

## DIANNE HARRIS

Director of the Illinois Program for Research in the Humanities & Professor at UIUC

### *A Second Suburb: The Landscape of Levittown, PA*

Wednesday, November 18, 2009 at 5:30 p.m.  
at Dumbarton Oaks in the Music Room at the Main House  
(Registration begins at 5:00 p.m.)

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# Levittown

#### Abstract

Carved from eight square miles of Bucks County farmland northeast of Philadelphia, Levittown, Pennsylvania, is a symbol of postwar suburbia and the fulfillment of the American dream. Begun in 1951, after the completion of an identically named community on Long Island, the second Levittown soon eclipsed its New York counterpart in scale and ambition, yet it continues to live in the shadow of its better-known sister and has received limited scholarly attention. An overview of her forthcoming edited volume, "A Second Suburb" uncovers the unique story of Levittown, Pennsylvania, and its significance to American social, architectural, landscape, environmental, and political history. As Harris's lecture will show, Levittown, PA, played an important role in establishing specific models for suburban residential landscape design, but it also served as a site for experimentation in domestic architecture, modernism, environmentalism, and eventually as a battle ground for civil rights in the suburban north. *Second Suburb* explores the surprisingly rich interplay of design, technology, and social response that marks the emergence and maturation of an exceptionally potent rendition of the American Dream, writ large in the landscape.

**Dianne Harris** is Director of the Illinois Program for Research in the Humanities and Professor of Landscape Architecture, Architecture, Art History, and History at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, where she teaches courses in landscape and in architectural history. She holds a BA in Landscape Architecture, a Master's in Architecture, and a PhD in Architectural History from the University of California, Berkeley. Her publications include the co-edited volumes *Villas and Gardens in Early Modern Italy and France* (Cambridge University Press, 2001), and *Sites Unseen: Landscape and Vision* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2007). She is the author of *The Nature of Authority: Villa Culture, Landscape, and Representation in Eighteenth-Century Lombardy* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003) and *Maybeck's Landscapes: Drawing in Nature* (William Stout Publisher, 2005). Professor Harris served as guest editor for a special issue of *Landscape Journal* devoted to the topic of "Race and Space" (May, 2007), and she is editor of a multidisciplinary volume on the Pennsylvania Levittown that will be published by the University of Pittsburgh Press in 2010. She is currently writing a book that focuses on ordinary postwar houses and gardens in the United States between 1945 and 1960, which will be published by the University of Minnesota Press. Professor Harris is the First Vice-President for the Society of Architectural Historians and the recipient of a 2006 Iris Foundation Award for outstanding scholarly contributions in the history of art, decorative arts, and cultural history.



Image courtesy of Bucks County Free Library

Reservations are required. Please RSVP by Friday, November 13th  
to: [Landscape@doaks.org](mailto:Landscape@doaks.org) 202-339-6460.

The lecture will be held in the Music Room at Dumbarton Oaks's Main House located at 1703 32nd Street, NW, Washington DC.  
The lecture is open to the public without charge. A light reception to follow. Parking not provided.