter and paper concludes with opinions, insights, and recommendations for addressing gated communities and crime.

Many of the concerns surrounding gated communities are complex and challenging to present. Many concerns are rooted in the sciences of sociology and philosophy and arouse deep moral debate. Rather than attempting to explain the underlying worth of the concerns that gated communities excite, the intent of this chapter is to illustrate the consequences of gated communities. Some of these consequences are real, while the remainder are speculative although logically sound. This discussion focuses on issues that challenge planning practice and that run counter to planning ideals.

4.1. Planning concerns surrounding gated communities

The police powers of government provide the authority to engage in municipal planning. These powers enable localities to pass laws that protect the public health, safety, and general welfare. The planner serves as a custodian of these interests, primarily (but not exclusively) by regulating development and helping communities accommodate and adapt to the forces of change. Several reasons why the planner must heed gated communities with caution in upholding the public health, safety, and welfare are presented in the following paragraphs. The planner should conduct a critical evaluate of these matters when reviewing a proposed residential development that involves gates or other barriers to entry.

Efficient transportation systems are vital to the success of our economy and very way of life. Yet gated communities impair system efficiency by intentionally disrupting the flow of automobile traffic. Automobile traffic is both a local and regional phenomena. Local traffic disruptions often have a domino effect and impact traffic elsewhere in the regional transportation network. Gating, particularly of the urban perch, causes disruption by leaving fewer streets available for public use. In turn, traffic congestion is heightened on roadways throughout the region as drivers seek space on thoroughfares left open for public use.

When barriers are placed just a short distance from heavily trafficked collector streets, not all seeking entry to the community can stand idle on entryway lanes. This is especially true during times of peak travel. Backups can spill onto streets just beyond the gate. As a result, the movement of passerby's not attempting to access the community is hampered. Traffic congestion causes pollution, frustration, and increases the risk of accidents. These outcomes impose immediate threats to the public health, safety, and general welfare.

Gating removes travel lanes from public use and requires alternative routes to be traveled. The deflection of traffic from gated to unobstructed thoroughfares not only heightens traffic, but can stress neighborhoods that must now be traversed to reach final destinations. Heightened traffic in these neighborhoods often leads to social and economic turmoil. Together, these transportation implications illustrate that the benefits of gating are extremely localized, yet the consequences wide reaching. Planners must consider the transportation impacts of gating at both the local *and* regional level before providing approval.

Gates further compromise health and safety by obstructing the delivery of public services. The provision of emergency services is of particular concern. Points of entry to gated developments are intentionally few, and those points must be reached in order to gain rightful access. Furthermore, heavy congestion and other events (such as stalled vehicles or automobile accidents) at entryways to gated communities can completely seal them off from outside traffic. If no alternative entry point(s) exists, inbound traffic reaches a standstill. Each of these situations adversely impacts the response time of emergency services and personnel when time is most critical. Though intended to reduce

the need for most emergency services, gating endangers residents when immediate emergency assistance is required. Gated entryways must be designed in a manner that allows easy access for emergency personnel and equipment.

Throughout the recent past, America has witnessed a rampant shift from public places to private spaces. For instance, “Main Street” has turned inward to private shopping megastructures. Parks and playgrounds have been transformed into private amusement parks. Outdoor plazas have been relocated in the form of elaborate indoor atriums. All of these are consumer-oriented facilities, allowing segregation on the basis of income and ability to pay. Gated communities are no exception. Though segregation in these developments is intentionally economic, race and socioeconomic class are interrelated in our multicultural nation. In this sense, gates give rise to racial segregation by creating enclaves of racially homogeneous neighbors. The use of gates as a barrier to integration has no place in our racially diverse society.

Controlled spaces and environments are being encountered with increasing frequency in the U.S. The forfeiture of rights, freedoms, and individual opportunities accompany the privatization of space. Opportunities for free speech, for instance, are restrained in private spaces. Of great concern is the removal of parks, open spaces, streets, and sidewalks from the public domain. Many of these facilities have been financed with resources collected from members of the larger community. The privatization of once public facilities resembles nothing less than a form of legal robbery from members of the (local) taxpaying public. Protecting the public welfare entails the protection of public spaces that provide opportunities for recreation, entertainment, and social contact. Therefore, planners must be critical of gating projects that privatize formerly public facilities.

The cases and theories examined in this paper demonstrate that gating rarely produces crime-free communities. Yet the residents of gated communities often view gated developments as safe havens. Considering this discrepancy, the residents of gated communities are lulled into a false sense of security. Conflicts between the prevailing view and the reality of crime inside gated communities challenge the health, safety, and welfare of the public living behind gates and barriers. From this point of view, planners

would be doing a favor by strictly regulating gated communities. That favor may benefit both the misinformed (naïve?) residents of gated communities and the public at large.

