IN 1960

Levittown, N.J.
by 1960 was well established as a new suburb of Philadelphia, albeit just outside the typical commuting ring: many families had taken occupancy in the community's four neighborhoods, the main shopping center had opened the previous year, its first church and supermarket had opened, and two schools had been completed.

In fact, by the end of 1960, Levittown, N.J. would experience significant growth in its infrastructure and services. Two more elementary schools would open, as would the high school. The public library, fire company, and emergency squad would also be established. By the end of 1960, the township's population would grow to 11,861.

Despite the apparent prosperity being experienced by the new Levittowners, sales of new homes began to decline after reaching an all-time high of 2,174 in 1959. Following a series of modifications to the houseline in 1959, Levitt and Sons was doubtless beginning to feel the effects of a soft housing market. People were still coming to Levittown, but the sales did not reflect what the company was used to and were certainly not commensurate with its most complete community yet.

So Levitt turned to diversification. The first change was by completely redesigning the one-story home. After a failed attempt to modify the exterior of the original one-story for the 1959 houseline, a new House B was introduced for the 1960 houseline. With this change, Levitt found success: the new model became the hit of the development. It became so popular, the Levitt would eventually introduce an alternate exterior for the 1961 houseline, to maintain a balance between the three styles of homes. The second change spoke much more directly to diversification: two new models, the Manor House and the Country Clubber, would be introduced into the houseline for the move-up market. While the price range for the standard houseline was between $12,000 and $15,000, the two new models were priced above $20,000. Both offered four bedrooms and up to three baths, as well as such higher-end features two-car garages, family room or library, and, in general, very large rooms. In addition, the two new models were situated on larger homesites in a separate wooded section with rolling terrain. Of course, in a softer market, the more expensive models sold much more slowly than the standard models.

Even though total sales would drop to 848 for 1960 (down from a high of 2,174 the previous year), these changes would signify the beginning Levitt's ability to weather the market and change course to respond to a changing housing demand. Over the next few years, this ability would prove even more necessary to Levitt and Sons, as the market slump was only in its beginning stages.