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Why White Collar Job Outsourcing Will Transform America's Suburbs

While there's no consensus on the precise number of white-collar jobs American companies will outsource to India in the coming years, it seems increasingly clear that millions of middle class jobs -- from programmers and back-office technicians to Wall Street analysts and architects -- will soon find their way from U.S. office parks to the cubicles of Bangalore and Mumbai.


By Seth Brown
Mar 16, 2004



And while we swap stories about out-of-work programmers, one thing is clear: no one is preparing for the most important challenge -- ensuring that America's suburbs are ready for the inevitable and painful transition.

Why America's suburbs? In short, because America's high tech suburbs -- where millions of "information economy" jobs have been created in the past few decades -- are most at risk. In Silicon Valley's Santa Clara County, unemployment is still above the national average. In suburban Denver, Colorado, telecom companies have shed thousands of jobs. Cutting edge places like suburban northern Virginia, Route 128, outside of Boston, and Research Triangle Park, North Carolina should all be worried.

So will these leafy suburbs and corporate campuses turn into 21 st century versions of decaying Flint, Michigan? It's too soon to tell, but as America's older cities know well, it's hard to dodge the bullet of inexorable economic change.

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LATEST OP-EDS

[The Smart Sprawl Strategy](#)

By *Wally Siembab*

Aug 31, 2005

How do we retrofit America's sprawl to prepare for a post-oil world? In this week's Op-Ed Wally Siembab proposes a strategy of "smart sprawl" -- retrofitting suburbs of any density so that residents can shop, obtain services and work all within a mile or two of their home.

[The Sky Is Not Falling On Cities](#)

By *Carol Coletta*

In the 1960s and 1970s, as the first wave of manufacturing jobs left the U.S. for China and other low-cost locations, hundreds of thousands of American factory workers received pink slips. While factory workers were hard hit by these wrenching changes in the economy, it was America's manufacturing cities -- like New York, Detroit, Baltimore, and Philadelphia -- that really hit the skids. Workers could leave for greener pastures and other jobs, but cities could only do their best to staunch the bleeding. The loss of these jobs sent many cities into tailspins from which they are only now -- 30 years later -- beginning to recover.

If America's suburbs take a lesson from the recent experiences of its cities, however, they just might have a chance. First, start planning now for slower growth. While they might eventually be replaced, those jobs won't be coming back. Second, compete for new high-value industries like nanotechnology and biotech. Third, encourage the development of arts and cultural amenities that might persuade existing residents to stay put.

With some luck, America's suburbs will weather this global economic storm. And if not, well--suburban Bangalore is supposed to be very nice.

Seth Brown is publisher of The Next American City, a quarterly magazine about the ongoing transformation of America's communities. Excerpts of The Next American City's current issue -- looking at competition between cities -- are available on the web at www.americancity.org.

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Aug 25, 2005

Cities aren't in decline. The way population change is "measured" by the Census Bureau leaves much to be desired, writes Carol Coletta in this week's Op-Ed. But even if cities were in decline, a city's population is no longer tied to its economic success. What is ironic about these estimates and the misleading story of decline that has been spun around them is the fact that cities no longer have to grow big to grow wealthy. For the first time, according to research from CEOs for Cities, a city's population is no longer tied to its economic success.

[From NIMBYs To DUDES: The Wacky World Of Plannerese](#)

By Ric Stephens

Jul 26, 2005

Ric Stephens has compiled a list of some of the wackiest -- yet at times quite realistic -- urban planning words, in a vocabulary he has dubbed 'Plannerese.' This week's Planetizen Op-Ed includes a selected glossary of the terms, in addition to 'A Modern Fairy Tale in Plannerese,' which looks at a typical planning issue through the humorous lens of planning jargon.

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