

Challenges to Comprehension

Costs of Sprawl

Students from a suburban setting frequently do not grasp the inefficiencies of sprawl, as it is the only model of urban life they have known. For example, many students in an introductory human geography class answer the question, “Why do people live in the suburbs?” with “Because everything is close and convenient, you can drive anywhere you need to go.” True enough, if you don’t mind paying for the car and gas.

A great way to demonstrate alternative models is through a look in the “coordinate questions” below, where two cities of the same population are contrasted.

Assignment

Review/Reflection Questions

Why do people live in cities? Why do people live in suburbs?

Identify whether you live in the city or in the suburbs and explain why you live there.

How are cities in North America different from cities in Europe?

How are cities in Europe similar to cities in less developed countries?

Describe the issues associated with suburban “leapfrog” development? How could these issues be resolved in North America?

Coordinate Questions

Look at the following locations in Google Earth. You may want to use two windows so you can switch back and forth between the two easily.

52N, 0.99 W (Buckingham, Buckinghamshire, England)

43.7 N, 116.35 W (Eagle, Idaho, USA)

Answer the following questions:

- Each of these small towns is to the north and west of a larger city. Find these larger cities and name them.
- Describe the land uses beside housing and their distribution in each of the cities.
- Estimate the population for each town. Make sure your scale is similar for each town.
- Now look up the population for each town using a simple Internet search. Report what you find.
- Describe the approach to land use and planning taken in each town.
 - Which represents a greater infrastructure cost, and why?
 - Which represents a greater impact on the environment and why?
 - Which represents a greater impact on the aesthetic appeal of the countryside and why?