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Willingboro Futuro

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Last Thursday, I finally visited the Futuro in Willingboro, New Jersey's Mill Creek Park – a Futuro which, interestingly, served elsewhere in Willingboro as a branch of City Federal Savings Bank before being moved to its current location in the 1970s.

Willingboro goes back a few hundred years, but was renamed Levittown in 1959 as an homage to Levitt & Sons, the residential developers synonymous with the introduction of mass-manufactured post-World War II bedroom communities to the United States. The name only stuck for a few years, though: Residents, by a slim margin, voted to reinstate “Willingboro” in 1963 due to confusion with nearby Bucks County's Levittown — another Levitt & Sons community.

I'd imagine the optimism surrounding Levitt's housing and plans lingered for a few more years regardless, but I could be wrong. Refusal to sell homes to black families led to some groundbreaking lawsuits against Abraham Levitt, and when Willingboro reinstated its original name, Levitt & Sons cut off donations to the town's schools. Yes, the developer was donating to the town's schools. These people were in bed together like Fleetwood Mac. I'm eager to take the town's pulse on how this all affected morale, and modern-day sentiments on Levitt.

I'd never been to Willingboro before last week — surprising in light of the fact that I grew up maybe twenty miles away. Cruising along Levitt Parkway, a winding throughway divided by a grass median and flanked by bedroom communities of varying degrees of maintenance, I could still sense the excitement that must have accompanied this road at a time when most American streets were one of two things: Urban grids or winding rural routes. We know that this new, in-between style of living excited the suburban masses — who themselves were a new strain of the American population. It seems only fitting that a town infused with what was considered forward-thinking development would have been home to a Futuro.

Unfortunately, not a single known photos exist of this Futuro as a bank branch...so if you know of anyone who grew up in

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Willingboro in the late 60s/early 70s, feel free to ask 'em if they have any visuals. A long-shot, I know, but I'm sure dads with cameras from Sears were photographing their tots standing in front of the era's cutting-edge structures. Photos have GOT to exist; it's just a matter of pinpointing them.

Willingboro will hopefully green-light their Futuro's inclusion in the documentary. Fingers crossed.

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