

# The truth is Americans still prefer to live in the suburbs

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Obama's Housing Development Toolkit, his Strong Cities, Strong Communities initiative and his recent Executive Order Establishing a Community Solutions Council represent his obsession, along with other urbanists, with shaping the culture of America by concentrating populations in compact urban centers. Urban centers, after all, are the deep well of liberal Democratic voters.

But in a recent article by Joel Kotkin entitled, *It Wasn't Rural "Hicks" Who Elected Trump: The Suburbs Were-And Will Remain – The Real Battleground*, he makes a convincing case that the well wasn't as deep as Democrats thought it was. He wrote:

“Despite the blue urbanist can't that dense metro areas – inevitably labeled ‘vibrant’ – are the future, in fact, core cities are growing at a slower pace than their more spread out suburbs and exurbs, which will make these edge areas even more important politically and economically in the coming decade. The states that voted for Trump enjoyed net domestic migration of 1.45 million from 2010 to 2015, naturally drawn from the states that were won by Hillary Clinton. Democrat-leaning ethnic groups, like Hispanics, are expanding rapidly, but Americans are moving in every greater numbers to the more conservative geographies of the Sun Belt, the suburbs and exurbs... Despite the wishes of many planners, and their Democratic allies, suburbs and small towns are not about to go away in the near future.”

He continues, “Nor can blue state advocates continue to claim that millennials will not move to suburbia, because that is clearly happening. Urbanist mythology now holds to a fallback position that millennials move to the suburbs simply because they have been priced out. However, they don't look at other compelling reasons – notably shaped by life stage – for suburban growth. As most millennials will be soon be over 30, it seems likely more will head to the periphery, as did earlier generations to gain more space to raise a family, better schools and safety.”

This fact, of course, flies in the face of the fourth out of ten strategies in the Housing Development Toolkit, “Eliminate off-street parking requirements”.

If this were just the elimination of another regulation, this might be a welcome thing. However, the purpose of this strategy is not to eliminate off-street parking requirements, but to greatly discourage and diminish the use of cars.

The Toolkit says, “Parking requirements generally impose an undue burden on housing development, particularly for transit-oriented or affordable housing. When transit-oriented developments are intended to help reduce automobile dependence, parking requirements can undermine that goal by inducing new residents to drive, thereby counteracting city goals for increased use of public transit, walking and biking.”

Once you understand the purpose of dense development, the subliminal message in this statement is clear: to discourage people from driving a car, compare it to drug use by calling it “automobile dependence” and to the drug dealer by “inducing” people to drive.

The second part of their message is laughable to anyone who owns a business, especially retail; “Businesses that can be accessed without a car can see increased revenue, increased use of alternative modes of transportation, and improved outcomes for residents”.

Claiming that cars will counteract “city goals for increased use of public transit” and references to transit-oriented development is a clear indicator that a city has or plans to develop light rail. Light rail, the darling of a progressive city, is outrageously expensive and used by a very small percentage of the population. It is not surprising that such a city would want to increase its customer base to help pay for light rail, even though it is also typically funded by heavy taxation.

The goal for urbanists is to densify cities, and that includes the suburbs. The suburbs have been demonized by urbanists who assign negative terms such as “sprawl” in order to shape the public’s opinion and to shame them into rejecting the automobile. Offering developers a place where they can omit parking from their budgets as an enticement is one way for them to create a most favored basis for transit-oriented development in the urban cores and suburbs.

The reality is that the auto-centric suburbs and small towns continue to be the preferred living arrangement for most Americans. They don’t see their cars as the liabilities that urbanists wish they would. Instead, the mobility that cars give us increases our opportunities for the jobs and type of homes we actually want.



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