

Cost of living causing Californians to move

By Conor Dougherty, New York Times

Russel Lee and his wife spent the past few years going online to do the depressing math of how much less housing costs pretty much everywhere that isn't California. They looked at Idaho, Arizona, North Carolina and Kentucky, but Lee, who was born in San Francisco and has lived in the Bay Area his entire life, could never quite make the move. Then the fires came.

In October, as the most destructive wildfire in state history swept through Northern California, Lee's three-bedroom home in Santa Rosa was consumed by the flames. He lost everything. He used the insurance payment to buy a \$150,000 home outside Knoxville, Tennessee, and will soon leave California for good.

For the half-century after World War II, California represented the epitome of middle-class America on the move. As people poured into the state in search of good weather and the lure of single-family homes with backyard orange trees, the state embarked on a vast natural engineering project that redirected northern water southward, creating the modern Southern California and making the state the most populous in the nation.

Those days are long gone.

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