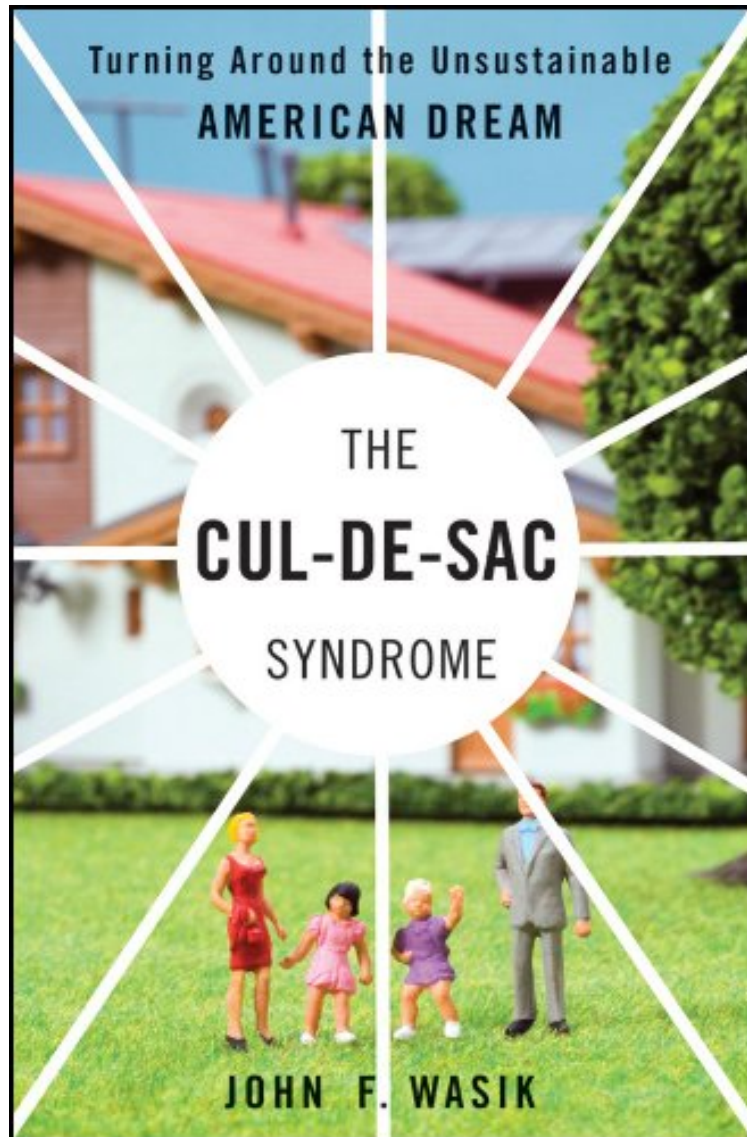


(Free read ebook) The Cul-de-Sac Syndrome: Turning Around the Unsustainable American Dream (Bloomberg)

## The Cul-de-Sac Syndrome: Turning Around the Unsustainable American Dream (Bloomberg)

*John F. Wasik*

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**John F. Wasik : The Cul-de-Sac Syndrome: Turning Around the Unsustainable American Dream (Bloomberg)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Cul-de-Sac Syndrome: Turning Around the Unsustainable American Dream (Bloomberg):

0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Required Reading To Reimagine our RestorationBy William DahlIn

