Beyond City Limits

How a move to the suburbs changed communities and politics

SS24.US2.11b "Describe the demographic and political changes that occurred as some populations shifted from cities to suburbs."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two demographic changes, circle two political changes, and number two places where a population shift helps explain a political change.

Moving Out, Shifting Power

1 After World War II, the edge of many U.S. cities changed from fields to subdivisions. A growing economy, federal mortgage insurance, and new highways helped many families buy homes outside city limits and commute to work. The move was unequal. Discriminatory lending and sales practices often kept Black families from buying in new developments, even when they could afford a home. Many white families left central cities, while Black migrants from the South continued to arrive in those cities. Suburbs were not all alike, but these patterns made many metropolitan areas more divided by race and income.

2 Consider what happened when a city household moved just beyond its boundary. Its members might still use city jobs and roads, but their property taxes now supported a suburban government and school district. As more middle-income residents and businesses relocated, some cities struggled to fund services for people who remained. Suburban communities could collect taxes for their own schools while using zoning rules that limited apartments or smaller, less expensive homes. Those choices shaped who could settle there and who held influence at local meetings. Federal policies helped drive the move, but local decisions also reinforced the new boundaries.

3 Population shifts also changed electoral politics. Growing suburbs gained voters and, after each census, could gain representation as legislative districts were redrawn to reflect population. Candidates seeking state or national office increasingly addressed suburban concerns, including school spending, property taxes, and transportation. Suburban voters did not act as one bloc, and views differed across regions and decades. Still, a family's move could change more than its address: it could shift tax resources, school governance, and political attention away from a central city. Debates over housing access and public services now reached across municipal lines, even though neighboring communities often made separate decisions.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the move to suburbs change the racial makeup of many metropolitan areas, and what limited who could move?

2. How could a household's move across a city boundary affect funding for both the city and the suburb?

3. How could suburban zoning decisions affect both the population and political influence of a community?

4. Why did candidates seeking state or national office pay more attention to suburban concerns as suburbs grew?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

A fictional suburb is considering allowing smaller, lower-cost homes and sharing the cost of a bus line to the central city. Write a five- to seven-sentence advisory note predicting one possible demographic change and two political choices or effects; use causal links from the passage and explain why the results are not certain.

ANSWER KEY

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GRADE 11 · SS24.US2.11b

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two demographic changes, circle two political changes, and number two places where a population shift helps explain a political change. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the move to suburbs change the racial makeup of many metropolitan areas, and what limited who could move?	**Many white families moved from central cities to suburbs while Black migrants continued to arrive in cities. Discriminatory lending and sales practices restricted Black families' access to new suburban homes.**
2	How could a household's move across a city boundary affect funding for both the city and the suburb?	**Its property taxes would support the suburban government and schools instead of the city. As more residents and businesses moved, the city could struggle to fund services.**
3	How could suburban zoning decisions affect both the population and political influence of a community?	**Rules limiting apartments or smaller, less expensive homes could restrict who could settle in the suburb. That would also affect whose views were represented at local meetings.**
4	Why did candidates seeking state or national office pay more attention to suburban concerns as suburbs grew?	**Growing suburbs gained voters and could gain legislative representation when districts were redrawn, giving candidates more reason to address suburban priorities.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Allowing smaller, lower-cost homes could make the suburb accessible to more households with different incomes. That change might also widen access for families excluded by earlier housing practices, although a zoning change alone would not end discrimination. A shared bus line could connect residents to city jobs while requiring both governments to negotiate funding. If the suburb gains residents, its school district may need to adjust its budget. More voters might also push candidates to debate transit and housing rather than focus only on property taxes. The outcome depends on home prices, lending practices, and whether local leaders approve both proposals.

Accept other passage-supported causal explanations that distinguish a possible outcome from a certain one. For Part 3, look for a demographic prediction, two political choices or effects, and an explanation of uncertainty.