

Families shun cities, fearing crime, but it's staid suburbia that's scary

By **CORY ALBERTSON**

A family with 2.5 children moves into a mildly expensive neighborhood. Before the wife unpacks a dish, the doorbell rings. Her neighbor from across the street, wearing a handmade seasonal vest, is holding an assortment of freshly baked seasonal cookies to match.

The woman introduces herself, thrusts the cookies in the newcomer's face and hands her a piece of paper. It lists the names and ages of the neighbor's own 2.5 children in chronological order. The neighbor manages to keep performing her multiple tasks with a



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practiced grin. Welcome to the suburbs. This is just the first hour.

For the last 50 years, the American dream has been routine and has always involved the suburbs. Today, the suburbs are dull and predictable. America's now recognizable metropolitan areas are exciting and attracting families.

Many previously forgotten Atlanta neighborhoods, such as Grant Park, are being reborn with vitality and originality not found outside I-285. For the families who live outside Atlanta, it is time to come to town.

Growing up around diversity, which is found in cities, is important for today's children. The United States embodies diversity and embracing this is

integral to surviving in modern society. Being taught about diversity coupled with exposure to it at a young age not only affects individual character, but also family life, worldviews and citizenship values.

Exposure to different cultures will improve children's understanding of the real world. Many different races, cultures and orientations thrive under Atlanta's southern, but modern, umbrella. In the suburbs, however, finding difference is more difficult for children.

Suburbs are too mass-produced. The formula for a suburb invariably revolves around a mall. Close to the mall are restaurants such as Chili's, T.G.I. Friday's, O'Charley's and others ending in a possessive "s."

Also, obligatory media stores such as Circuit City, Media Play and Best Buy are usually within close proximity of each other for maximum competition. The stores and restaurants are usually located along a vast stretch of one main road. Which city

am I describing? Kennesaw? Douglasville? Duluth? No one can tell, because most suburbs are so similar.

Fear of crime is a major reason families do not want to live in a city. Most have a media-influenced perception that something will happen to them if they set foot outside their door.

But most violent crime has nothing to do with location and everything to do with who you know. It is well known that many violent crimes are committed by someone who is close to the victim. The perpetrator could be a family member or a friend, in the cities or in the suburbs.

Honestly, we should be more afraid of a perfectly programmed woman thrusting her cookies and, ultimately, her sheltered lifestyle in our face rather than of walking down Peachtree Street. The city is not a scary monster. If families make the move, they will discover it is an exciting, cultural playground for the modern world, especially for the developing mind of a child.



JEAN SHIFRIN / Staff

Atlanta boasts numerous attractions for children, including the fountain in downtown Atlanta's Centennial Olympic Park.