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Government Policy through the Lens of Suburban Development

Curriculum Unit 10.01.01
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Introduction

This unit seeks to teach both the history of the post-war American suburb and the process by which the federal government makes policy decisions. The students will explore the historical forces that led to suburban growth. While the policy-making process is often shrouded in secrecy, the policies that spurred the creation of modern suburbs are surprisingly well documented. Additionally, the consequences of these policies are obvious to most Americans every day. Thus the history of modern suburbs allows teachers to circumvent these obstacles, teaching the policy-making process in real terms and assessing its real consequences. Most importantly, this unit will help students to understand the consumer dimensions to these policies, thereby allowing them to explore the cultural ramifications of policy decisions as well.

Approaching the policy-making process in this way allows students the opportunity to understand and evaluate the decisions that led to their towns, their schools and their lifestyles. The students will come away with a clearer understanding of their government and their own history. As a result, the students can build on their critical thinking skills and content knowledge, allowing them to understand and evaluate the world in which they live.

History

The modern American suburb sprang from the confluence of the aspirations of Americans, the will of American corporate interests, and the policies of the American federal government. The suburbs are an experiment in urban planning that has been evolving for 60 years, leaping over the barriers to urban growth that have limited cities for thousands of years. Moreover, the suburbs represent a social and economic shift that flows, in large part, from government action.

The rise of the American suburb in the post-war period is a singular event in human history. Throughout most of urban history, cities have grown out from their center in fits and starts as opportunity and prosperity allowed. Ancient and medieval urban growth was limited by transportation, economics, and security. The need

for defense was acute, given the modern nature of national defensive frameworks. Thus cities needed to be largely self-sufficient in case of attack. As a result, what urban planning there was usually focused on the inner city, leaving the fringe to fend for itself.

Most importantly, until about 200 years ago, cities rarely grew so large that people could not travel by foot from farms to city center and back in less than a day. The need for fresh food and the limited means of transporting that food to market made relatively local farms a necessity in order for cities to sustain rising populations. Even with the most advanced trade networks available, it was rare to travel eight or ten miles outside the city center and not find oneself in the countryside.

The Industrial Revolution changed the nature of cities in a fundamental way. New technologies and wealth allowed greater movement of men and material to and from urban centers. Where previously a nation's wealth was measured in commodities such as gold and grain, capital became the new measure. No longer an expensive symbol of a nation's wealth, cities became the main source of that wealth. Cities grew to accommodate that role. By 1920, for the first time in the nation's history, more Americans lived in cities than in the country. In some ways this industrial growth foretold the growth of suburbs after the Second World War, decentralizing cities and moving huge amounts of capital to the nearby countryside. But few would have predicted, looking at the streetcar suburbs of the 1910s the scale or the nature of our modern urban landscape.

When most Americans think of the suburbs, they imagine the 1950s and the post-war exodus that drove many city dwellers (usually white and working or middle class) to abandon the cities in favor of newly constructed tracts of mass produced housing. This is a popular image, one that has attained a mythic status in American memory. This image relies on the belief that suburbs as we know them are the natural result of the prosperity that came after two decades of war and depression. In some small measure, this view of history is correct, if incomplete.

To fully understand the history of the suburbs however, it is necessary to understand the major shift that occurred in consumer attitude's, personal transportation, and credit. These three forces, with the aid of government made the growth of the suburbs possible. As with most major changes in history, these forces began to chart a course toward the suburbs long before the 1950s. Trends in consumerism, transportation, road building, and credit were all well underway by the 1920s.

Popular images of late 19 th century America included thrifty mothers who knew the value of a dollar. These notions, though popular, are hardly accurate. The late 19 th century saw the rise of payment plans, layaway and installment buying. These innovations in credit helped a new and expanding middle class afford the wide range of new goods and services available from the industries growing up around them.

While stores and vendors were able to offer buying plans and credit to consumers, and banks were allowed to offer mortgages, usury was for the most part illegal, and thus credit was unavailable for anything other than a major purchase. This legal framework allowed illegal lending to flourish, and predatory lending was the norm. By the early 20 th century, there was a strong political effort underway, backed by banks and Americans alike, to repeal usury laws. The effort was successful, and led to the rise of legal lending, and a boom in easy credit throughout the 1920s. This allowed a wide range of households to purchase goods that would have been previously unattainable. The rise in credit also created a booming economy based in consumerism.