4.2. Areas for continued research

People are retreating behind gates to gain more control over public issues and dilemmas that threaten their comfort. Yet control over members of the larger law abiding public also seems possible. The following discussion elaborates this claim by presenting potential social and political ramifications of gated communities. These matters have received limited amounts of scholarly attention, but further research seems necessary before final conclusions can be drawn. Nonetheless, the planner should take these issues into consideration when evaluating gated developments.

A primary objective of planning practice is to uphold and further the general quality of life for all local citizens. Quality of life is a complicated concept that encompasses many different variables and values. The task of outlining those is well beyond the scope of this paper and will not be attempted. Nonetheless, one of the fundamental ways in which the planner strives to preserve and improve quality of life is by molding an environment that brings resources, ideas, and people together. Gated communities seem a direct threat to the social glue that binds communal members into a cohesive body. Gates effectively bifurcate the community by creating two distinct groups: those that belong, and those that most certainly do not. The extent to which gates fragment society has yet to be determined and requires further investigation.

While gates and barriers are an effective way to demarcate territory, they seem not to be creating community at all. The term ‘community’ is used in both a geographic and social sense within the planning discipline and is analogous to the phrase ‘sense of community’. Sense of community fosters pride, responsibility, and social networking. A survey conducted by Georjeanna Wilson-Doenges found that “gated community residents reported significantly lower sense of community scores as compared with the nongated community” (605). Blakely and Snyder agree, reporting that “although their structure might well support strong community feeling, it does not create it. Neighborhood in the sense of a collectively identified boundary can be physically created, but neighborhood in the sense of mutual responsibility is much harder to produce” (Fortress America 135).

These findings imply that gates often fail to evoke a sense of community even within their own confines. Poor sense of community presents a direct challenge to local quality of life. The effects of gating on sense of community must be monitored at the local, regional, and national level as gated communities continue to grow in number.

Combined with the political framework governing gated communities, gates allow residents to focus their attention upon themselves, avoid confrontations with their non-gated counterparts, and pursue their own common interests. Problems arise when those interests do not align with the interests of the general public. Two discrete publics emerge at such times, and their inability or unwillingness to collaborate presents a direct threat to the general welfare. Blakely and Snyder summarize these concerns by posing the question “can this nation fulfill its social contract in the absence of social contact?” (“Fortress Communities” 2).

With their gates and private governments (homeowner associations), residents of gated communities are effectively immune to many issues that confront the non-gated portion of the community. This leaves little incentive for gated community residents to participate and be responsive to larger community affairs. Their own problems can generally be solved internally by their own political institution and without the help of local officials and government. In this sense, gated communities are distinct geographic places and political entities wholly separate from the jurisdictions in which they lie.

The fact that gates might eliminate the call to participate has enormous ramifications for our democratic society. Groups become disadvantaged as the balance of political power sways. Without support from the larger community, disadvantaged groups often fail to muster enough political support for needed services, programs, and facilities. Furthermore, gated community voters might “oppose the use of their tax dollars for causes that benefit the public as a whole” (Damstra 538). Admittedly, opposition to taxation occurs in all communities. Yet the area defined by gates becomes the center of attention and the sole area of concern for gated community residents. As a result, opposition to spending becomes magnified unless benefits fall within the gate. This is despite the fact that community facilities and services are used by gated community residents upon exiting the gate.

The withdrawal of gated residents from local matters and responsibilities is largely speculative and unknown at the present time, yet not completely impossible. Furthermore, non-gated residents of the larger community could follow in the footsteps of gated residents. Inadequate political power and deficient community pride could persuade non-gated residents to lose hope and interest in community affairs. To assess the true social impacts of gated communities, the withdrawal of residents from public participation and volunteerism should be monitored within gated neighborhoods and the larger communities in which they exist.

The ability of gates to shelter neighborhoods from the forces of change will become evident with the passage of time. Aging communities often encounter a degree of both real and perceived decline. Such decline takes shape in the form of physical deterioration, social fragmentation, striking demographic shifts, rising crime, and other deleterious conditions. Whether or not communal gates will provide immunity from this “natural” process of change is yet to be seen. For the time being, we are left to rely upon future research to provide us with the answers to this question.

Questions concerning prolonged sustainability also surround gated communities. In exchange for excluding the public from their streets and private facilities, local governments often mandate that gated communities finance their own maintenance and improvement efforts. The local homeowners association assumes responsibility for collecting needed funds and expending them as necessary and appropriate. However, “(I)t is not unusual that the costs associated with repairing the gated community’s streets, lights, pools, and common areas may be rather high, particularly in those situations where the homeowner’s association has been derelict in its duties or has otherwise allowed those features to deteriorate” (Smith, et. al., 420).

