



John DeFazio, AIA

John DeFazio, AIA is an architect, writer, and teacher. DeFazio graduated from New York Institute of Technology, where he currently teaches undergraduate architectural studio. At NYIT, he taught graduate studio, thesis, ecological site design, integrative architectural design, and urban design in undergraduate studios. He is currently a senior project advisor at Drexel University, Westphal College. At Drexel, he has also taught modern architecture and contemporary art theories and history in art and architecture, and in the study-abroad program, traveling most recently to Japan and previously to the Netherlands and Barcelona. He writes on contemporary art, architecture, and planning, and contributes to *Art in America* and *Residential Design Magazine*. In addition to his practice, John DeFazio is a founder and co-director of the Raymond Farm Center of Living Arts & Design.

Deconstructing Levittown

With all the extraordinary and cutting-edge residential architecture built on Long Island over its 350-year history, arguably no work has shaped the world of houses and housing more than Levittown. As both a suburban prototype and a lightning rod for cultural critique, it radically transformed the building industry, built environment, and American society. In this presentation, John DeFazio, AIA, deconstructs the Levittown model from its Long Island origins to its global iterations.

The session begins with Levitt's technical innovations, tracing the shift from artisan construction to Fordist, site-wide assembly lines that adapted Frank Lloyd Wright's Usonian principles into standardized starter homes. Next, it analyzes macro-forces driving suburbanization—aerospace growth, Robert Moses's parkways, Cold War decentralization, single-use zoning, spatial isolation, and FHA racial covenants—alongside ecological impacts on Long Island's sole-source aquifer.

Finally, drawing on critiques by Mumford, Gans, and Venturi & Scott Brown, DeFazio examines the "preservation paradox" of owner-modified vernacular architecture. The presentation concludes by framing Levittown's structural flexibility as a playbook for 21st-century suburban retrofitting, accessory dwelling units, deep-energy retrofits, and equitable housing solutions.