The rise in consumerism, fueled by newly available credit changed more than the bottom lines of Macy's and

Gimbel's. It changed the attitudes of businesses and consumers alike. Consumers saw that for a bit more than the purchase price, they could own products today that might have taken them years of saving. Businesses that had been offering payment plans for decades saw the expansion of their sales. Soon it became obvious that expanding credit to those not previously eligible would mean a substantial increase in the number of toasters, washing machines, and typewriters sold.

These new consumption realities of the 1920s came to an abrupt halt with the crash of 1929, and the bank-runs that followed it. Credit, which in the 1920s had become a necessary part of the consumer landscape, dried up. By the end of the 1920s most middle-class American households relied on credit to buy durable goods, maintaining limited savings. By the 1930s, in an age of 33% unemployment, businesses and individuals needed credit for their very survival. Unfortunately, the trauma suffered by the financial system resulted in a drastically reduced money supply and limited the ability of even the strongest institutions to lend.

While things gradually improved throughout the 1930s, it took a world war to jump-start the American economy again and breathe new life into factories and banks. Only in the 1950s would the economy return to real prosperity, fulfilling the promises made by both the Federal Government and corporations throughout World War II. These promises of space, comfort, convenience, and consumer goods constituted something of a social contract between the American people and their government. When the war ended, the American people expected this contract to be fulfilled. Post-war governmental policies reflected this expectation, expanding credit, building infrastructure, and creating jobs.

In order for millions of Americans to move to the suburbs, America needed to overcome the greatest obstacle to urban growth, transportation. Again, the seeds of the post-war suburbs had been sown decades earlier. Before Henry Ford pioneered the affordable automobile, a large-scale campaign was underway to improve American roads. The Federal government waded into the field of road building with the Federal-Aid Road Act of 1916. This act allotted $75 million for the creation and upgrading of roads throughout the country. (Lewis 8/9) Over the next 30 years, the Federal Government partnered with states to create modern, surfaced and graded roads throughout the nation. For the most part this road-building was reactive in nature, connecting existing towns, and fixing existing rights of way. Nonetheless, the building of these roads would substantially alter the character of the American city. Homes sprang up on the fringes of cities, and the automotive commute became a normal part of some American's lives. The affordable automobile, on the federally financed road led to new growth in the suburbs throughout the 1920s.

These road-building efforts set the stage for the suburban growth of the 1950s, but they also led to a series of unanticipated consequences for urban planners. Namely, by the late 1940s, it had become obvious that building new roads, bridges, and highways created more traffic than they relieved. Pre-war American cities had not been built to accommodate cars, and even if existing roads were paved and upgraded, they were faced with unanticipated usage. As Americans moved out onto these roads in massive numbers, road-building struggled to keep pace. Only a new paradigm in road-building held the promise of relieving this congestion and meeting the burgeoning consumer desires of Americans, the modern highway which offered the promise of freedom to travel, and helped to guarantee that the trucks delivering consumer necessities would reach all parts of the country.

The final shift necessary for Americans to make the leap to modern suburban life was a shift in government policy. Prior to World War I, the Federal Government's role in urban planning was severely limited. Urban growth was generally organic in nature, and while the Federal Government had always maintained a role in distributing public lands and incentivizing population movement, the layout of specific cities was generally a

matter left to local authorities.

Prior to the Great Depression, most road-building efforts, even those undertaken with federal money, were local affairs. States and cities dictated the rights of way and the roads that would be improved. The Great Depression and the New Deal changed this relationship substantially. As with most other areas of Federal influence, urban planning became an issue of federal concern. In order to spur economic growth, the Federal Housing administration was formed to provide insurance against mortgage defaults. "This meant that home loans suddenly became a very safe and desirable business for America's bankers." (Hanchett) Along with road improvements, this represents both the intervention in the marketplace and the first in a series of policy decisions that would incentivize suburban construction over urban renovations.

