

# Can the Path Be Altered?

## Salvaging And Renewing Rural Plains Communities

By **Dr. Larry Swanson**

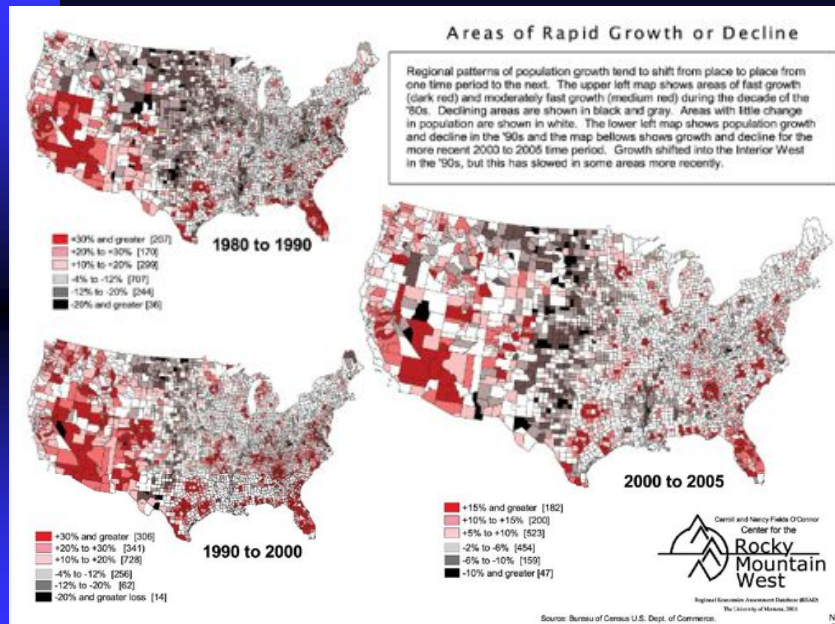
Economist & Director  
O'Connor Center for the Rocky Mountain West, The University of Montana

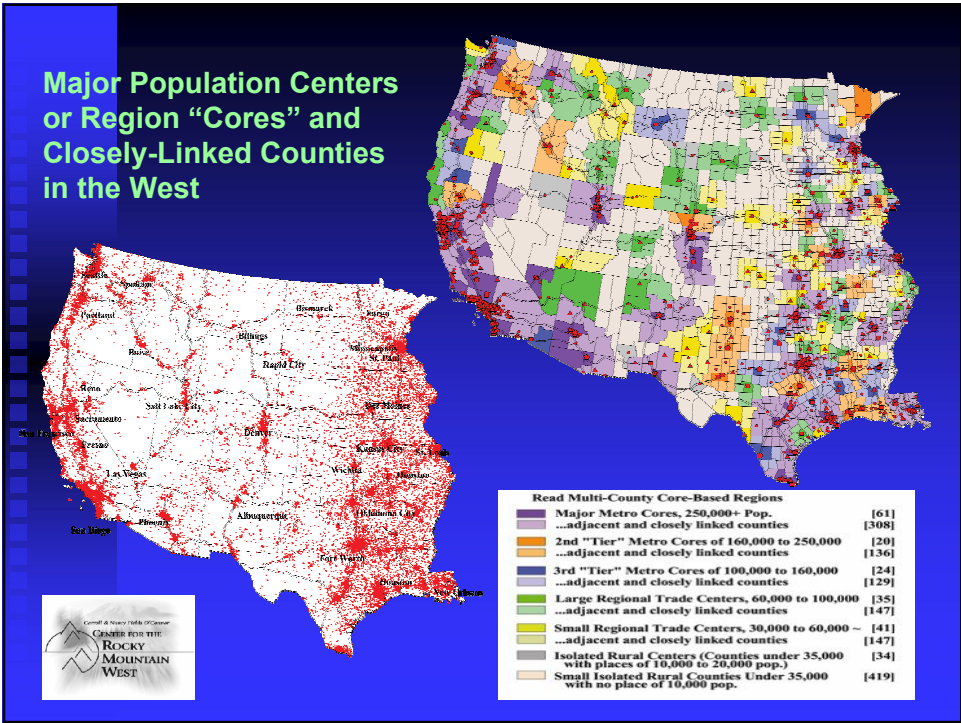
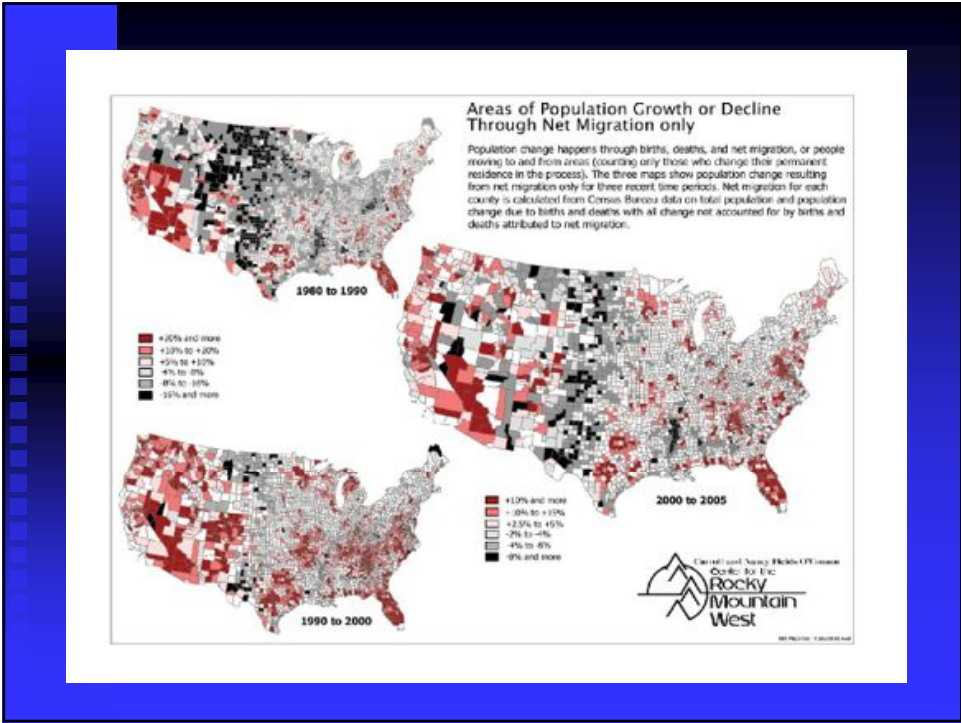
- Shifting Migration Patterns (movements of people to and from communities)
- Continuing Population Aging (Relatively "Old" population that will continue to age)
- Changing Geography of Economy (Much different economy than in the past)
- Newly Emerging Paradigm for Local Area Economic and Community Development
- Potential Strategies for the Central and Northern Plains Region ("Middle Places in Middle Spaces" and "Big Spaces with Small Places")

*Even though most forces driving larger patterns of change in the economy and society are supra-community in nature, so much of what really counts in area economic and community vitality is increasingly within the reach of community leaders.*

### 2007 Grasslands Foundation Lecture

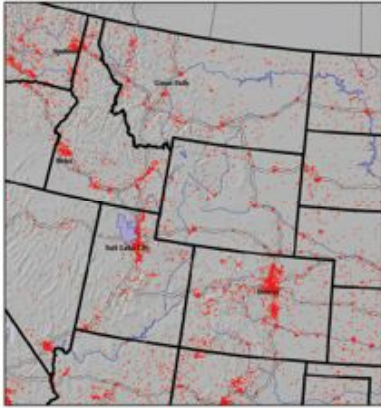
April 12, 2007  
Lincoln, Nebraska





## Sub-State Economic Regions in the Rocky Mountain West

The Rocky Mountains stretch from northern New Mexico north to the Canadian provinces of Alberta and British Columbia. Much of Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, Utah, and Colorado is contained in the Rocky Mountain West. The map below shows region population distribution in 1990.



**"Hub" Places by Size**

- 100,000 Population and Greater
- 50,000 to 100,000 Population
- 20,000 to 50,000 Population
- 10,000 to 20,000 Population

**Other Incorporated Places**

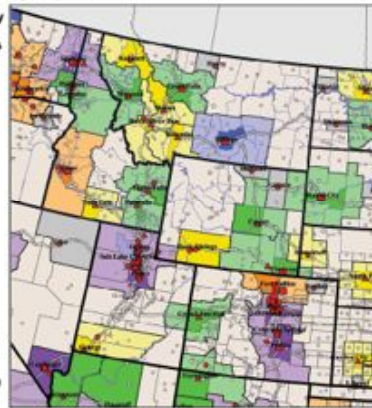
- 5,000 to 10,000 population
- 250 to 5,000 population

Interstate Highways

The map below shows how the region is generally spatially-organized around major population centers and into READ regions. There are four "major metro core" regions, with Denver and Salt Lake City the largest, followed by Colorado Springs/Pueblo and Spokane (shown in purple). There are two "2nd Tier" core regions (Boise and Fort Collins shown in orange). There is only one "3rd Tier" core region (Billings shown in blue). At lower levels, there are eight "large regional center" regions (green) and seven "small regional center" regions (yellow).

### READ Multi-County City-Centered Economic Regions

In the left map, each dot represents 750 people.



**Major Metro Cores, 250,000+ Pop. [4]**

- ...adjacent and closely linked counties [28]

**2nd "Tier" Metro Cores of 100,000 to 250,000 [2]**

- ...adjacent and closely linked counties [12]

**3rd "Tier" Metro Cores of 100,000 to 160,000 [1]**

- ...adjacent and closely linked counties [9]

**Large Regional Trade Centers, 60,000 to 100,000 [8]**

- ...adjacent and closely linked counties [45]

**Small Regional Trade Centers, 30,000 to 60,000 [7]**

- ...adjacent and closely linked counties [18]

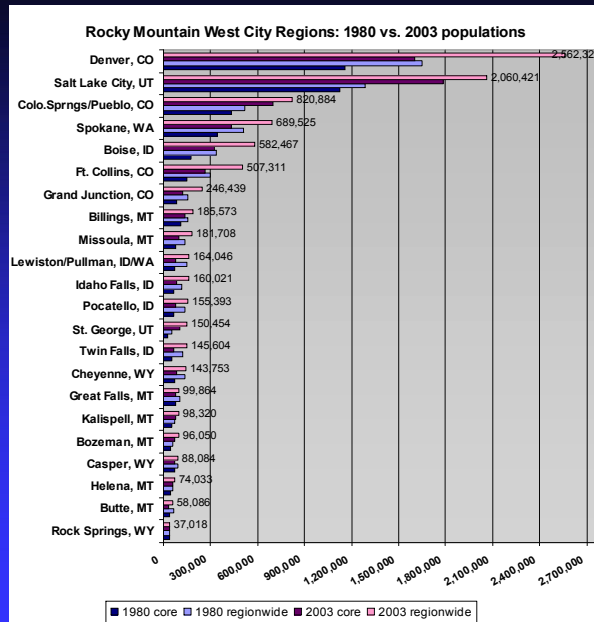
**Isolated Rural Centers (Counties under 35,000 [4] with places of 10,000 to 20,000 pop.)**

**Small Isolated Rural Counties Under 25,000 [7] with no place of 10,000 pop.**

## City Regions of the Rocky Mountain West

The 22 Rocky Mountain West city regions are rank-ordered by size of the region-wide population, which includes the population of each region "core" area (one or several counties where a primary regional population center is located) and the closely-linked surrounding counties. The chart shows region core and region-wide populations for both 1980 and 2003.

The most populated city region in the Rockies is Denver with nearly 2.6 million people, followed by Salt Lake City at 2.1 million. The third ranked city region drops off considerably from the second, with Colorado Springs/Pueblo at 820,000, followed by Spokane at 690,000. Boise ranks fifth at 580,000, followed by Fort Collins at 507,000. There is another large drop off in population in going to the seventh ranked region – Grand Junction at 246,000. The next 11 city regions are modest in size ranging from Billings, MT, at 185,000 (8<sup>th</sup>) to Bozeman, MT, at 96,000 (18<sup>th</sup>). The last four have region-wide populations under 90,000.

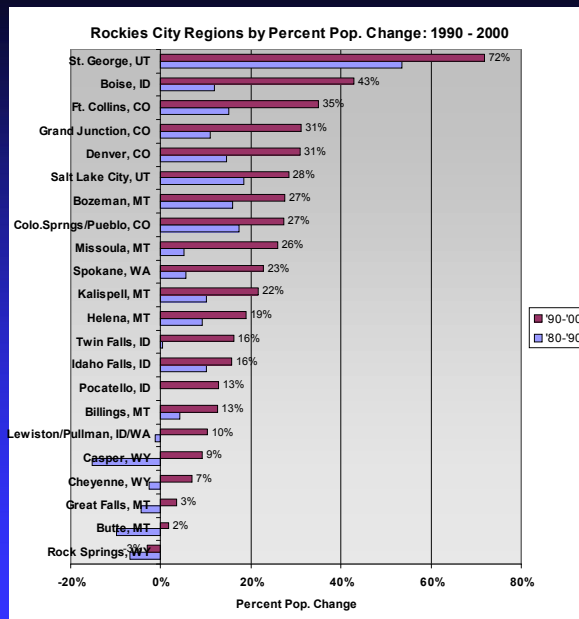


## Relative Population Growth among Rockies City Regions

The chart at the right shows the Rockies city regions rank-ordered by relative rates of population growth during the 1990s. Growth rates for the 1980s also are shown for purposes of comparison.