The Cul-De-Sac Syndrome - Turning Around The Unsustainable American Dream, John Wasik provides a surgical strike into the heart of the socio-economic and social-structural challenges currently facing the U.S. He begins with a characterization of the false economics that got us into this mess, a scholarly historical overview of the origins of suburbia in the U.S. and how debt and finance played a fundamental role in the current conundrum. As Wasik states, "The age of froth is long over. It's a time for reckoning and renewal." (p.174). This book focuses on re-imagining, re-engineering and rebuilding our communities...and a sustainable way of life for America. Wasik spears the illusions and assumptions that fueled the unsustainable rise in residential real estate prices. He moves on to characterize how we must "clean up and move on." This is not one of those books that simply summarizes and criticizes a crisis in hindsight. It provides terribly important insights into the correction required to stabilize and grow this nation. Listen to Wasik. After devouring this work, I'm convinced he is a thinker legitimately worth paying attention to. One of my favorites for 2009.0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Passionate Plea for Change By Jeffrey Swystun There is a great deal of information in this book as the author throws the McSink in with the McMansion. It covers the latest downturn, how American society ended up fascinated with home ownership to the point that many now believe it a right not a privilege, and how the home itself and the development it resides in can be better designed. His 'cul-de-sac' metaphor covers personal entitlement, home and community design, and the dead-end many Americans now find themselves. This situation is "a cul-de-sac of unsustainable costs and serious long-term consequences for our health and our environment". So not only is this a book about economic consequences it covers urban planning, resource depletion, and homebuilding techniques. He coins the term, "spurbs", or the sprawling urban areas that make the homeowners car dependent and the whole situation 'unsustainable'. In terms of home design, Wasik's frustration clearly shows, homes "became statements of pure ego and the subjugation of nature" and "Each new home became a mini theme park" and "embody a need to convey wealth, status." There were a few other subjects that stood out: the dotcom bubble cannot be viewed as a separate episode but rather as a part of the current crisis, the balloon frame form of construction which was new to me, and computer servers now consume 1.2% of all U.S. power (Google's servers eat up the equivalent power needed to run 11,000 homes). Wasik is very passionate on all topics and there are logical connections between them but it felt disconnected to me perhaps worthy of three different books - he even addresses obesity midway through. The content cannot be discounted but it could be better organized. 3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Green believer willing to spend our green to go green By Marc Comtois After detailing the recent bursting of the housing bubble, John Wasik asks, "Why was the American psyche so heavily invested in home ownership?" Answering his own question, Wasik points to the history of Americans' inherent desire to own property to begin his explanation. He looks to the Jeffersonian conception of the "pursuit of happiness" that replaced Locke's "preservation of [men's] property" in the Declaration of Independence. According to Wasik, property was only a part of Jefferson's conception of the "American Dream." "America would expand far beyond [Jefferson's] beloved Blue Ridge Mountains. It would be an enlightened development led by yeoman farmers. The key to this master plan: a massive acquisition and settlement of discrete parcels of land into subdivisions. It was precise. Eventually it would become a bulwark of democracy." Thus, the Louisiana Purchase provided the opportunity for all as envisioned by Jefferson, who helped to inculcate in the American mind an ethos of opportunity based on national expansion by the expansion of property ownership. What was good for the citizens was good for the country. This basic philosophy was reinforced by Lincoln's settlement policies; the Homestead Act of 1909, the New Deal and so on. Yet, somewhere along the way the inherent "good" of home ownership shifted. It was no longer enough to own a home (albeit, via a 30 year mortgage!). After the dot com bubble burst and 401(k)'s took a dive, "Homes became the financial panacea of the middle class," according to Wasik. Low interest rates, easy loans, sub-prime...we all know the terms by now. The result was the housing crisis of 2008/09. But there is more to the story. As Wasik details extensively, the expansionist mindset still prevails in America and has led mostly middle-class families into sprawling "spurbs" far out in the former hinterlands. And now the reality is undercutting the conventional wisdom of the past. Does it make sense to work 1-2 hours from your home (a 5,000 square foot McMansion that houses you, your spouse and 2 kids), which forces you to spend too much time on the road commuting to and from work and traveling between box stores and play dates in your gas-guzzling SUV? As Wasik tells it, this rapid expansion away from established population centers has strained our infrastructure and our health and has foisted unneeded bills onto our budgets. In the second half of the book, Wasik offers visions of a future towards which he hopes Americans will turn. In short, he sees our national salvation somewhere in a marriage between New Urbanism and Green Technology. However, cost is a prohibitive factor, and, recognizing this, Wasik is always willing to temper his "gee whiz" fascination with innovative green technology with pragmatic sticker shock. Custom green costs a lot, but it may lead to more cost-effective innovation down the line. Of course, someone is going to have to pay for it as the kinks get worked out! (And tax-payer dollars are going to play a big role in subsidizing such experimentation--the Obama administration's Green Energy "stimulus" has shown that). Cost is also a factor in Wasik's prediction that people will be moving back to the cities. So long as energy prices continue to rise, people will look to avoid paying those costs by looking for smaller abodes that are closer to work and play. However, that's assuming that those population centers reform current zoning laws, spruce up rundown sections and generally make themselves more attractive to the single set and aging boomers. Wasik thinks they will. Though not