With the end of World War II, the Veterans' Administration leapt into the mortgage insurance market as well with the G.I. Bill of 1944. Returning veterans were offered lavish benefits, while at the same time banks were offered generous insurance and programs to lower the cash down payment required to secure a mortgage. Both the V.A. and the F.H.A, however, showed a clear preference for suburban development and white males. In most cases the only homes that the V.A. or the F.H.A would underwrite were newly constructed homes in the suburbs. These new government programs helped legitimize mortgage debt from a moral standpoint, casting that debt as the entrance fee to the good life in the suburbs. Moreover, as one's home now constituted an investment capable of accruing value, and mortgages offered the possibility of leaving something to your children, paying rent became an irrational choice.

In some ways these governmental initiatives made perfect sense. Even at this early date there was great concern in and out of the halls of government about what it would mean to bring millions of servicemen home from war. The privations of the Depression were a clear and recent memory. The government was still run by the same administration that had worked for more than a decade with the almost exclusive goal of job creation. Given that the building of new homes and new towns requires a great deal more resources and a great deal more labor, a preference for suburban development also represented a preference for job creation. Furthermore, these were policies that labor, construction executives, oil companies, auto companies, and contractors could readily agree on.

The sheer scale of these efforts would substantially alter the character of the American city. Certainly Americans were on the move out of the cities throughout the 1920s and the 1930s. Good roads, cheap transportation, and credit backed by federal aid made it possible for Americans with some means to move to suburbs previously reserved for the wealthy. The change in post-war America was the seemingly democratic nature of these new efforts. Factory workers, who throughout history had been part of the working class, were elevated with the help of government to the new and expanding middle class. This shift brought with it new privileges, new opportunities, and new wealth. Of course, this shift was also largely limited to white American breadwinners who were favored by government programs, thereby offering them a substantial advantage over their African American peers.

By the 1950s the priorities of the Federal government were clear. The American people were clamoring for normalcy. They had sacrificed for a long time, and now they hoped to settle in to work, to earn a good wage, and to enjoy material prosperity. American corporate interests, who had tasted the wealth available in suburban development, lobbied hard for Federal subsidies. Oil companies, car manufacturers, homebuilders, and unions joined forces to lobby for the creation of new highways that would lead to suburban growth far from city centers all over the nation. Ultimately, the Federal Government listened, but not without great hesitation and deliberation.

The New Deal, and World War II had led to unprecedented levels of debt and federal spending. The Republican Eisenhower administration and Republicans in Congress were deeply concerned with the deficit spending. During the 1950s they campaigned to set the Federal Government's financial house in order. While Democrats sought to write ambitious highway construction legislation, deficit-wary Republicans blocked any efforts that might raise public debt.

In 1955, Senator Albert Gore proposed legislation costing 29 billion dollars, and creating a proactive system of limited access highways across the country. The measure was soundly defeated as Americans across the country joined a movement to limit tax increases and hold down Federal spending. By 1956 however, the landscape had changed. Seeing the failure of the 1955 Act, road builders, civic associations, tire companies, oil companies and homebuilders joined forces to create the "Road Gang." The Road Gang was a lobbying group that put forth enormous efforts of time and money to create the conditions necessary to pass the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956.

The 1956 effort was successful, and the Federal Government entered a new phase in road construction. The chief difference between the 1956 act, and all previous efforts at road construction was that now road building would be proactive. The 1956 act provided 90% of the funding to build roads designed to meet the anticipated needs of 1972. This shift represents an attempt to battle the congestion now gripping American roads, but it also represents a substantial commitment to the creation of new towns, suburbs, and lifestyles for the American people.

Convincing the federal government to support these subsidies took little work. The benefits were obvious. Consumption, and suburban growth would provide a steady supply of good factory and construction jobs. Wealthy Americans in a position to speculate could make fortunes, and the American people could share in the prosperity of good times.

Convincing the public that suburbs were desirable places to live also turned out to be relatively simple. Building on their promises of prosperity to come throughout the war years, corporations now offered dream homes at affordable prices. Thus the demand created by years of advertising, and the efforts of the burgeoning consumer culture came to a head. When those homes were finally available, the exodus began in earnest. Advertising and opportunity led to large numbers of white middle class Americans abandoning the cities in favor of the new developments.