The St. George, UT, region is growing faster than any other city region in the Rockies, up 72% during the '90s. Next in order are Boise (43% in the '90s vs. 12% in the '80s), Fort Collins (35% vs. 15%), Grand Junction (31% vs. 11%), Denver (31% vs. 15%), Salt Lake City (28% vs. 18%), Bozeman (27% vs. 16%), Colorado Springs/Pueblo (27% vs. 17%), Missoula (26% vs. 5%), Spokane (23% vs. 5%), and Kalispell (22% vs. 10%). The remaining 11 city regions all grew by less than 20% in the '90s.

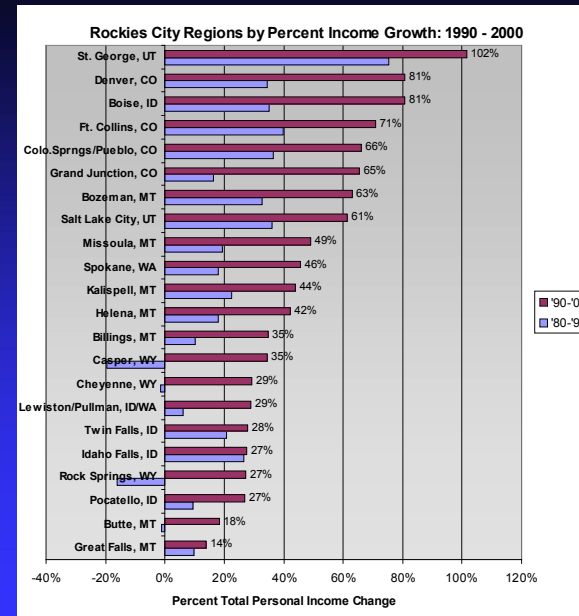
Across the entire gamut of city regions, growth rates in the '90s were significantly higher than in the previous decade.



## Relative Personal Income Growth among Rockies City Regions

The chart rank-orders city regions in the U.S. Rockies by the rate of personal income growth during the '90s. Just as with population growth, St. George had the highest percentage increase in its area income base among all of the regions with growth of 102% - a doubling of its income base over the ten-year period in inflation-adjusted dollars. Rates of growth in income also were high for Denver and Boise (81% growth in both cases) and for Fort Collins (71%).

Total personal income growth nationwide during the '90s was 37%. Personal income growth was equivalent to or exceeded this nationwide norm for all but 8 of the city regions. The income growth norm for all 22 city regions combined was 64%. Income growth in the rest of the region outside of these city region areas was 48% in the '90s.

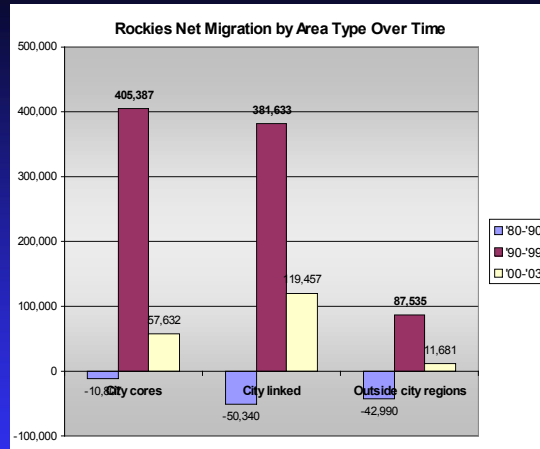


## Dramatic Shifts in Net Migration Patterns

In going from the 1980s to the 1990s, there was a "sea change" in migration patterns in the United States and this shift led to dramatically higher levels of net in-migration to the Rocky Mountain West. Nearly half of the region's population growth in the '90s can be attributed to net in-migration, or more people moving to the area than the number moving away (and changing their permanent residence in the process).

In city core counties, net migration went from out-migration of over 10,000 in the '80s to in-migration of over 400,000 between 1990 and 1999 (the period in which migration data were compiled). In closely-linked areas surrounding core counties, net migration climbed from a loss of over 50,000 people in the '80s to over 380,000 in the '90s. And in isolated and more rural areas of the region, net migration went from negative territory (a loss of nearly 43,000 people) to positive (gain of nearly 88,000) from one decade to the next.

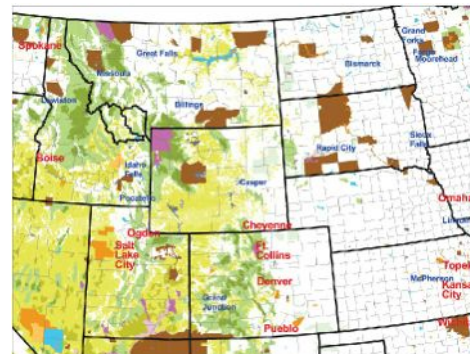
This migration shift has made the Rocky Mountain West one of the United States' fastest growing regions.



Emerging patterns of migration will largely drive population growth trends over the next ten to fifteen years, largely because of the undue influence of the very large "baby boom" population in the United States, an age group heavily participating in western U.S. migration shifts.

## Land in Public Ownership and Federal Management

The largest landowner in the United State is the American people through their national government. In the 48 contiguous states there are around 810,000 square miles of land under some type of federal agency administration and management. Over 90 percent of these lands, or nearly 714,000 square miles, are in the 22 contiguous western states largely west of the Mississippi River, with the greatest concentrations in the Interior West. In the 8-state region, these lands are most heavily focused in the Western Mountain region, with large concentrations of national forest lands, BLM lands, and several major national parks. The 3-state region has several large Indian reservations – most in the region's eastern and central portions. In the last decade, net migration flows have turned in the direction of these lands.



### Federal Lands

- Bureau of Indian Affairs
- Bureau of Land Management (Public Domain)
- BLM Wilderness, Wilderness Study, N. Man. & Other
- Department of Defense
- Department of Energy
- U.S. Forest Service National Forests
- Forest Service Wilderness & Wilderness Study Areas
- Forest Service, Other Lands
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- National Park Service National Parks
- NPS Wilderness, Wilderness Study, Preserve, Recreation Areas, etc.
- NPS National Monuments, Historic Sites, Battlefields, etc.
- Other agencies

Source: U.S. Geological Survey, 1:250,000 Scale Digital Line Graph Data, National Atlas of the U.S.

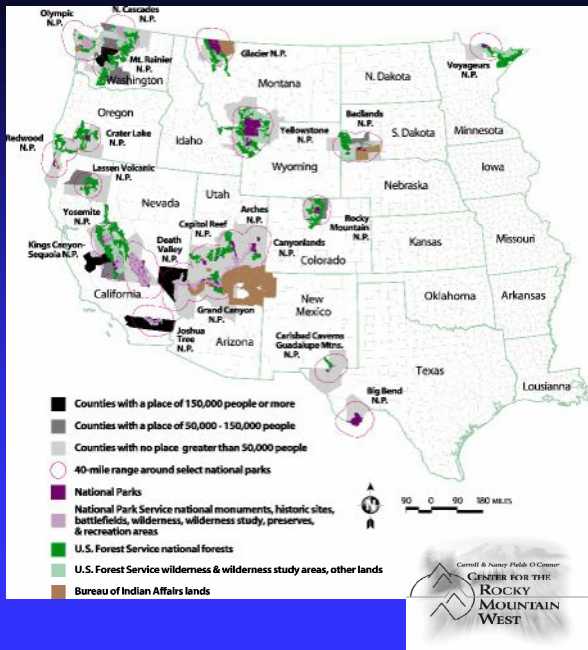


The University of Montana, 2001  
Regional Economic Assessment Database (READ)

## Areas Nearby National Parks In the West

There are 80 western counties whose geographic center is within 40 miles of a major national park in the West. The majority of these (51) are non-metropolitan in character.

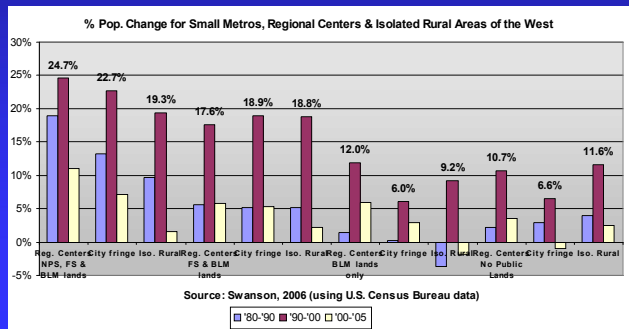
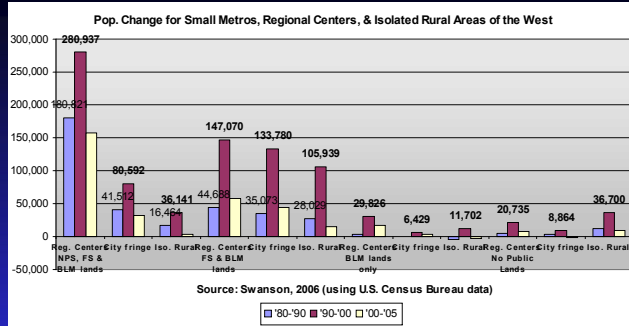
The map shows major national parks in the 22 contiguous states west of the Mississippi River. Other federal lands adjacent to these parks are also shown.



## Population Trends in the 11-State West for Rural Areas Based Upon Proximity to Federal Public Lands

The upper chart shows population change only for areas of the 11-state West outside of the more metro areas (both core and fringe areas of larger metros). Counties include core counties of large and small regional population centers, fringe counties of these and more isolated and rural counties with no large cities and that are not close to any cities.

The lower chart shows percentage change in population for all counties within these groupings. The greatest growth is occurring in regional center counties nearby national park lands with growth of 25% in the '90s and continuing relatively fast growth. Next is growth in areas nearby these regional centers also nearby national parks with growth of nearly 23%. Growth is also relatively high in areas nearby national forest lands. In isolated rural areas growth is greatest nearby national parks and national forest areas. This growth pattern is reflective of amenity-driven population movement.

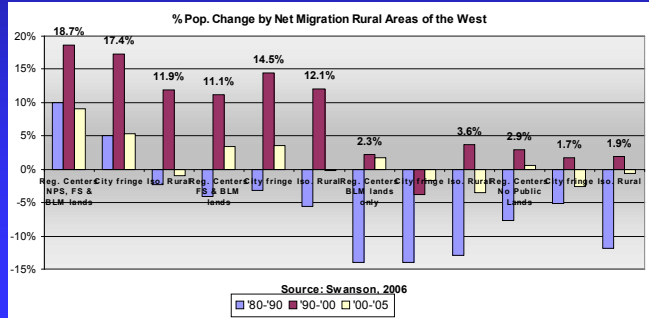
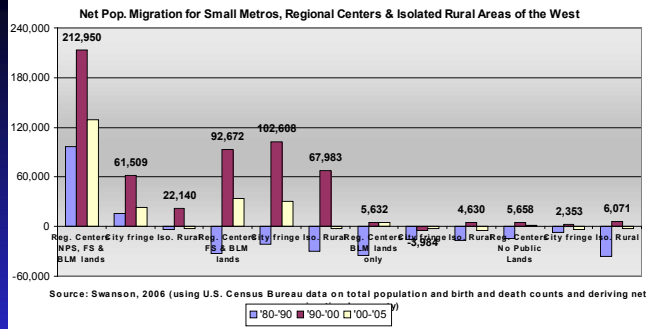


### Population Change by Net Migration for Rural Areas of the 11-State West According to Public Lands Proximity

Most population change in the West is being driven by patterns of net migration rather than natural change (birth and death rates). The upper chart shows population change by net migration only for several recent time periods. The lower chart shows how this net migration affected area populations in percentage terms.

The movement of people from place to place in the '90s led to significant increases in population in rural areas nearby national parks and national forest lands. While shifts in migration patterns also led to some increases in rural areas not nearby these lands, this growth was relatively small but did represent a significant shift from the decade of the '80s when net out-migration was much higher in virtually all rural areas.

These patterns indicate that most population growth in rural areas of the West is due to net migration and net migration that is largely amenity-driven, favoring growth areas with large national parks and forests.

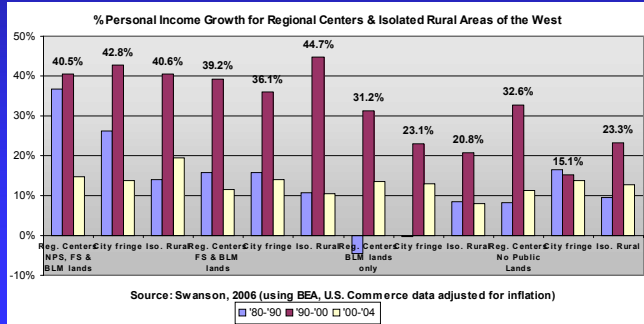
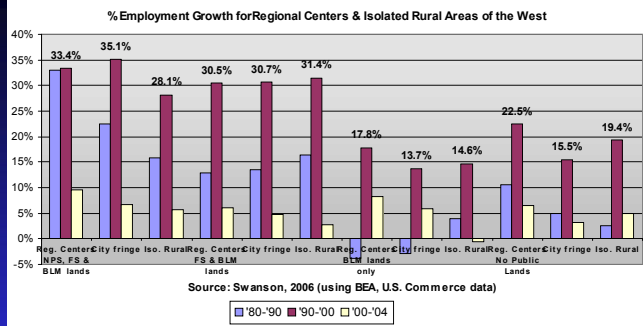


### Trends in Personal Income and Employment Growth in Rural Areas of the 11-State West based upon Proximity to Public Lands

Trends in personal income growth and employment growth are tending to follow patterns of growth in population, which is favoring growth in rural areas nearby national parks and national forest lands in the West.

