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Title: The Evolution of Shrinking Suburbs: Patterns and Challenges to Sustainable, Resilient Development in Metropolitan America

Recent popular and scholarly work has drawn attention to the issue of shrinking cities. In particular, a growing body of literature has focused on the impacts of population loss on European cities, and more recently, the Rustbelt in the United States. However, fewer scholars have examined the phenomenon of shrinkage in the suburban environment. This paper presents an exploratory study of the evolution of shrinking suburbs in the United States. We ask the following questions: 1) What explains the evolution of shrinking suburbs?; 2) To what extent have suburbs shrunk; and 3) what are the socioeconomic, spatial, and ecological characteristics of shrinking suburbs? We begin with synthesis of the literature on population decline and shrinking cities, and we find that key themes emerge around globalization, deindustrialization, and neoliberal growth policies. Then, we draw on a sample of the top 50 metropolitan areas to identify the geography of shrinking suburbs and document their socioeconomic characteristics. We operationalize a definition of shrinking suburbs using spatial and temporal criteria. Using census track-level data with normalized boundaries from the Neighborhood Change Database, we extract numerous socioeconomic variables regarding the demographic structure, labor force, housing stock, and income distribution from 1970 to 2010. In total, we find that approximately one-quarter of suburbs are shrinking. We identify the characteristics of shrinking suburbs, and we find put forth a typology of shrinking suburbs. We conclude by reflecting on the consequences of shrinking suburbs on the metropolitan landscape by considering the roles of governance, regionalism, and political fragmentation. Ultimately, we argue the planners and policymakers need to address the population and economic needs of suburban residents to achieve sustainable and resilient development.