Even though these subsidies resulted in huge economic gains for the companies involved, maintained production levels after the war, and offered jobs to millions, these policies amounted to more than economics. Suburban development policies were social as well. They turned cities into homes of wealth and of concentrated poverty. The departure of the new, largely white, middle class accelerated as safety and educational quality in the cities deteriorated. With heavy tax subsidies for buying a home, and no tax subsidy for renting, it became cheaper to own than to rent. Moreover, draconian slum clearance policies and highway building programs made cities less and less livable, setting the stage for our modern urban environment.

Justification

This history of the suburbs clearly illustrates both the process by which policy is made in America, and the role of policy in our seemingly organic markets. Policy generally follows a five-step process, beginning with agenda building, progressing through formulation, adoption, and implementation to policy evaluation. Each step in this process, as it pertains to the growth of suburbs, is clearly documented in the historical record as it is obvious in our daily lives. Thus this unit will be able to replace traditional units on social and economic policy in AP Government courses, as well as policy units in civics courses and social history units in U.S. History courses.

The logic behind this unit is simple. The history of the suburbs has led in most cases the setting in which our students have lived their lives. Moreover, unlike raise in taxes, or a new health care bill, the ramifications of suburban policies are appreciable for most students. While most policies of the federal government are obscure in nature, leaving students confused about their meaning, and their consequences. Finally, the students will come to understand the reach of the Federal Government, and its ability, by slightly altering spending priorities (and with our complicity), to reorganize our society.

Once a class completes this unit, students will be able to articulate and explain the history of the suburbs. The students will also be able to explain the policy-making process, evaluating its strengths and weaknesses while applying their understanding of those steps to policies beyond the suburbs. Students will also actively evaluate the policies that led to the suburbs, engaging in the final step in the policy-making process themselves.

Finally, in cooperation with Spanish and Statistics classes, the students will apply their understanding of the policy processes to the production of a Public Service Announcement to help others to understand the policy-making process, and other policies of the American government. This application of their understanding will serve as the capstone project to the unit, allowing the students to demonstrate their own understanding, and help others to inform themselves as well.

Objectives

As a result of this lesson the students will be able to

1. Explain the social history behind the policies that led to the creation of the suburbs.
2. Explain the steps in the policy-making process as they pertain to economic policy.
3. Discuss the factors that went into the creation of the 1956 Federal Aid to Highways Act.
4. Discuss Federal economic aid programs as they led to suburban development.
5. Explore the ramifications of these suburban development policies on cities.
6. Evaluate the ramifications of suburban development policies on the lives of Americans and the nature of citizenship.
7. Evaluate the policy-making process itself.

Strategies

Objective 1:

The first objective of the unit will be met by an inquiry into American life before the 1950s. Students will review, research, and synthesize information from historical sources to help them understand the social and political factors that led to the creation of the suburbs after World War II. Students will complete three basic writing exercises in which they seek to describe urban life in America in the 1920s, the 1930s and the 1940s. For each writing exercise, the students will have the opportunity to discuss their findings with the class.

Prior to the class, students will be assigned a reading from Alan Brinkley's American History: A Survey, as well as their first writing assignment. Students will have chapter 24, the 1920s to use as a resource when answering the prompt "Describe urban life in America during the 1920s". This will allow students to review their understanding of the 1920's, and it will prepare them for class, which will begin with a whole class discussion of their writing.

This discussion will set the stage for their writing on the 1930s and the 1940s. The teacher will guide students through explaining their writing by asking them to explain what their lives might have been like as city dwellers in the 1920s. Ideally, students will describe living in apartments, working in factories, using public transportation, and exploring new means of recreation. This should give students the context to understand the relevant information about the 1920s while giving them a basic guide for what will be expected of them in their next two assignments.

Students will then be broken into two groups. One group will use the materials in the class (history books, internet resources, maps, etc.) to describe urban life in the 1930s, while the other will describe urban life in the 1940s. Students will have about half of the class to complete their descriptions, before the class reconvenes. The teacher will spend this time circulating from student to student, helping to ensure that they each understands what is being requested.

When the students have completed their descriptions, they will break into groups of four, with each group containing two students who wrote about the 1930s and two who wrote about the 1940s. The groups will discuss their writing assignments with one another. Each student will be responsible for ensuring that they understand the decade their group members wrote about.