The upper chart shows percentage changes in total personal income, adjusted for inflation, for rural areas nearby federal public lands and not nearby these lands. Personal income growth is considerably higher in areas nearby national parks and forests.

The lower chart shows the same pattern in looking at total employment growth.



## A More "Footloose" Economy – both People and Jobs.

Tremendous advances in information technology, combined with radical advances in communications infrastructure, emergence of a services-based economy, with employment growth concentrating in small business, further combined with a steady aging of the U.S. population and rapid increases in non-labor and more mobile sources of income ... have re-designed the modern workplace and re-organized the geography of economic activity.

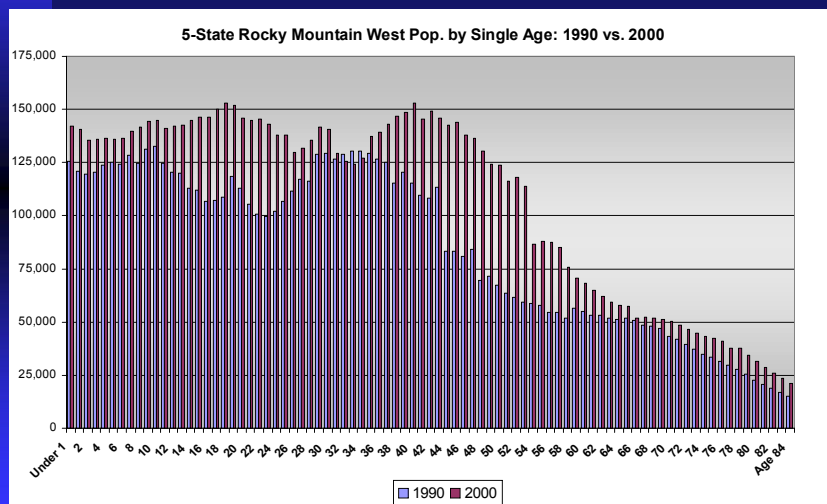
Today's economy is much more "footloose" than yesterday's economy. Both people and jobs are moving around more freely and new patterns of migration and business location are emerging. In the old economy, people followed jobs. In this newly emerging economy, jobs increasingly follow people.

The "old" economy encouraged urbanization and sub-urbanization. The "new" economy increasingly encourages growth to occur mostly in places where people want to live. Many mid-size cities and outlying non-metro areas – particularly ones with attractive communities in areas with high quality environments – have become very fast growing. Many smaller and more rural communities nearby these small cities and amenities are sharing in this newfound growth.

- Larry Swanson, OCRMW, U. of Montana

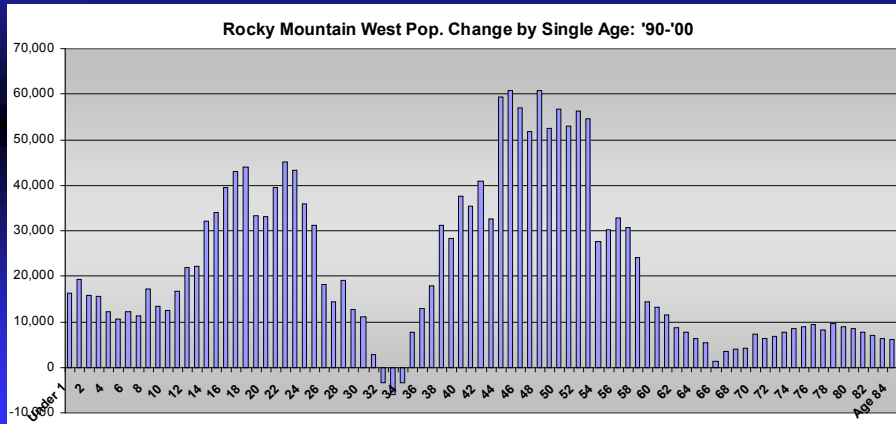
## Shifting Age Composition in the Rocky Mountain West

The relatively fast-growing Rocky Mountain West region population is growing fastest among certain ages of the population – most notably, persons between the ages of 40 and 60 – classic "baby boomers," or persons born after W.W.II between 1947 and 1964. The other fast-growing age segment is teenagers and young adults, or persons in their early teens and mid-to-late 30s – the children of baby boomers or the "echo" generation.



## Population Change by Age in the 4-State Rockies: '90 to '00

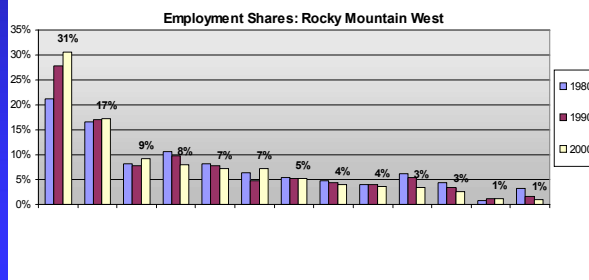
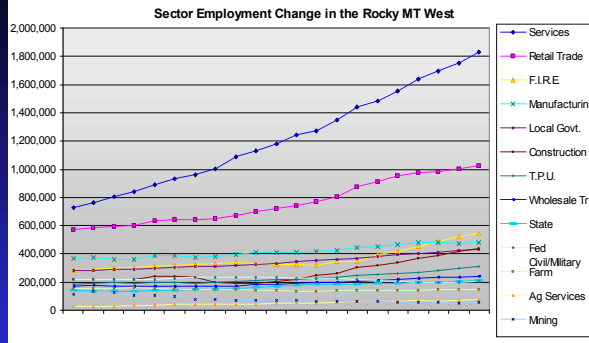
The chart below shows population change between 1990 and 2000 by single age. Growth is focused in two major age groupings – “baby boomers” or persons now between the ages of 40 and 60, and the “echo” generation or children of the baby boomers. These two large age groupings will shift into older ages and at the time of the 2010 Census, growth between 2000 and 2010 will be largely focused among persons between 50 and 70, which is the aging baby boomers, and persons between 20 and 40, children of baby boomers who are moving into ages of family formation, child-rearing, and work force entry and early career development.

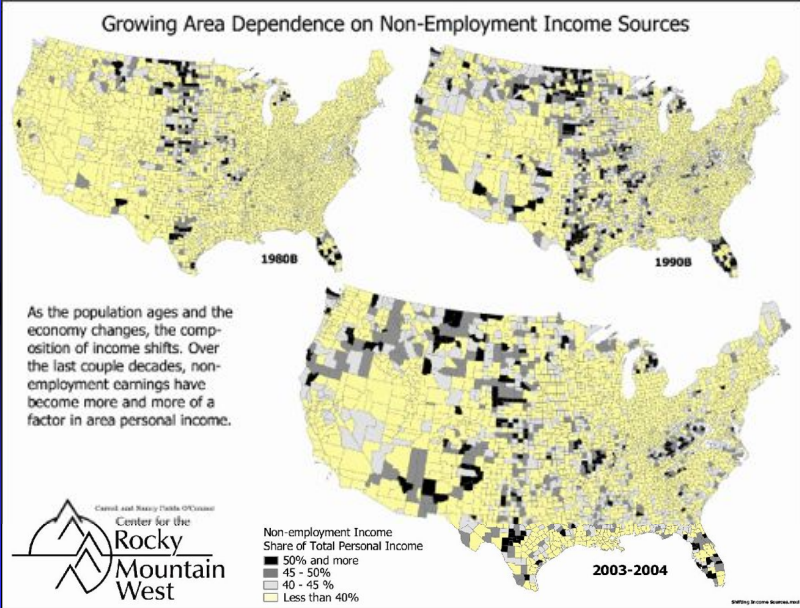
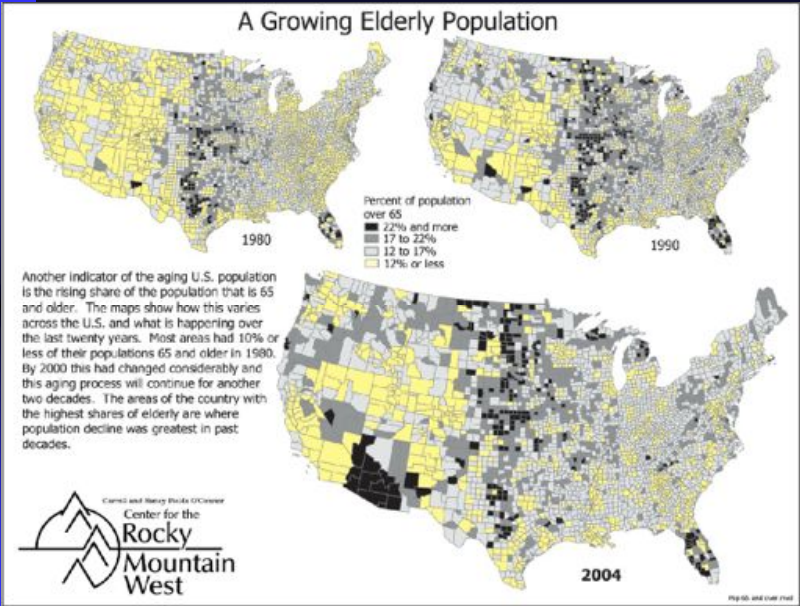


## Employment Shifts in the Nation's Fastest-growing Regional Economy

Over the period of time when the Rocky Mountain West emerged as one of the nation's fastest growing regional economies, employment growth heavily focused in the services sector. There are 13 major sectors of the economy (listed in the chart legend at the right), and services is clearly where most employment growth has been concentrated. In a region that views itself as built upon traditional industries such as mining, oil and gas, logging and lumber production, railroads, and farming and ranching, this wholesale shift into services employment has been unsettling and misunderstood. The region itself has the fastest growing income base in the United States as measured in percentage growth.

The lower chart shows the relative shares of total employment accounted for by each major sector for three points in time: 1980, 1990, and 2000. The most significant feature in this chart is the increase of services' share of total employment from 21 percent in 1980 to 31 percent twenty-years later.





## What increasingly really counts in local area economic development in this new economy?

**The Quality of your community** .. infrastructure, schools, neighborhoods, commercial development, streets, parks, arts and cultural amenities, identity, energy, vitality, multi-dimensionality, visual appeal, surrounding environs, ...

**The Quality of your work force** .. diverse, appropriately educated, and adaptive with training and education opportunities at all levels and nearby multi-faceted, well-delivered programs in workforce development

**The Quality of your businesses** .. market-oriented, forward-looking, entrepreneurial

**The Quality of your surrounding environment** .. not just parks and attractive, well-planned neighborhoods, downtowns, and commercial districts, but landscapes and natural amenities like streams, lakes, watershed and riparian areas, mountains, forests, grasslands, open spaces, etc.

Even though most forces driving larger patterns of change in the economy are supra-community in nature – technological change, transportation developments, new products, major demographic shifts, etc. - so much of what really counts in area economic vitality .. is within the reach of community leaders and decision makers. .. they can help create and sustain the types of positive attributes that attract, nurture, and stimulate economic energy and vitality and the conditions for economic improvement over time.

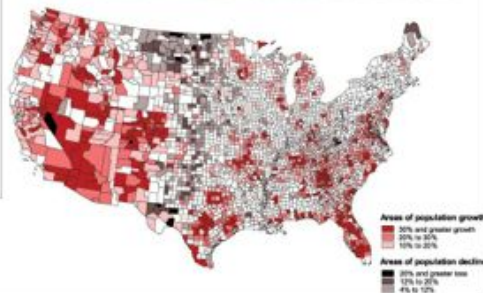
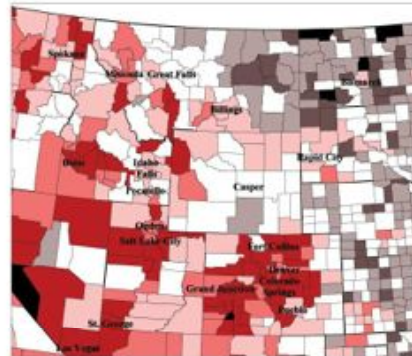
## The Fast-growing Interior West

Population change across the region between 1990 and 2000 was heavily driven by migration patterns, including fairly heavy migration into many areas of the Rocky Mountain West region, continuing out-migration from many non-metro or rural areas of the Plains region, and a more mixed pattern along areas of the Central Front of the Rockies. The maps show areas of the nation and of the region where percentage population growth was the greatest - 30 percent and greater in the dark red areas and 20 to 30 percent in the medium red areas - and areas with the greatest losses in population - 20 percent and greater in the dark black areas and 12 to 20 percent losses in the medium gray ones. Areas shown in white (unscreened areas) are counties whose populations saw only a little or moderate changes during the last decade, falling somewhere between gains of 10 percent and losses of 4 percent.

As can be seen, population growth is heavily focused in many areas of the greater Interior West, stretching from western Montana, Idaho and eastern Washington in the north to Colorado, Utah and Nevada and further south into the larger Southwest region. Population decline remains focused in the Interior Plains region and is particularly heavy in the northern portion of the Plains region.

Along the Rockies Central Front, aside from the Colorado Front where growth remains high, the pattern is more mixed or less pronounced in one way of the other.

The Rocky Mountain Region is being referred to by some as the "Third Coast" in American population settlement and growth.



