

SS.912.A.7.1 Post WWII Domestic Prosperity- Example 2 Answer

Which development resulted from the construction of the interstate highway system?

- a. increased suburbanization
- b. reduced air pollution
- c. decreased fuel consumption
- d. growth of long-distance passenger train service

Answer

a. increased suburbanization

There were no new homes built during the war years. No construction materials were available. The military got all construction materials produced. There was a pent-up demand for new housing. War workers had been well paid, but they had little to spend it on, so they saved. There were also no new cars produced during the war, and no new consumer goods. All production was retooled to make items for the military. So the war workers wanted new houses, and had the money. Sixteen million men had served in the military, many had saved their money too and married their sweethearts when they got home. They too wanted houses. Ex-servicemen had as one of the benefits of their service a one-time, no questions asked, no credit check home loan, with a tiny down payment. So even if they had not saved their military pay, they could still buy a house. All this demand for housing fueled a construction boom that lasted into the 1960s.

Businessmen, the housing contractors, bought large tracts of land just outside towns and "subdivided" these into house lots, and sometimes went ahead and built houses on them, ready to move in to.

The government built roads to connect outlying areas to the downtown, so suburbanites could get into town to work, and back out to get home, in a hurry. Of course these roads have grown ever more crowded. When Eisenhower became president the government began construction of the Interstate Highway System.

Gasoline was dirt cheap, and so were cars. Not every family had a car before WWII, but after the war everybody wanted a great big, gas-guzzling V-8 powered shiny new car. If you lived in the suburbs, a car was a necessity, because there was no public transportation (except in New York City, which had commuter rail lines serving some adjacent areas).

Another reason people moved to the suburbs was they wanted to live some place nice. They wanted their children to have a good school. The governments (state and local) in the postwar years largely abdicated their responsibility to control crime and catch the criminals, and people did not feel safe in large cities, and often there was a good reason for this perceived lack of security. As affluent people left downtown for the suburbs, this left the downtown areas for the poor and minorities. This resulted in lower taxes being collected, and schools suffered and declined. This encouraged more people, anyone who could, to get out of town where the living was better and you stood less chance of being murdered or robbed.

After WWII, thousands of veterans returned home eager to settle down and start their families. At the same time, the US government offered VA loans that made owning a home a realistic possibility for many of these returning veterans. Also, thousands of people migrated within the United States to larger cities, hoping to find jobs in industry. This sparked a huge increase in the demand for housing both in US cities and in their outskirts. **The Valleyview Homes project and the Levittown project** are two examples of the kinds of housing that became available in the 1940s and 1950s.

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