When the groups have completed their discussions, the class will reconvene to review their findings. It will be necessary at this point for the teacher to fill in some of the gaps produced by this kind of independent inquiry. Some students will not find all the information they need, and others will find a great deal of information that is irrelevant. It is most important that the students understand the 1920s as a period of growth, the 1930s as a period of finding work and making do, and the 1940s as both a period of pent-up desire during the war and a watershed where the desire for prosperity came roaring back.

Objective 2:

The next step in the unit is to break down the steps in the policy-making process. In order for students to critically analyze the history and the acts involved in the creation of the suburbs, it will be necessary for them to understand these steps well enough to apply them to the laws in question. Moreover, given that policy is usually the result of a number of separate acts of Congress, students will ultimately need to understand that

policy rarely results from a single law. This will set the stage for understanding that while no single law led to the modern suburb, many different laws passed over many different years amounted to a policy of suburban creation and urban renewal.

In order to accomplish this objective, students will list, explain and cite examples of each step in the policy-making process. Prior to class the students will read chapter 15 of American Government and Politics Today, which outlines the process by which policy is created. Class will begin with the students listing those steps, and explaining each from memory in their notebook.

The teacher will then lead the students in a discussion of those steps, and of the Federal Government's tools to influence the economy. As my classroom includes computers for every student, the students will then find recent examples of economic policy, and explain the steps in the policy process as they pertain to the policy they found. In order to ensure that students are fluent in the parts of the process and that they can explain those steps. Students will then present their policy and their findings to the class. While there is a potential for overlapping policies, the sheer number of economic policies available to the students should limit the chances that two students will choose to present on the same policy.

Objective 3:

Having become fluent in the process by which policy is made, the students will move on to discussion and evaluation of a specific act in long list of acts leading to the policy of suburban development. Prior to class the students will read chapter 5 of Tom Lewis' Divided Highways, which explains the political wrangling necessary to pass the Federal-Aid to Highways Act of 1956. This history clearly outlines the political history of the act, and therefore serves as a useful step between policy as a result of a single act, and policy as a result of many.

When the students arrive in class, they will sit with partners and outline the steps and stakeholders involved in the passing of the Federal-Aid to Highways Act of 1956. This will allow them to synthesize their understanding of the steps in the policy process, as well as allowing them to break the chapter into its most relevant parts.

When this is complete the teacher will lead the students in a discussion of their findings, and the class will outline the obstacles that existed in 1955 to the passage of the bill, and the changes that led to its passage in 1956. This discussion will lay the groundwork for a political understanding of the policy as well as giving the students the chance to finalize their understanding of the events. The students will then individually break down the pros and cons of the 1956 act. Each student will be assessed based on a writing assignment at the end of the class in which they explain whether or not they would have voted for the 1956 act.

Objective 4:

Once the students are grounded in the steps of policy-making, the history of the suburbs, and the Federal-Aid to Highways Act of 1956, the unit progresses to a broader discussion of the economic policies that led to the suburbs. Prior to class students will read Thomas W. Hanchett's article on federal aid to suburbanization (see resources section). This article outlines in clear and specific terms the economic aid involved in the rise of suburbia. Furthermore, reading this article at this time allows students to synthesize their understanding of the history of suburbia, with their understanding of economic policy in a coherent way.

This class will begin differently, drawing on their prior knowledge of suburban development to begin with a synthesized understanding of the material covered so far. Thus students will begin class by answering the following writing prompt. "How did the article you read last night alter your current understanding of suburban

policy?" The class will discuss this question after the students have had the chance to answer it themselves.

The students will then use American Government and Politics Today chapter 16 to review the goals of American economic policy, and the distinctions between fiscal and monetary policy. This will allow the students to explore and review the tools the federal government has to influence the economy.

The students will then break into small groups and discuss the article with some specific tasks in mind. First the students must list and explain each of the laws that helped to create the Federal Government's policy on suburbanization in the 1950s. Second, the groups will need to explain how these acts combine to create a policy on suburban development. The goal of these conversations is to allow the students to analyze how individual laws that build roads, subsidize home construction and subsidize sewer construction can combine to advantage one kind of town, city or lifestyle over another.