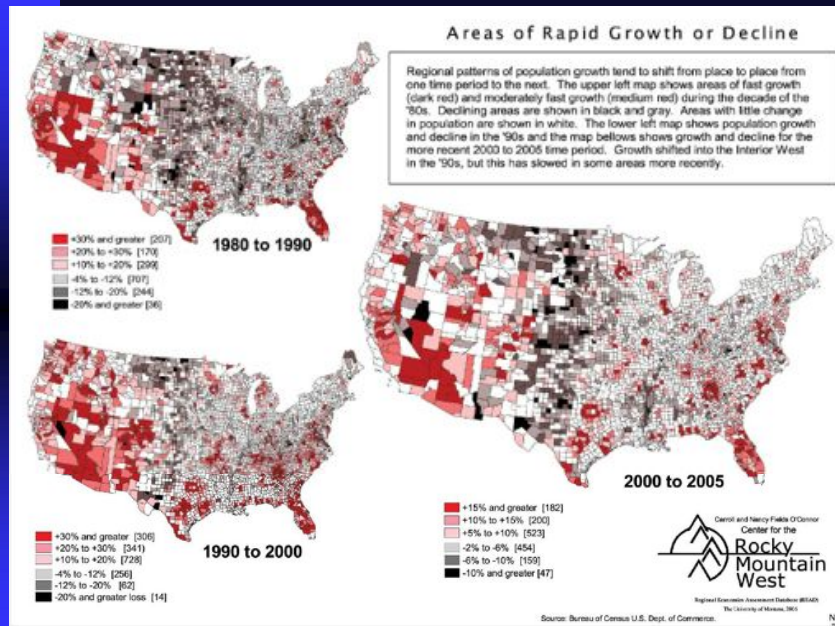
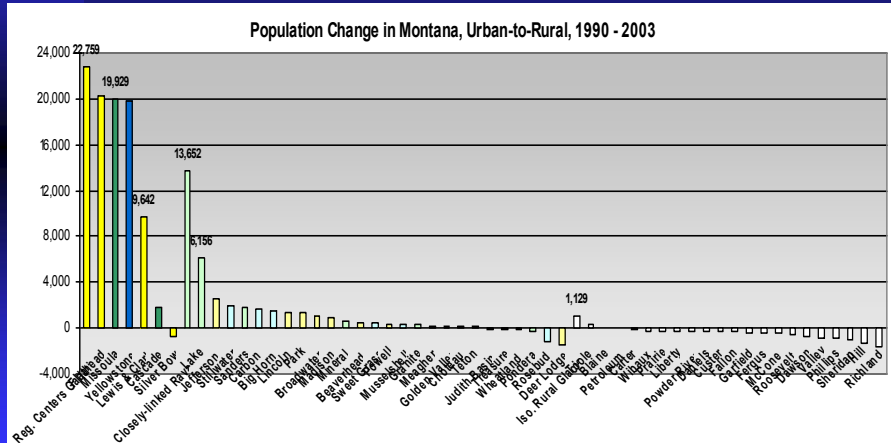
Regional Economic Assessment Database (READ)  
The University of Montana, 2004

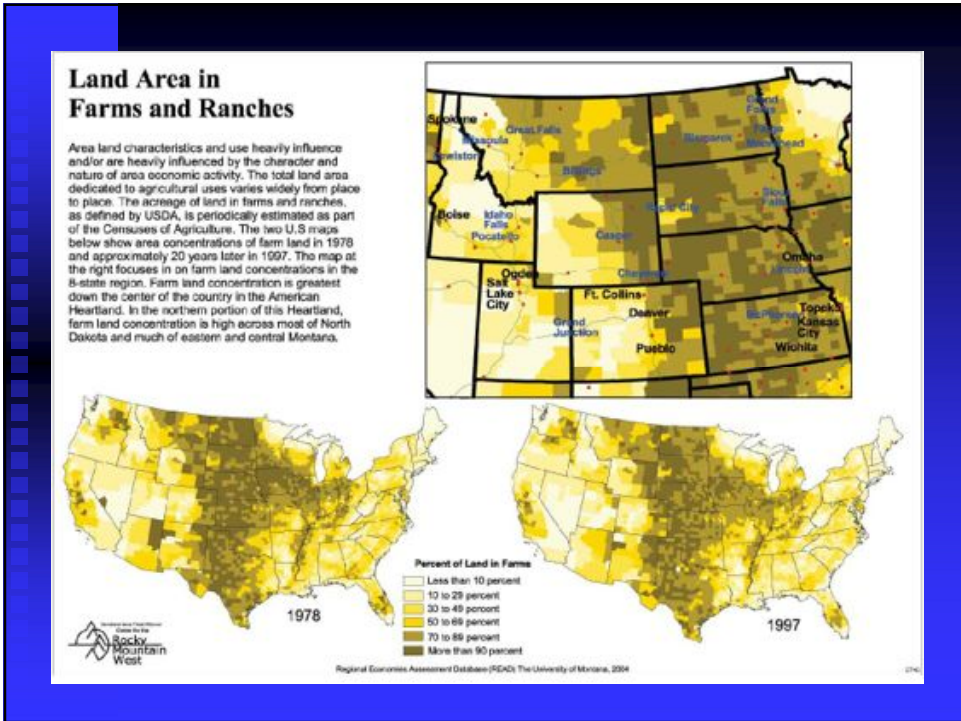
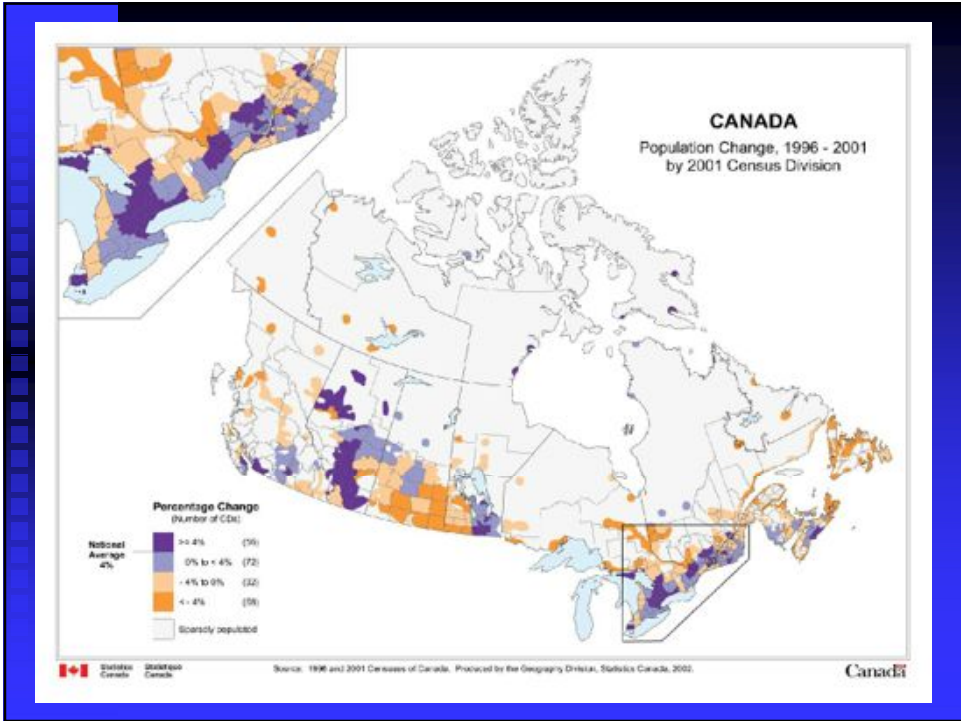




## City-Centered Growth in Montana

Most Montanans live in or nearby the state's seven largest population centers. In fact, today, more than 60 percent of the state's population lives in the seven counties where its major population centers are located. Another quarter of the population live in counties surrounding these regional centers and are closely-linked to these centers economically and socially. Less than 14 percent of the state's population lives in relatively isolated areas with small populations.



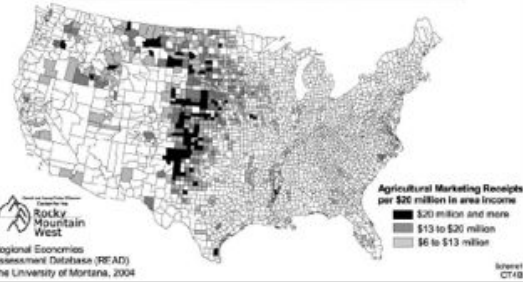
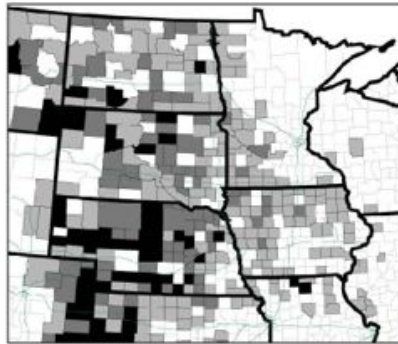


### Area Economic Dependency on Production Agriculture

The importance of production agriculture to area economies can be gauged by comparing the value of total marketing receipts by area ag producers to overall area income. In the two maps, areas shown in dark black are those where total ag receipts equal or exceed the total personal income of an area. These areas are the most dependent upon agriculture. Areas shown in the medium gray shade - areas with \$13 to \$20 million in average annual ag receipts per \$20 million in total personal income - also are heavily dependent upon agriculture. Areas shown in the light gray shade - receipts of \$6 to \$13 million - are ag dependent as well. Areas shown in white have a much lower dependence upon production agriculture; either because agricultural sales are relatively low or because income from other sources is relatively high.

Total ag receipts include marketing receipts from both crops and livestock and livestock products and are an annual average for three years ('96, '97, '98).

Areas most dependent on agriculture also are most heavily affected by swings in agricultural prices and production levels. Much of agriculture went from a period of relative prosperity in the mid-1970s to price and income collapses of near epic proportions in the early and mid-1980s. Full recovery and sustained prosperity still elude much of the industry, casting a shadow over the future of areas most dependent upon this important industry.



Rocky Mountain West  
Regional Economics Assessment Database (READ)  
The University of Montana, 2004

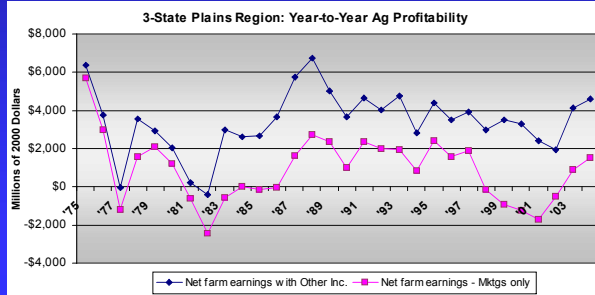
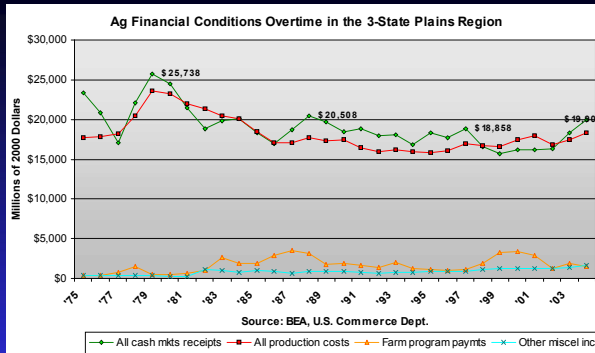
Internet  
CT18

### Ag Financial Trends in the 3-State Plains Region

Agricultural producers in the Plains region have been dealing with precarious financial conditions for many years. The upper chart shows total cash marketing receipts from all crop and livestock sales by producers in the region dating back to the mid-70s. These receipts, shown in green, are juxtaposed next to data on annual costs of production. You can see that on a year-to-year basis, it is a close battle between profitability and loss, considering only income from what is produced and costs of actually producing it.

The chart also shows income received by ag producers from other sources, namely, government farm programs and "other miscellaneous income."

The lower chart then shows year-to-year net farm earnings with and without these other sources. In many years income from government farm programs and other sources provide the margin of difference between gains or losses. But the erratic and uncertain nature of farm finances have contributed to the steady decline of farm numbers and farm families in the rural Plains.

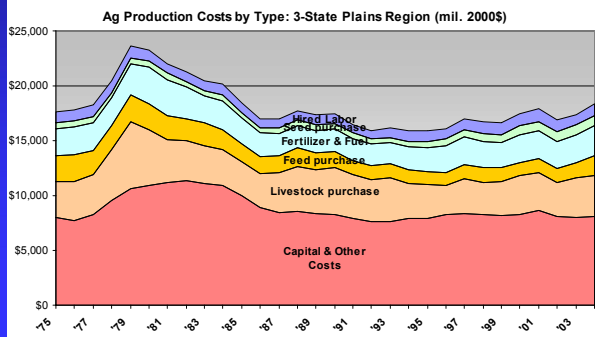
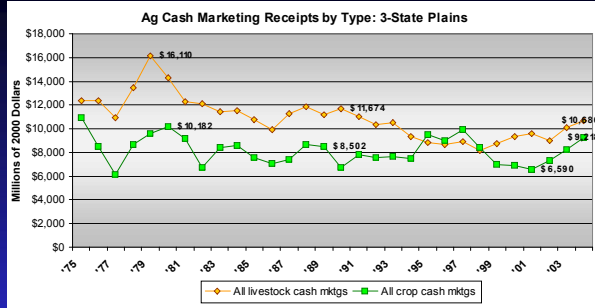


## Ag Production Trends in the 3-State Plains Region

The long-term decline in the total value of agricultural marketing receipts in the Plains region, adjusted for inflation, is largely reflected in declines in livestock cash receipts. The upper chart shows cash marketing receipts by major type – crops and livestock – for ag producers in the 3-state region. Livestock receipts once totaled more than \$16 billion (late '70s). More recently they total less than \$11 billion. Crop receipts exceeded \$10 billion in the late '70s, but more recently totaled about \$9.2 billion (2004 data).