heavy-handed, Wasik shows no love for the Bush Administration and guarded hope for the policies thus far promised by the Obama Administration. Time will tell if his faith is rewarded. Overall, Cul-De-Sac is a good synthesis of current Green and New Urbanism thinking ("Green Urbanism"?) and Wasik is an interesting and lively guide. If it just didn't cost so much!

An incisive look at the consequences of today's costly and damaging suburban lifestyle In *The Cul-de-Sac Syndrome*, Bloomberg News' John Wasik exposes the economic, cultural, environmental, and health problems underlying life in suburbia. Wasik provides powerful insights into how the U.S. suburban lifestyle has become unsustainable and what can be done to salvage it. His observations are firmly grounded in exclusive on-the-ground research, interviews with thought leaders, and the latest studies and statistics. The book Exposes the untold truths about suburban home ownership: green isn't always so green, life isn't cheaper after accounting for gas, water, and taxes, and modern suburban living isn't so idyllic considering the toll it takes on our health Includes exclusive research and analysis by experts in the field that debunks the many myths associated with suburban living Explores innovative solutions being developed in cities across the country The American Dream of moving further from a city to buy a bigger house and find better schools has become a costly nightmare. *The Cul-de-Sac Syndrome* examines why and what can be done.

ldquo;Wasikrsquo;s focuses much of the blame on the lsquo;spurb,rsquo; his term for automobile-dependent sprawling suburbs whose only connections to cities are multi-lane highways. He shows how the American dream of moving further from a city to buy a bigger house and find better schools was a costly proposition, which was an underlying cause of the crisis. For me, it was a totally new look at the American dream and its costs.rdqquo; mdash;Larry Swedroe, moneywatch.com, February 2011From the Back Cover"John Wasik's *The Cul-de-Sac Syndrome* offers enough to chew on for three sets of teeth, enough to digest for three stomachs, and then alerts the mind faster than an approaching siren." mdash;RALPH NADER, consumer advocate "Get ready for a totally original look at the American dream. Wasik delivers the first truly multidisciplinary examinationmdash;using planning, law, architecture, and history to focus on working solutions that keep the dream alive. This is a winner!" mdash;PAUL B. FARRELL, JD, PhD, columnist, MarketWatch.com, and author of *The Millionaire Code* "This excellent book takes a ground-level look at the causes of our housing crisis and offers myriad ideas on reinventing the concepts of home and community." mdash;ILYCE R. GLINK, syndicated real estate columnist and author of *100 Questions Every First-Time Home Buyer Should Ask* "A genuine kick to the head, showing how our individual quests for the biggest house on the hill are destroying our environment, the economy, and our health. But *The Cul-de-Sac Syndrome* is no dead end. It offers a green, urbanized 'promised land' with real community, more free time, and a higher living standard. It's a masterful blueprint to unpave paradise and restore the world we cherish." mdash; AURENCE KOTLIKOFF, author of *Jimmy Stewart Is Dead: Ending the World's Ongoing Financial Plague with Limited Purpose Banking*About the AuthorJohn F. Wasik is a personal finance columnist for Reuters and the author of twelve other books including *The Audacity of Help: Obama's Economic Plan and the Remaking of America*. He has won eighteen awards for his writing, speaks all over North America, and has appeared on NBC, CNBC, MSNBC, FOX, CNN, Bloomberg TV/Radio, PBS, NPR, and radio stations from Australia to Boston. For more information, visit [www.culdesacsyndrome.com](http://www.culdesacsyndrome.com)