Objective 5:

For the fifth objective, the students will need to step back from the history of suburbs and step into the present moment. Evaluating the policies that led to the modern suburb is a process that can only occur if the class takes time to study and analyze the modern suburb itself. This objective will be broken into two parts, and each treated as its own concept in class.

Prior to class the students will read chapter 8 of Tom Lewis' Divided Highways, which explains the fight over highway development along the riverfront in New Orleans. Thus students should arrive in class having considered the winners and the losers of highway development.

The first half of this objective, exploring the ramifications from the perspective of the Federal government, is a straightforward inquiry assignment. Students will begin by laying out the goals of suburban development policy. Some of these goals they will know from their reading, some they will have to find using classroom resources once they have the assignment. Furthermore, it will be necessary for the students to consider the cost to government of pursuing this policy.

The second half of this objective, exploring the ramifications from their own perspective, is a more complicated matter. We will begin by looking up the city of New Haven and their own homes in Google Maps. Once the students have taken a serious look at the maps, the students will have the chance to look over Dolores Hayden's Field Guide to Sprawl. Both of these resources offer an aerial view of the built environment, and serve as a valuable resource for pushing kids to think about where they live. At the bare minimum students should come away from these resources with a deeper understanding of their environment, though ideally they will be able to draw connections between the images they are reviewing and the policies they have recently studied.

Once both parts of the objective have been met, the students will convene in small groups and brainstorm the results of suburban development policies in their own lives. In this way class will conclude with a discussion of the personal impacts of suburbanization, the winners and the losers of suburbanization, and the pros and cons of suburbanization. The class will conclude with a brief writing prompt asking "Would you reconsider now whether or not you would have voted for the Federal Aid to Highways Act of 1956? Why or Why not?"

Objective 6

The unit will wrap up with an evaluation of both suburban development policy and policy development itself.

Prior to class, the students will read chapter 6 of Lizabeth Cohen's Consumer's Republic. In this chapter Cohen explores the impact of the movement of marketplaces from cities to suburbs in the 1960s. Cohen describes the malls of Bergen County New Jersey, as well as exploring the meaning of citizenship in a more suburban nation. This reading will introduce the students Cohen's dual notions of citizen consumers and purchaser consumers. In this way students will become acquainted with the larger effects suburbanization and consumption on citizenship.

The class will begin with a brief discussion of the pros and cons of the suburban development policy we have explored throughout the unit. This discussion will rely heavily on the Cohen reading, in that it consolidates many of the forces that have been discussed in class up to this point. Students will describe the new landscape, synthesizing the reading and drawing conclusions about its implications. If they do not come to it on their own, the teacher should prod students toward the inclusion of consumption and consumerism in their discussions of the changed landscape of suburban communities.

When this is complete, students will break into small groups and answer the question, what are the consequences of suburban development policies. This will necessitate a final deconstruction of the pros and cons of suburban development, as well as a final assessment of its winners and losers. The Cohen reading will prove an asset to this discussion, in that many of the topics discussed in the previous class are laid out in the reading. Each student will be responsible for taking notes on this discussion, as the notes will be a pivotal part of the essay that will be written in the final class of the unit.

When the students have exhausted their discussions, the teacher will reconvene the class and lead them in tying the material together with a discussion of citizenship in this new suburban landscape. The class will conclude with this discussion of what it means to be a citizen/ exercise political rights in this new landscape.

Objective 7

On the final day of class students will evaluate the process of making policy in general, using suburban development policy as an example of both social and economic policy. The teacher will begin class with a review of social and economic policy. The teacher will put the terms on the board, and students will be asked to define each. When this is complete the students will brainstorm ways in which suburban development policies amount to social or economic policy.

When this is complete the students will review the policy-making process, and the policies involved in the growth of the American suburb. This will be a strictly question and answer review to ensure that students have ample time to write their essays.

Students will then write an essay answering the following prompt "Given what you know about the government policies that led to the modern American suburb, evaluate the process by which policy is created in the U.S." In order to write a complete and exemplary essay, students will need to assess the political factors involved in policy, the ramifications of this specific policy, and the steps in the process of creating policy. In this way students will be expected to put together all aspects of the unit into one coherent essay.