The lower chart shows what accounts for production costs over the last 30 years. The single biggest cost category is costs related to interest on loans, machinery purchase and repair, and taxes.

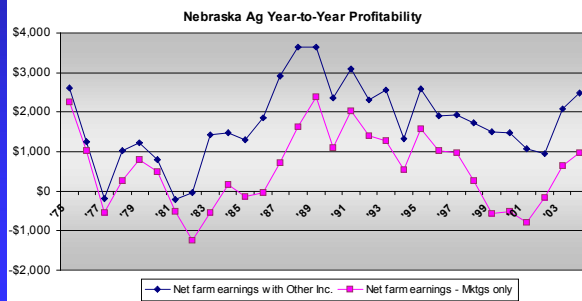
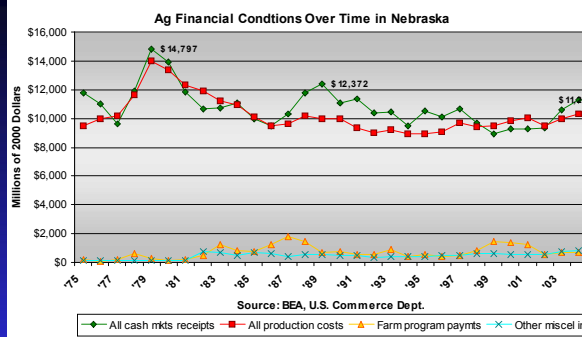
Ag producers have had to be very cost-conscious in order to stay in business. But most efforts to cut costs have been more than matched by reductions in marketing receipts.



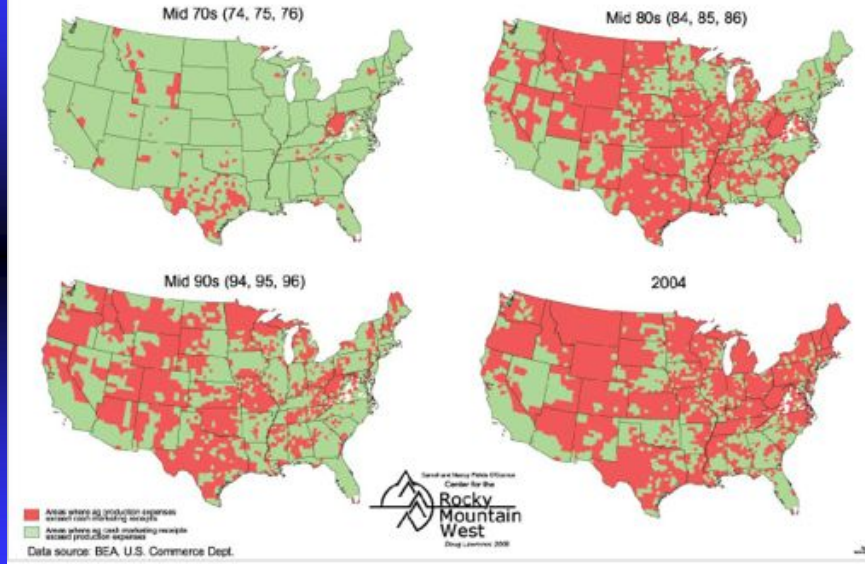
## Ag Financial Trends and Conditions in Nebraska

The profitability of agricultural production in Nebraska has been up and down over the last 30 years. The mid-80s were a period of extreme financial duress and "crisis," but a similar pattern emerged in more recent years with far less fanfare and notice. Income from farm programs and other sources have been very important in maintaining some semblance of profitability in many years.

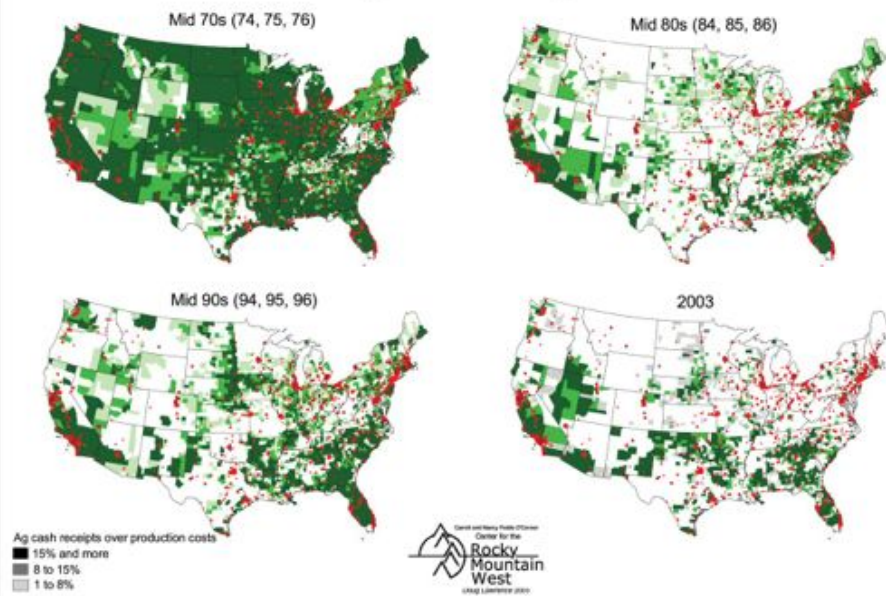
The lower chart shows year-to-year profitability for ag producers in the state in the aggregate, with and without income sources other than marketing receipts.



## Ag Profitability in the U.S.



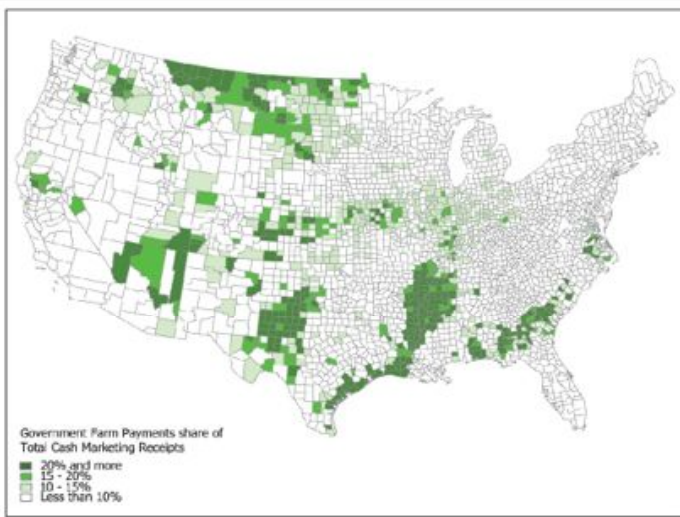
## Areas of Ag Profitability in the U.S.



### Area Ag Dependency on Federal Farm Program Benefits

The Federal Farm Program provides subsidies and other measures for a variety of crops in the U.S., most notably corn and soybeans, wheat and rice, and cotton.

The map shows areas of the U.S. where income received by farmers under these programs has the greatest impact on their incomes.

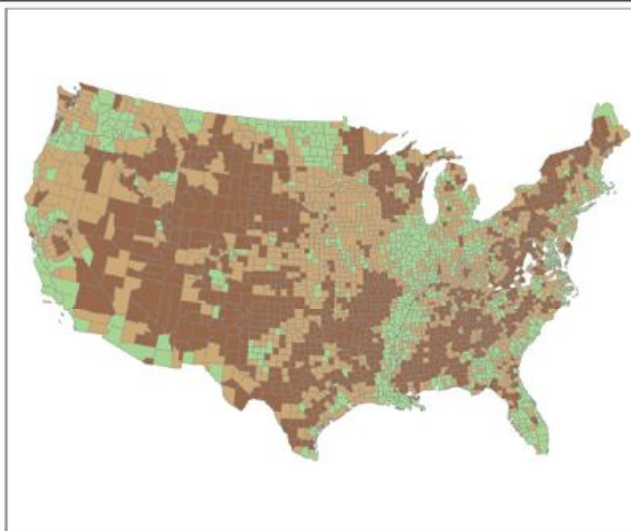


From [www.nrc.gov](http://www.nrc.gov)

### Agricultural Diversity in the U.S. Based Upon Crop and Livestock Receipts

The map shows areas of the U.S. based upon the orientation of their ag sectors. The dark brown areas receive 70 percent or more of their ag cash marketing from the sale of livestock or livestock products.

The green areas receive 70 percent or more of their marketing receipts from the sale of crops. The other areas falling between these have a mix of livestock and crop receipts.



- Livestock receipts 70% and more of total cash marketing receipts
- Mixed crops/livestock
- Crop receipts 70% and more of total cash marketing receipts

From [www.usda.gov](http://www.usda.gov)

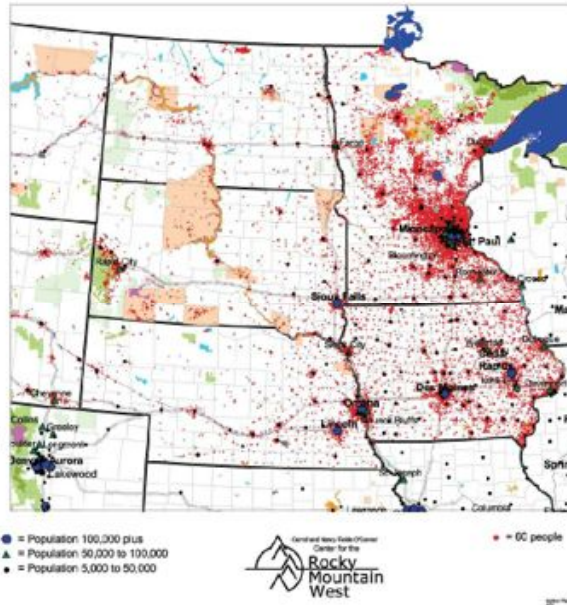
## The Northern Great Plains Region

### Key Trends and Prospects

The map shows population distribution in the 5 states of Minnesota, Iowa, Nebraska, South Dakota, and North Dakota. Key population trends occurring in different types of areas of this 5-state region are briefly analyzed, along with 16 Plains counties of eastern Montana. The 413 total counties in the region had a population of 10,985,000 in 2000 and this population is mapped at the Census block level with each dot representing 60 people. The region had grown to 11,300,000 people at the time of the most recent estimates in July, 2005.

The largest population concentration in the region by far is in and around Minneapolis-St. Paul. There also are several other major metropolitan areas including Des Moines and Omaha. Other major metro areas include Lincoln, Duluth, and Cedar Rapids. All of these can be considered "major metro centers" and there is considerable population residing in the "fringe" areas of these large centers.

The region also has smaller metro cores that include Fargo-Moorhead, Waterloo, Davonport, Rochester, St. Cloud, and Sioux Falls ("2nd Tier metros"). At the next level down ("4th Tier") are Dubuque, Sioux City, Bismarck, Grand Fork, and Rapid City and their fringe areas. Next are several "5th Tier" metros like Mason City, Mankato, Grand Island, and Minot. And below these are even smaller isolated centers and rural areas.

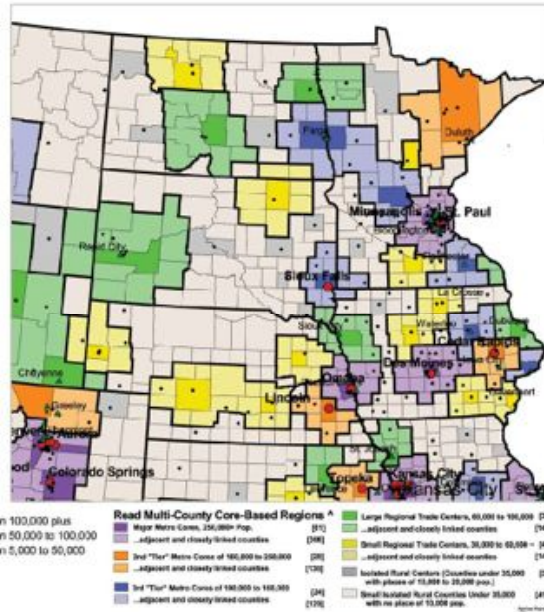


## Multi-County, City-Centered Regions and Isolated Rural Areas

The map shows how the counties in the region are classified by urban-rural types from the very most urban places to the most rural areas. The areas in dark maroon and dark orange are counties with 1st and 2nd Tier metro cores - major metropolitan centers. The light maroon and orange counties are ones considered "closely-linked" to these major metro centers - major metro "fringe" areas.

Of the region's 413 counties, 8 are major metro core counties - ones with county-wide populations of 160,000 people or more in 1990 (benchmark year used in classification). There are 43 closely-linked fringe counties for these centers.

The dark blue counties contain the 3rd Tier metro centers (county-wide populations of 100,000 to 160,000) and there are 10 of these counties. Counties with major cities in fringe areas of these include those with Clinton, IA, Muscatine, IA, and Austin, MN. There are 38 other fringe counties for these (light blue counties). The 5 dark green counties are 4th Tier centers (ones with county-wide populations of 60,000 to 100,000). There are 38 fringe counties of these (light green). The dark yellow 5th Tier centers are counties with small population centers that have county-wide populations of 30,000 to 60,000 (12 in all including the fringe counties with Hastings and Kearney). These have 68 fringe counties (light yellow). There are 12 counties that contain 10 small rural centers (places of 10,000 to 20,000 in counties with 35,000 pop.) And there are 168 isolated rural counties (light gray).



