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An Interesting Trend — Costs Driving Many Middle-Class Families From Cities

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The Washington Post reports that the high price of housing is driving many middle-class families from major American cities — and even from some suburbs. Reporter John Pomfret sets out the picture:

Between 2000 and 2004, all eight metropolitan regions from Seattle to San Diego lost middle-class families. On the East Coast, a similar trend is underway, with middle-class families fleeing the New York region and Boston for the South. The District has been in the buffer zone, losing middle-class families with children to the Sun Belt but gaining some from the Northeast, said William Frey, a demographer at the Brookings Institution.

“There’s a middle-class flight on both sides of the country,” said Frey, who has analyzed county-level census data on both coasts. He has found that real estate costs more than schools are driving the migration. The trend has city officials worried about what the loss of these middle-class families will do to the vitality of their communities, and they are trying to find ways to stem the flow.

Unsurprisingly, the city of San Francisco is a special case, with children disappearing from the city and its environs:

The departure of families is being felt especially hard in San Francisco, which is losing children at a rate that outpaces the rest of the region. Researchers, including Frey, say the skyrocketing cost of housing, more than the fact that the city is a center of gay life, is the crucial factor. San Francisco risks turning into Venice, Italy — a beautiful tourist town with few long-term residents and no families, said Gabriel Metcalf, executive director of the San Francisco Planning and Urban Research Association, which has advocated changes in zoning and the construction of not just more subsidized housing but also more market-rate housing.

Needless to say, this is a major demographic development. Furthermore, it must be tied to certain lifestyle choices as well. After all, many cities are turning themselves into artificial societies populated by young, mostly unmarried, urban professionals. This is an unnatural and unhealthy pattern.

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