

Picture Perfect: Hollywood's Ideal Communities and the Perils of Dream-Building

How do the media's depictions of cities and towns
inform the way in which we would like to live?
And what happens if we try to build the media ideal?

In the 1940s Hollywood movies such as *It's a Wonderful Life* depicted the ideal small town; in the 1950s TV shows such as *Leave it to Beaver* and *Father Knows Best* painted a similarly idyllic picture of suburban life. Such imagery helped to market the new postwar era of suburban prosperity; but they were also a source of discontent as people grappled with the reality of dispersed, centreless, car-oriented suburbs and found them wanting compared to media imagery. Are Hollywood's fictitious communities an impossible fantasy? Or are they a cultural memory of aspects of community that we left behind in the postwar era?

Stephen Rowley will trace the evolution of such images of community in post-war Hollywood films and television, and look at attempts by planners and developers to build places that live up to that imagery. He will draw on fictional examples from the 1940s through to more recent productions such as the *The Truman Show*, *Pleasantville* and *Mad Men*, as well as a photographic tour through built environments such as studio backlots, the New Urbanist town of Seaside, and the Disney-built town of Celebration.



6.00—7.30pm, 25 July 2013

Loop, 25 Meyers Place, Melbourne

\$20 WPN/PIA members/students

\$25 non-members

Registration at www.planning.org.au/vic.

Stephen Rowley is an urban planner and former co-editor of *Planning News*. He has just completed his PhD at the University of Melbourne School of Culture and Communication.