Classroom Activities

Lesson For Objective 1: The History Behind Suburbia

Goal:

To orient the students to the decades that led up to the 1950s and their influence on the rise of suburbia.

Objectives:

As a result of this lesson the students will be able to

1. Describe American life in the 1920s.
2. Describe and discuss American life in the 1930s and 1940s.
3. Explain the social history behind the policies that led to the creation of the suburbs.

Materials:

Board, marker, notebooks, pens, textbooks, computer resources, history books

Anticipatory Set:

At the beginning of the class the teacher will lead the students in discussing American life in the 1920s based on their homework.

Procedure:

1. The teacher begins class by answering any questions that the students have regarding the reading from the night before, as well as any questions they might have about urban life in the 1920s.
2. When all of the questions have been answered the students will be broken into two groups. The members of one group will each be responsible for describing urban life in the 1930s, while the members of the second group will describe the 1940s. This should take about 30-40 minutes or so, and will be based on the materials in the classroom.
3. When this is complete the students will break into groups of four, with two students who had described the 1930s and two members who had described the 1940s.
4. The students will then share their work with their groups, ensuring that each student has heard two perspectives on each decade. Each student will take notes to ensure that they remember each decade.
5. The teacher will gather the class together with 10 minutes remaining, and lead the students in a discussion of their findings filling in any gaps left in their understanding.

Closure:

The teacher will wrap up class with a brief overview of the unit to come.

Homework:

For homework the students will be asked to read chapter 15 of American Government and Politics Today.

Lesson for Objective 5: Exploring the Ramifications of Suburbanization Day 1

Goal:

To allow the students to begin to explore the consequences of suburban development policies.

Objectives:

As a result of this lesson the students will be able to

1. Explain the goals of the federal government's policies that led to suburbanization.
2. Discuss the winners and losers in the process of suburbanization.
3. Explore the ramifications of these suburban development policies on cities.

Materials:

Board, marker, notebooks, pens, Textbooks, internet capable computers, Dolores Hayden's Field Guide to Sprawl

Anticipatory Set:

Students begin class by answering the question, "What were the goals of the policies that led to suburbanization in America?"

Procedure:

1. The teacher begins the lesson by leading the students in a brief discussion of the anticipatory set.
2. When this is complete the students will use computers to map their own homes, and the city of New Haven, Connecticut using Google Maps. Each student will be asked to make observations and draw conclusions about the most prominent and the most relevant features in the satellite photos they find. Students can also look at the Field Guide to Sprawl, for more examples of the built environment in suburbia.
3. When this is complete, after 20 minutes or so, the teacher will reconvene the class and lead them in a discussion of the connections between the policies they have investigated and the

landscape in which they live. It will be necessary in this conversation to draw out the cause and effect relationship between their environment and the governmental policies.
4. When the class has finished discussing the built environment, the students will move into small groups and discuss the reading from the previous night (Chapter 8 of Tom Lewis' Divided Highways). The teacher will guide the discussion, asking the students to outline the pros and cons of highway construction as it existed in the 1950s and 60's, including a discussion of the winners and losers in that effort.
5. Students will wrap up their discussion with a brief writing assignment, answering the question "Would you reconsider now whether or not you would have voted for the Federal Aid to Highways Act of 1956? Why or Why not?"

Closure:

The teacher wraps up class asking a couple of students to share their answers to the writing prompt.

Homework:

For homework the students will read chapter 6 of Lizabeth Cohen's Consumer's Republic.

Lesson for Objective 6: Exploring the Ramifications of Suburbanization Day 2

Goal:

To allow the students to solidify their understanding of the pros and cons of suburban development policy.

Objectives:

As a result of this lesson the students will be able to

1. Discuss the pros and cons of suburbanization
2. Assess the impact of suburbanization on citizenship
3. Evaluate the ramifications of suburban development policies on the lives of Americans and the nature of citizenship.

Materials:

Board, marker, notebooks, pens, Textbooks,

Anticipatory Set:

The students begin class by answering the question "Based on everything we have discussed/ read so far,

what are the pros and cons to suburbanization?"