Grand and Isaac Falls O'Connor  
Center for the  
**Rocky Mountain West**

- = Population 100,000 plus
- ▲ = Population 50,000 to 100,000
- = Population 5,000 to 50,000

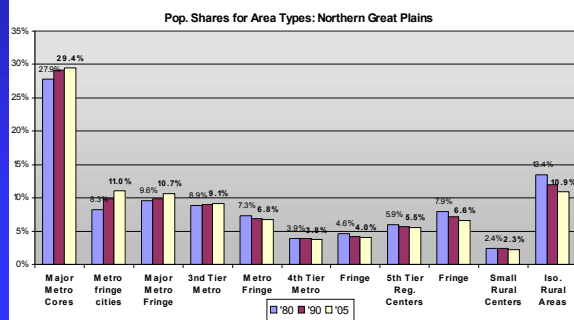
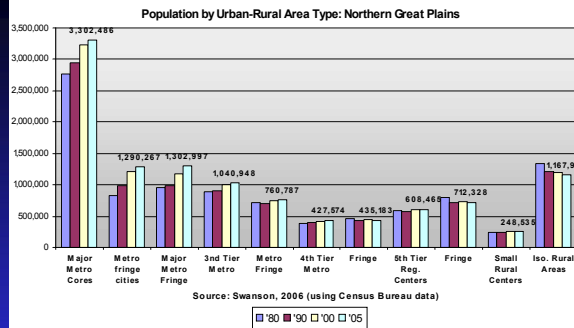
- Read Multi-County Core-Based Regions**
- Edge Metro Cores, 250,000+ pop. [8]
  - Adjacent and closely-linked counties [19]
  - 3rd "Tier" Metro Cores of 160,000 to 250,000 [20]
  - Adjacent and closely-linked counties [73]
  - 3rd "Tier" Metro Cores of 100,000 to 160,000 [24]
  - Adjacent and closely-linked counties [176]

- Large Regional Trade Centers, 60,000 to 100,000 [25]
- Adjacent and closely-linked counties [47]
- Small Regional Trade Centers, 30,000 to 60,000 [26]
- Adjacent and closely-linked counties [147]
- Isolated Rural Centers (Counties under 30,000 with places of 10,000 to 20,000 pop.) [4]
- Small Isolated Rural Counties Under 35,000 with no place of 10,000 pop. [418]

## Population Distribution in the Northern Plains

Of the region's 11.3 million residents in 2005, 3.3 million lived in the major metro core counties (dark maroon & dark orange), 1.3 million lived in smaller cities (20,000 to 50,000 pop.) in fringe areas of these major metros, another 1.3 million lived in fringe areas of these major metros without these large cities (light maroon and light orange counties).

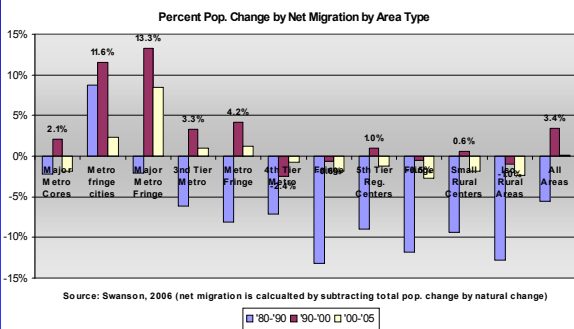
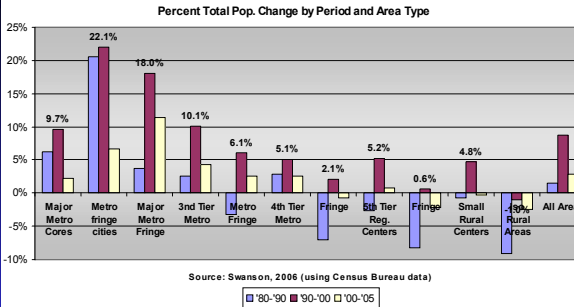
These first three urban area types had 29%, 11%, and 11% of the region's total population, respectively, or a total for all three of 50%. The other 50% lives in all the other types of areas, including 3rd Tier (dark blue), 4th Tier (dark green), and 5th Tier (dark yellow) centers and their fringe areas. Small rural centers (shown in dark gray) have a little over 2% of the population. The most rural and isolated counties (light gray) have about 11% of the population. Between the most urban places and their fringe areas with 50% of the population and the most rural places with 13%, there's a variety of smaller cities and fringe areas where about 36% of the population lives. These areas occupy the "middle" of the urban-to-rural continuum of places. They are neither totally urban or totally rural, but varying degrees of both.



## Trends in Population Change by Area Type

The region's overall population grew from 9.95 million in 1980 to 11.3 million in 2005. However, some areas grew while others declined. The '90s were a period of population growth for almost all areas, although there was much greater growth in more urban areas, particularly fringe areas of the very largest cities. Growth steadily declines in the more rural areas, which saw considerable decline in the 1980s. The biggest decline was by isolated rural counties, but there were significant declines in the fringe areas of smaller regional population centers (4th and 5th Tier centers).

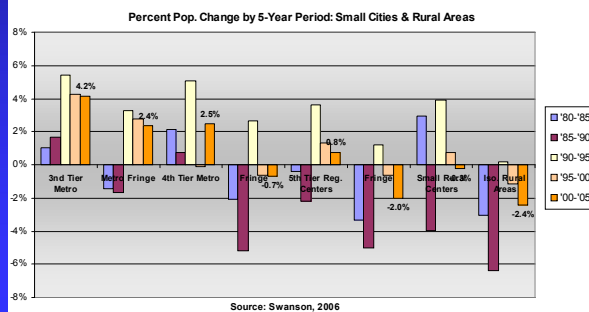
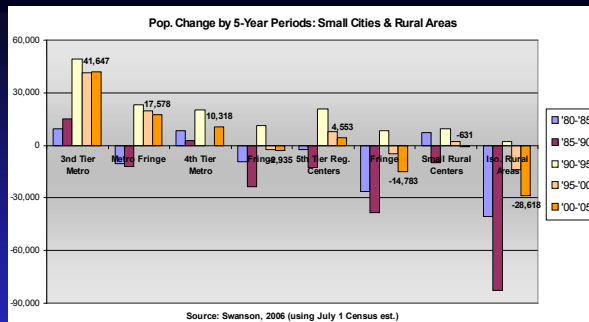
The lower chart shows decline from net out-migration. Net out-migration was widespread in the '80s, except for fringe areas of the largest cities. Net out-migration decreased substantially in the '90s. 3rd Tier centers and their fringe areas actually saw significant net immigration. 5th Tier centers saw a small net gain in population through net immigration. More recently (2000-2005), out-migration has returned in all the more rural areas. What's more, population growth through natural change is declining because of population aging.



## Smaller Cities, Their Fringe Areas & Isolated Rural Areas

The charts show population change in the region's smaller cities and their fringe areas (blues, greens, and yellows) and in the smaller rural center counties and isolated rural areas (where about 50% of the region's residents live). The 1980s were a very difficult time for these areas - "Farm Crisis" years. Rural areas as a whole lost 65,000 residents from 1980-85 and another 161,000 from 1985 and 1990. However, between 1990 and 1995, 144,000 new residents were added. This fell back to growth of 49,000 in the 1995 to 2000 period and to 27,000 persons from 2000 to 2005. Given the area's population aging, growth may slip back into negative territory from 2005 to 2010.

However, growth largely continues in 3rd Tier cities, extending into their fringe areas. There also is recent growth in 4th Tier centers and some modest growth in 5th Tier centers. But fringe areas of these smaller centers slipped to a minus 2.0%. Small rural centers slipped into small declines after gains in the previous two periods. More isolated rural areas may be slipping back into deeper declines after moving briefly into stable populations between 1990 and 1995.

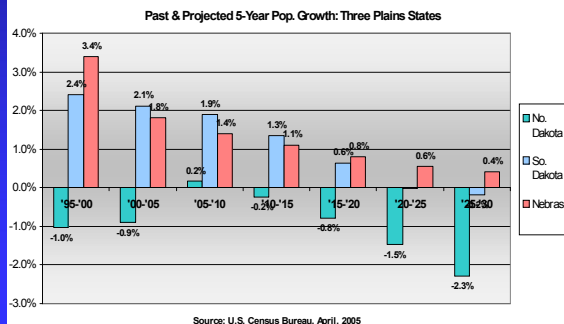
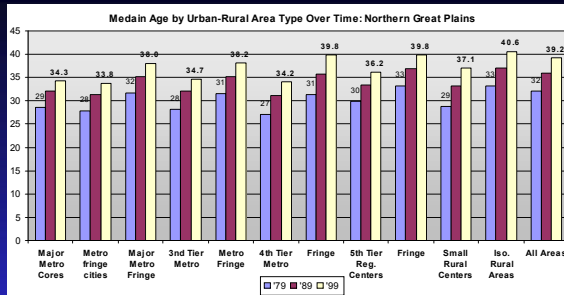


## Population Aging and Slowdown in Growth

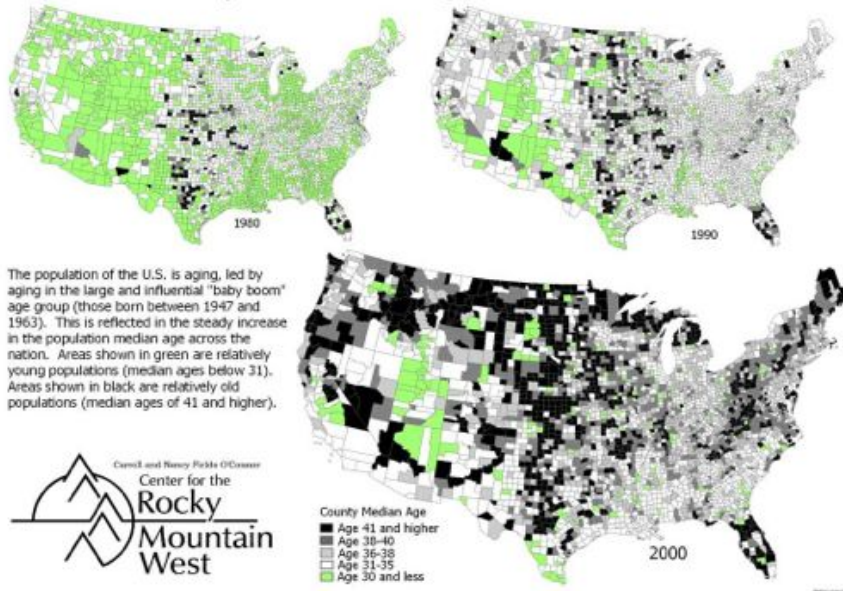
The population of the entire U.S. is aging and the median age is rising. This is led by aging of the very large "baby boom" population - those born between 1947 and 1963. Some areas are older than others, particularly those growing very slowly, and the Northern Plains is one of these.

The average median age for all 412 counties was 39.2 in 1999, but the most rural areas are the oldest and the most urban areas are the youngest. When the 2010 Census is conducted many rural areas of the Northern Plains will have populations with median ages exceeding 45. And for most of these, deaths will exceed births, adding a new dimension in area population trends.

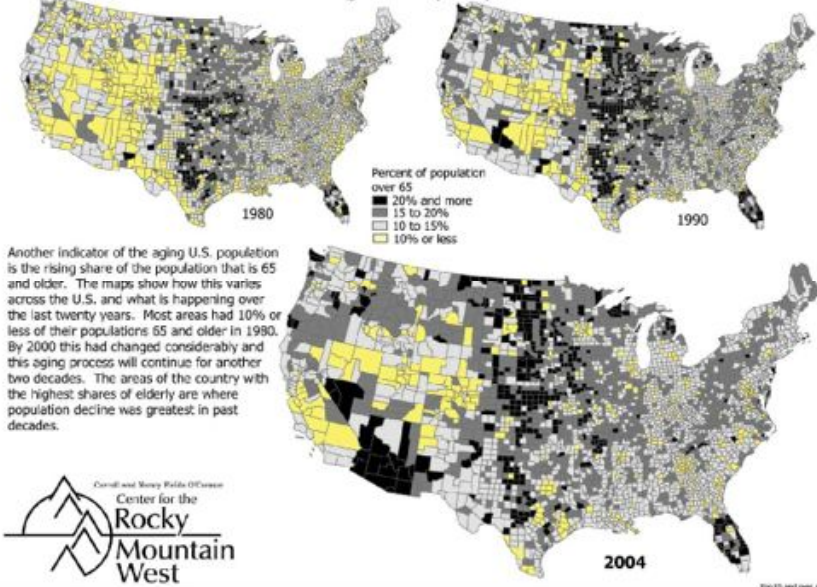
As the population ages, birth rates fall and death rates rise and, with continuation in net out-migration, this can and will slow overall population growth in this region already growing very slowly. The lower chart shows 5-year past and projected growth rates for three states in the region - North Dakota, South Dakota, and Nebraska. Both South Dakota and Nebraska are projected to have steadily falling growth rates. And North Dakota is projected to see greater and greater decline.