No assurance can be provided that homeowner associations will collect and save the finances required to complete necessary improvements. In the event that funds are not available when needed the health, safety, and welfare of gated community residents is jeopardized. Municipal governments will encounter difficult decisions if confronted by gated communities seeking public funds to correct their private dilemmas. At such times, challenging moral and political issues will come to the fore. As gated communities age

and encounter “growing pains”, much interest should be taken in their ability to resolve private matters independent of public finances.

4.3. Conclusion

Gated communities are not crime-free utopias. Rather, they often serve as places to hide. Gates surrounding new residential developments stand as a sign of fear and withdrawal, defining and providing places to hide and escape from life’s harsh realities. This only disguises problems and does nothing to alter the present state of problems that will carry into the future if left neglected. Unless gates are used as temporary defense mechanisms while sound solutions are crafted and intense efforts made to eliminate the causes of concern, we will forever be plagued by crime problems within our communities. Gates may appear to provide shelter from harm, but they offer no guarantees.

Gated communities are surrounded by uncertainty and seemingly deliver few, if any, widely shared benefits. These developments do not exist in a vacuum and potentially exert negative impacts on society at large. Inasmuch, gated communities *are* reason for concern. Concern gives rise to regulation in our democratic society and places such as Plano, Texas; Minneapolis, Minnesota; and Portland, Oregon, have begun to regulate the development of gated communities. These places and their approaches to regulate gated communities should serve as models for the rest of the nation. For instance, requiring all streets be deeded and open to the public effectively prevents the barricading of streets. Conditioning the approval of development proposals upon the absence/removal of gates is another avenue for planners to pursue in regulating gated communities.

In the absence of wide-scale regulation or another form of disruption, the number of gated communities is in line to reach well over 33,000 by the end of this very decade, housing upwards of 39.5 million Americans. Those numbers will likely be reached if we fail to take action, as there are no signs that either the demand for, or supply of gated communities will wither in the near future. Without regulation, gated community residents will continue in many instances to live with a sense of safety and security that is

at best incredibly localized, and at worst completely false. Where gating will lead is unknown, and the unknown is cause for concern.

To counter the uncertainty and many concerns surrounding gated communities, gates should be used only as a last resort in the fight against crime. The theories and cases considered in this paper provide sound instruction and direction. Situational prevention theory offers valuable insight and should be put into practice. This entails the use of gates in response to a local crime problem when (and only when) gating is identified as a sound solution. Opposed to this is the use of gates as a generic reflex to widespread criminal events and other social tensions. Five Oaks provides proof that situation prevention can effectively address local crime problems. Favorable results in Five Oaks stemmed from resident collaboration, a thorough investigation of the problem, and sustained resident involvement. All pedestrian and bicycle pathways into the community, as well as many roadway entrances, remain open. The latter is evidence that crime can be managed without completely excluding the public.

Gates are far from the only defense against crime. Defensible space theory, for instance, offers many valuable lessons beyond those addressed in this paper. Though gated communities were found to disprove defensible space theory, gates seem the contributing factor for that outcome. Newman had no intent for gates to be used as a sole defense against crime. Rather, he suggested the use of gates as one amongst an arsenal of crime prevention measures and strategies. In the absence of a communal gate, residents have no false sense of security. Therefore, responsibility must be accepted and criminal behavior combated through resident action. According to defensible space theory communities that feature good surveillance, access control measures, and territorial devices display promise in discouraging crime. Certainly these characteristics can be incorporated into new (and many old) projects without resorting to communal gates and barriers.

The lessons provided by the other crime theories addressed in this paper must also be considered in practice. Opportunity theory reflects the need for more than a simple gate in order to deter crime. Preventative measures must be applied throughout the entire community environment in order to protect opportunities/targets/victims from criminal misconduct. Routine activity theory insinuates that mixed-use environments hold

promise in discouraging crime by presenting capable guardians at all hours of day. Pattern theory implies that land use decisions must be made cautiously and in consideration of surrounding facilities that may be subject to criminal attention. Offensible space theory suggests that *communal* gates do more harm than good by sheltering criminals once inside. Many simplistic solutions, such as neighborhood watch programs and other physical attributes of defensible spaces, should be encouraged and adopted as alternatives to community gating.

As planners, we must put forth a serious and wholehearted attempt to replicate the perceived benefits of gated communities in a non-gated format. We must experiment with designs and public programs that foster resistance to crime through public collaboration and collective action. Until we do, the greatest crime may not be told by the crime statistics of gated communities. That crime might be that gated communities continue to lull residents into a sense of complacency, leaving them vulnerable to unthinkable acts of criminal misconduct while destroying all hope of creating community.