Procedure:

1. The teacher begins the lesson by discussing the anticipatory set with the students, leading the students in listing the pros and cons on the board. This list should be as exhaustive as possible. The Cohen reading from the night before should prove invaluable at this point.
2. At this point students will break into small groups of 2-4 in which they will create an outline of the consequences of suburban development policy. Each student will be responsible for taking notes, in that each student will need to draw heavily on this conversation for the cumulative essay to be written in the next class.
3. When this is complete the teacher will lead the class in going over their outlines, clearly identifying each consequence as the students mention them, and exploring each as fully as time will allow.
4. Class will conclude with another brief writing assignment, asking "what does it mean to be a citizen in this new landscape?"

Closure:

The teacher will wrap up class by asking for a few brief summaries of the students' responses to the writing prompt.

Homework:

For homework the students will consolidate their materials for the essay in the following class.

Appendix

The Advanced Placement program is grounded in teacher autonomy in curriculum design. As a result, the city of New Haven has not adopted a curriculum or requirements for AP U.S. Government and Politics courses. Thus this appendix will discuss the ways in which this unit meets the content requirements set forth by the College Board for AP Government courses.

This unit specifically addresses the content on government policy as well as the units on Congress, the Presidency, and the Bureaucracy. It meets the requirements that units on government policy include the process by which policy is created as well as exploring various specific historical examples of policy creation. Additionally, this unit touches on the required content on the process by which laws are made and overseen. Furthermore, this unit offers students skills that will better prepare them to write the essays on the AP Government exam.

Beyond the requirements of the AP Government course, this unit addresses the need for instruction in the social history of the U.S. Specifically, this unit prepares students in regular government or history classes to learn psychological content even though the unit itself does not appear in courses set out by the New Haven Public Schools.

Resources/ References

Brinkley, Alan. 1999. American History : A survey. 10th ed. Boston ; New York: McGraw-Hill College.

Alan Brinkley offers a concise survey of the history of the United States in this collegiate text. In particular, the chapter dealing with the 1920's serves the purposes of this unit well, offering a passable social history and political context.

Calder, Lendol Glen. 1999. Financing the American Dream : A cultural history of consumer credit. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Calder's book explores the growth of consumer credit in the United States in the early twentieth century. Calder discusses in depth the Victorian roots of usury laws, and the status of money lending in the late nineteenth century as a foundation to his work. Calder goes on to explain the end of usury laws, and the rise of consumer credit in the 1920s and 1930s.

Cohen, Lizabeth. 2003. A consumer's republic : The politics of mass consumption in postwar america /. New York: Knopf.

Cohen offers a comprehensive look at the history and consequences of American consumerism. Cohen explores the roots of post-war consumerism in the United States, and uses many vivid examples from her own home state of New Jersey. Cohen offers students the opportunity to appreciate the consequences of both consumerism, and suburbanization while contrasting citizen and purchaser consumers as models of modern political participation.

Cross, Gary S. 2000. An all-consuming century : Why commercialism won in modern america. New York: Columbia University Press.

Cross' book explains the process by which consumerism became our model of interaction in the twentieth century. In contrast to Cohen, Cross explores how consumerism grew as a model for organizing our lives. Cross' work is useful for teachers seeking background knowledge.

Hanchett, Thomas. 2001. The other "subsidized housing". Journal of Housing and Community Development 58 (1): 18-49.

Hanchett's article concisely lays out the systems in place to subsidize the growth of suburbs. While dense, this article is extremely useful in its ability to lay out for teachers and students both the policies that subsidized the suburbs, and the consequences of many of those policies.

Lewis, Tom. 1997. Divided highways : Building the interstate highways, transforming american life. London ; New York: Viking.

Tom Lewis has crafted an excellent resource for teachers and students in Divided Highways. Lewis effectively lays out the history of modern highways, assessing their consequences, and exploring the circumstances that surrounded their creation. Individual chapters effectively address battles in New Orleans to save the waterfront, and the political wrangling that led to the 1956 Federal Aid to Highways Act.

Schmidt, Steffen W, and Mack C Shelley. American Government and Politics Today. 2007-2008 ed. Belmont, CA: Thompson, Wadsworth, 2007.

This is a comprehensive text book on American government and politics. The book offers in depth coverage of a wide range of topics. In addition, it includes a full index of ancillary readings as well as both Federalist 10 and 51. I use this book as my text for my AP U.S. Government and Politics course.