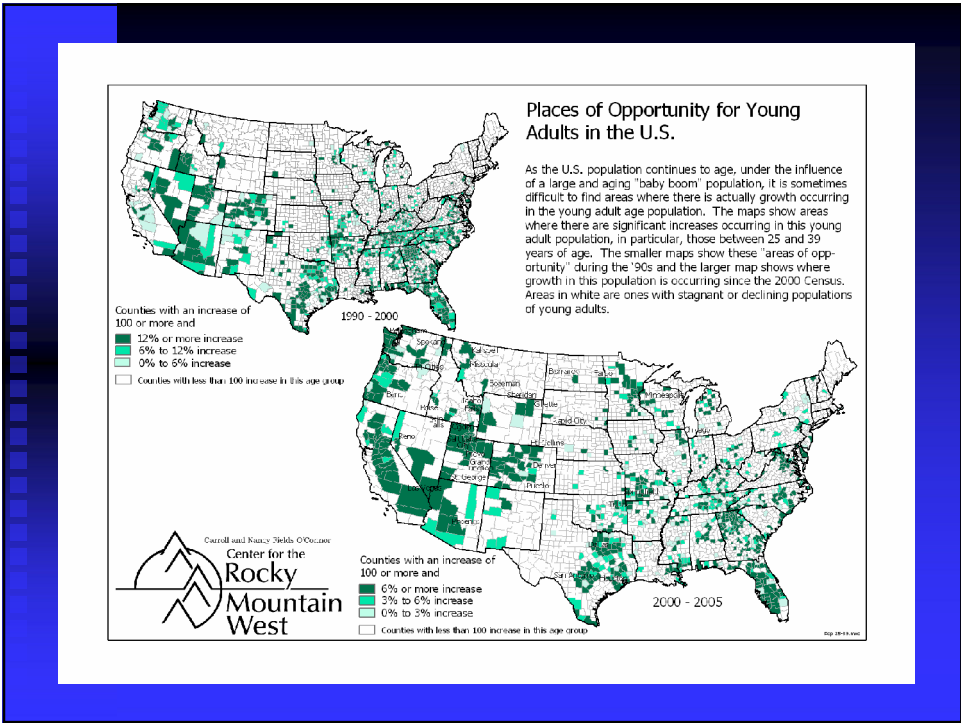
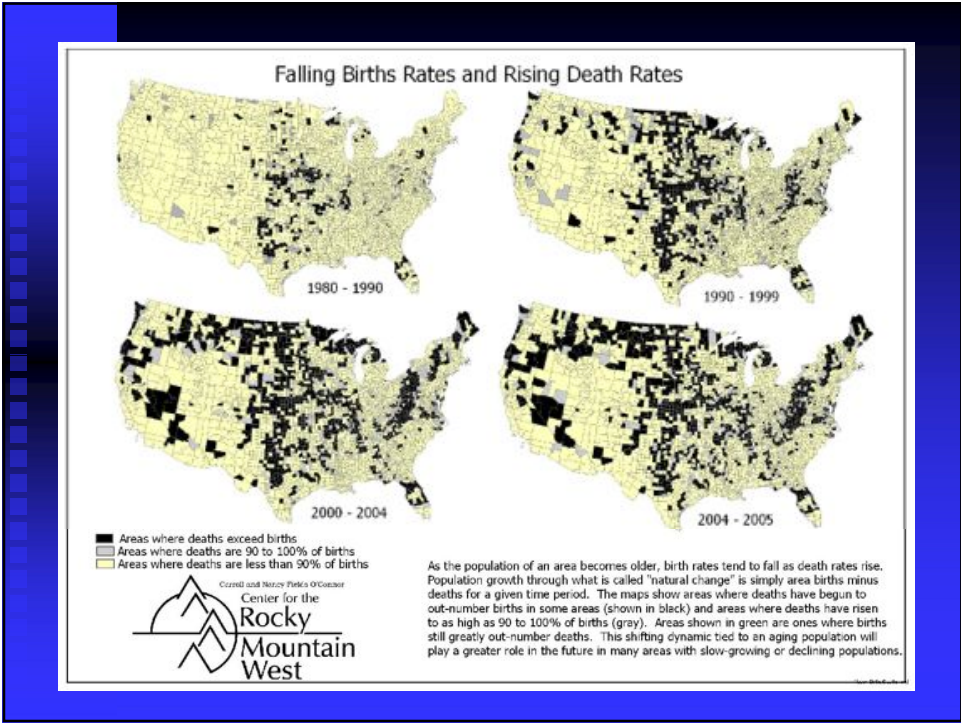


### Relatively "Old" and "Young" Areas of the U.S.



### A Growing Elderly Population



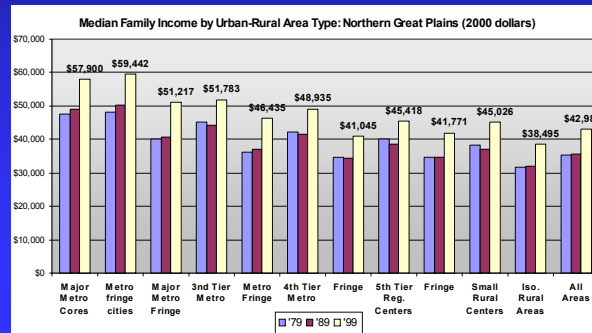
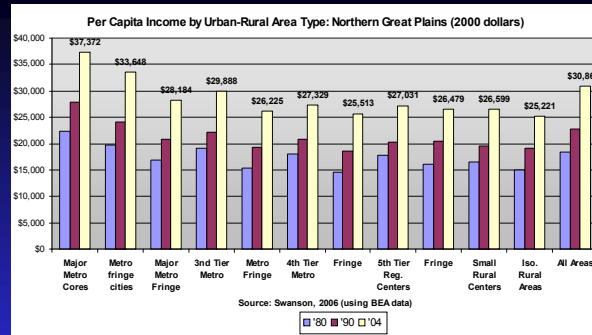


## Area Economic Well-being in the No. Plains

Per capita income levels tend to be consistently higher in more urban areas than rural ones. In the Northern Plains, per capita income for those living in the region's largest cities exceeded \$37,000 in 2004 in inflation-adjusted 2000 dollars, while per capita income in the most rural places was \$25,200.

Median family income in the region in 1999 was highest in fringe areas of the largest cities that also had small cities (\$59,400) and lowest in the most isolated and rural areas (\$38,500). It is possible that you can find places where incomes are a bit lower than the larger cities and their fringe areas, but higher than the more rural areas, and areas that also have more modest costs of living than the largest cities. And young families are becoming increasingly keen to these kinds of differences.

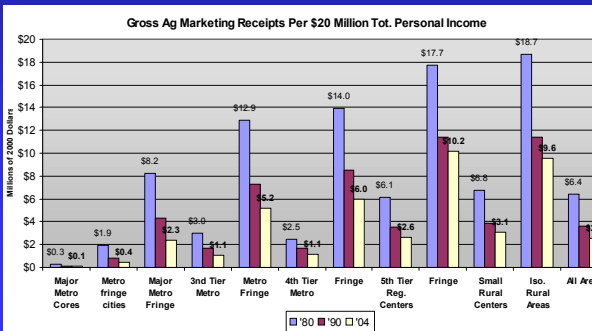
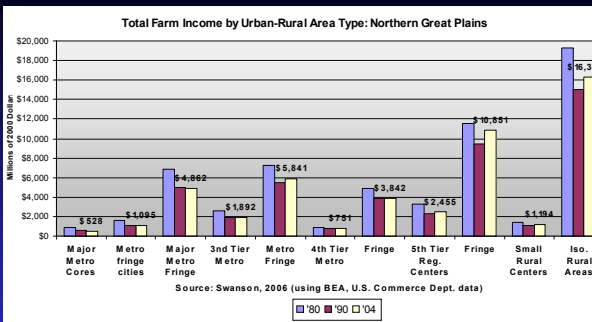
Areas that offer employment and business opportunities, that also have relatively low costs of living, particularly housing costs, and that also are attractive places to live with social and cultural interest and vitality – are increasingly highly sought places for young and old alike.



## Area Dependence on Production Agriculture

The upper chart shows how total farm income – including all gross farm marketing receipts, farm program payments, and other income received by farmers – is distributed by urban-rural area type. Most goes to the region's most rural and isolated counties and very little goes to more urban areas. The \$16 billion in income received by those in isolated rural areas represented 33% of the region total – only 1% went to major metro cores and only 11% went to fringe areas of these metros.

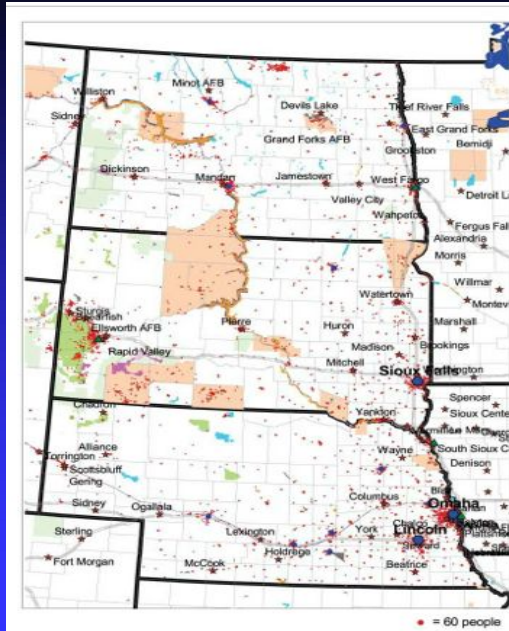
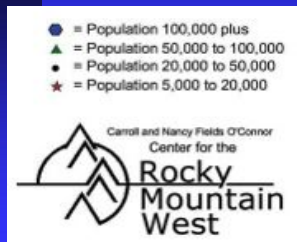
For cities and rural areas in the middle the picture is mixed. But as the lower chart shows, the value of gross marketing receipts for every \$20 million in area total personal income has been steadily falling across the region. For 3rd Tier metros this has fallen from \$3 million in 1980 to \$1.1 million in 2004. For the fringe areas of these 3rd Tier cities, from \$12.9 million to \$5.2 million. For 5th Tier regional centers, from \$6.1 million in 1980 to \$2.6 million in 2004. And in even the most rural and isolated areas the ratio has fallen from \$18.7 million to \$9.6 million.



## Population Distribution in the 3-State Plains Region

The map shows population distribution in the 3-state region at the time of the 2000 Census with population mapped at the block level. Incorporated places are identified by size, including large ones of 100,000 people and greater and small cities between 5,000 and 20,000.

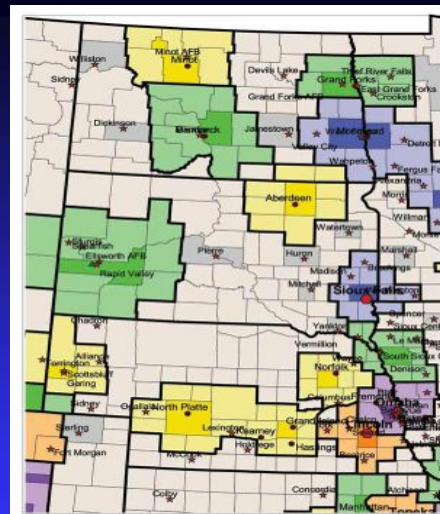
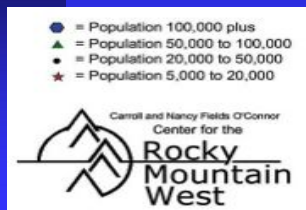
Federal public lands are shown, as are Indian reservations.



## Multi-County, City-Centered READ Regions and Isolated Rural Areas

This map shows how the 3-state Plains Region can be organized into READ city-centered regions or multi-county regions centered around a dominant population center in an area. "Regional population centers" can vary widely in size from small places of 20,000 to 30,000 with county-wide populations of 30,000 to 60,000 (shown in dark yellow) to major metro cores with 250,000 people or more in the core county.

Light colored counties are ones nearby and considered "closely-linked" to regional centers of varying sizes. Gray colored counties are more rural and isolated ones with small populations. Dark gray counties have small isolated centers (counties under 35,000 with places of 10,000 to 20,000).



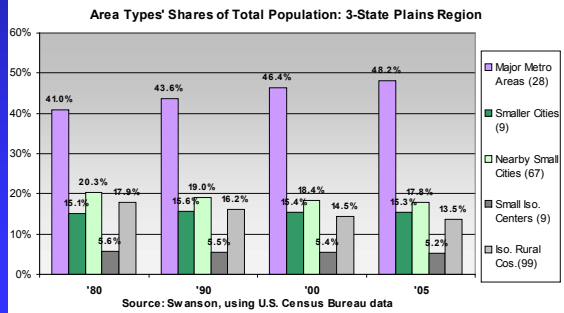
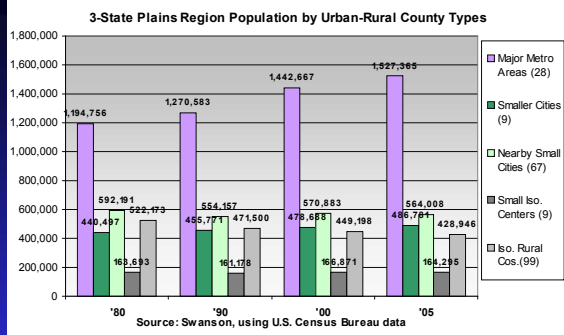
Read Multi-County Core-Based Regions <sup>A</sup>		Large Regional Trade Centers, 60,000 to 100,000 [35]	
Major Metro Cores, 250,000+ Pop. [61]	...adjacent and closely linked counties [308]	...adjacent and closely linked counties [147]	
2nd "Tier" Metro Cores of 160,000 to 250,000 [20]	...adjacent and closely linked counties [136]	Small Regional Trade Centers, 30,000 to 60,000 - [41]	...adjacent and closely linked counties [147]
3rd "Tier" Metro Cores of 100,000 to 160,000 [24]	...adjacent and closely linked counties [129]	Isolated Rural Centers (Counties under 35,000 with places of 10,000 to 20,000 pop.) [34]	Small Isolated Rural Counties Under 35,000 with no place of 10,000 pop. [419]

### Urban-to-Rural Population Distribution in the 3-State Plains Region

In 2005 approximately 3.2 million people lived in the three states of Nebraska, South Dakota, and North Dakota. And of these 3.2 million people about 48 percent or 1.5 million live in or nearby major metro centers – places like Omaha, Lincoln, Fargo, and Sioux Falls (28 counties in all). Another 487 thousand people, 15 percent of the total, live in smaller cities – places like Rapid City, Grand Forks, and Bismarck shown in dark green and Grand Island, Norfolk, North Platte, Scottsbluff, Aberdeen, and Minot shown in dark yellow on the previous map.

There are 67 counties in this 3-state region nearby these smaller cities (shown in light green and light yellow in the map). Their combined population totaled 564 thousand in 2005 and accounted for almost 18 percent of the total.

The remaining population was in counties with small isolated rural centers (9 counties in all) – places like Pierre, Huron, Watertown, Mitchell, and Yankton in South Dakota and Dickinson, Jamestown, and Williston in North Dakota. These counties had a combined population of 164 thousand. The remaining population resided in more rural, isolated, and less populated areas.

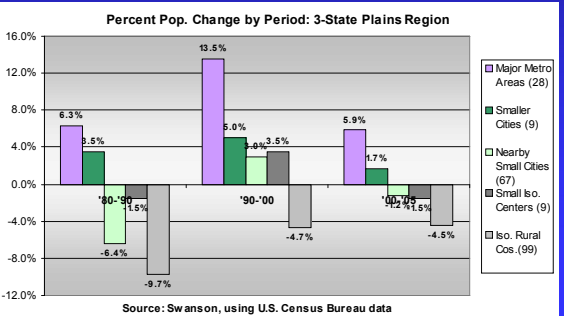
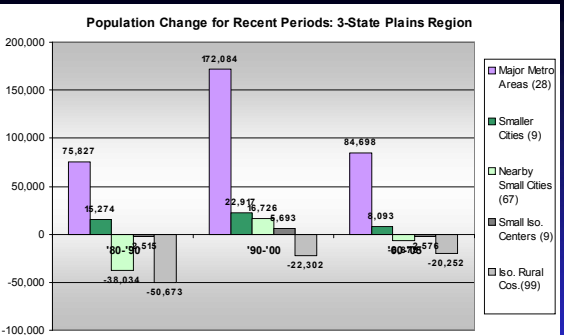


### Recent Change in Population by Urban-Rural Area Type in the 3-State Plains Region

The charts show how population has been changing in these various area types in the 3-state region since 1980. The decade of the '80s was a difficult period economically for much of this Plains region and the overall population of the entire area saw no change (-121 people for the region). In the '90s the region's population grew by over 195,000 – an increase of 6.7 percent. All area types except the isolated rural areas experienced population growth, including both large and small cities and many areas nearby these cities.

More recently population growth has slowed considerably region-wide, increasing by only 63,000 people between 2000 and 2005 – an increase of 2.0 percent. But most areas nearby the region's smaller cities are now declining in population, as are the small isolated rural centers, along with the more isolated and rural areas.

It is very possible that this pattern will continue through the current decade and may actually accelerate in the next two decades, with this accelerating decline in the region's more rural areas tied to population aging and continued net-out migration.

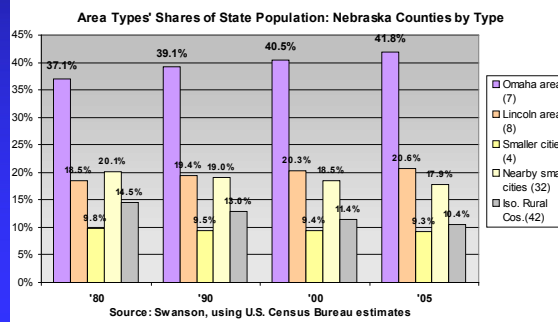
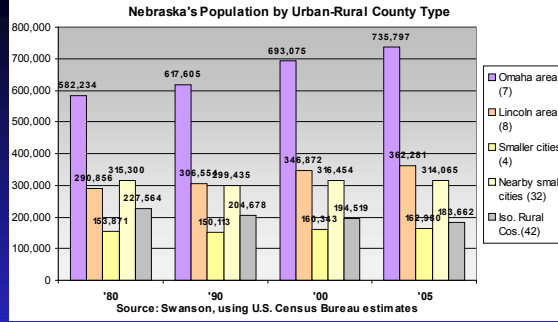


### Urban-to-Rural Population Distribution in Nebraska

Nebraska had over 1.7 million residents in 2005 and the upper chart shows how these residents are distributed by urban-rural area type. Fully 42 percent of the state's population in 2005 resided in or nearby Omaha, up from 37 percent of the population in 1980. Another 363 thousand resided in or nearby Lincoln representing almost 21 percent of the population – up from 18.5 percent in 1980.

Less than 10 percent resided in the four counties with smaller cities – Grand Island, Norfolk, North Platte, and Scottsbluff. But fully 18 percent resided in counties nearby these smaller cities including in counties with cities like Kearney, Columbus, and Hastings.

Less than 184 thousand residents of Nebraska lived in the 42 more isolated and rural portions of the state representing 10.4 percent of the population – down from 14.5 percent in 1980.

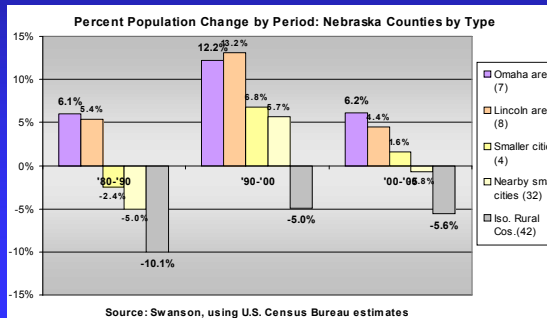
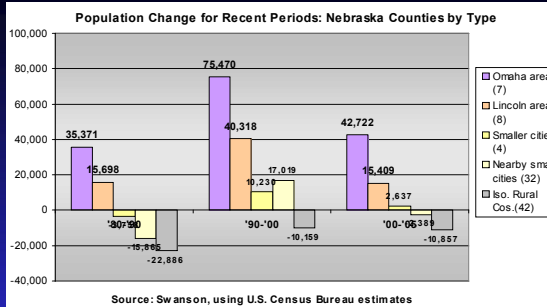


### Recent Population Change in Nebraska by Urban-Rural Area Type

Between 1980 and 1990 the population of Nebraska grew very little, going from 1,570,000 to 1,578,000 people – an increase of about half a percent in ten years. Growth increased considerably in the '90s, with population increasing state-wide by almost 133,000 people or 8.4 percent. In the '80s almost all of the state's growth was concentrated in or nearby the Omaha and Lincoln urban areas. But in the '90s, growth extended to the smaller cities and areas nearby these small cities. The more isolated and rural portions of the state saw decline in both periods, but much less in the '90s than in the '80s.

In the more recent five-year period since 2000, decline in the more rural portions of Nebraska is accelerating. As shown in the lower chart, population in the most rural counties has fallen by 5.6 percent in only five years, adding to a losses of 5.0 percent in the '90s and 10 percent in the '80s.

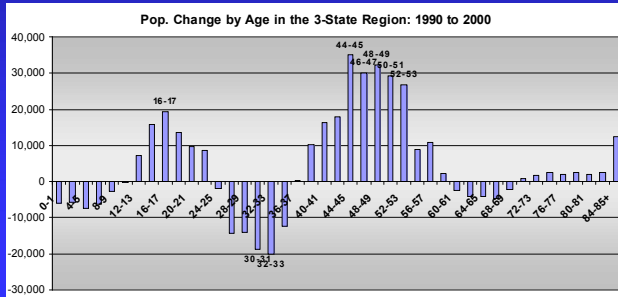
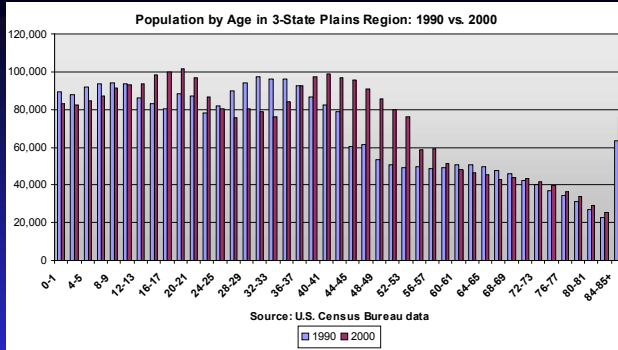
Decline also has returned to most areas nearby the smaller cities and population growth among the four small city counties has declined sharply. It is very possible that these trends will continue with even faster decline in these more rural portions of the state in the future, tied to population aging and continued out-migration.



### Population Growth by Age in the 3-State Plains Region

During the '90s the combined population of Nebraska, South Dakota, and North Dakota grew from 2,917,000 to 3,110,000, an increase of 193,600 people or 6.6 percent. The chart in the upper right shows the number of people residing in this 3-state region by age from youngest to oldest (grouped by 2-year age groupings) in 1990 and ten years later in 2000.

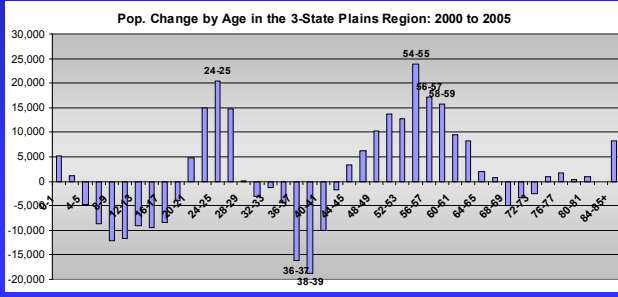
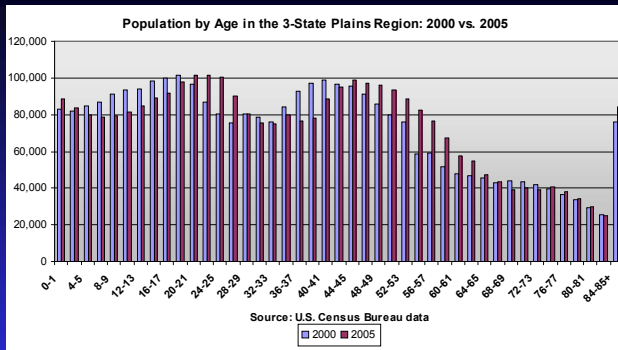
The lower chart then shows change in population over this period for each age group. Growth was concentrated among persons at ages from their early 40s to late 50s (baby boomers) and among children and young adults from 12 to 23 (children of boomers). There was significant decline in the number of residents from their late 20s to mid-30s and this resulted in declines in younger children under 10.



### More Recent Change in Population in the 3-State Region by Age

During the period from 2000 to 2005 the 3-State Plains region population increased from 3,110,300 to 3,173,400 – an increase of 63,100 people or 2.0 percent. Whereas growth in the '90s was concentrated among persons from their early 40s to late 50s, growth in this more recent period is concentrated among persons from the mid-40s to early 60s, reflecting the aging of the large and influential baby boom group. There also is growth in the number of young adults in their 20s and this further reflects itself in the beginnings of new growth among very young children.

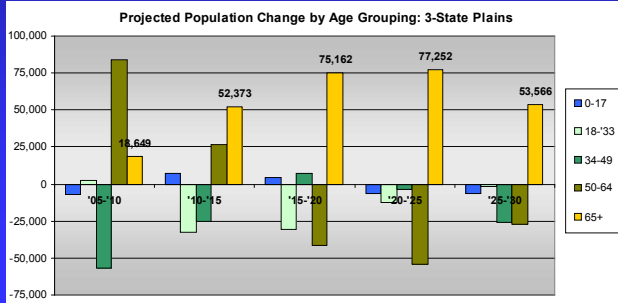
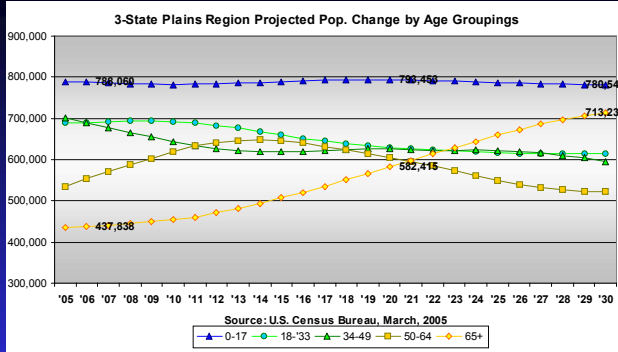
Growth over the remainder of the decade (2005 to 2010) will shift to adults between their late 40s to mid-60s. Growth beyond this after 2010 will increasingly shift to older adults ages 65 and more.



### Projected Population Change by Major Age Groupings in the 3-State Plains Region

The upper chart shows how population change is projected to occur among major age groupings in the 3 state Plains region (Nebraska, South Dakota, North Dakota). The youngest grouping – those under 18 years of age shown in blue – is projected to remain largely static, although decline occurs after 2020. The oldest grouping – those 65 and older shown in gold – is the only grouping projected to see consistent growth over the entire period.

The lower chart shows change for each age grouping for 5-year time periods going forward. The biggest increase in the near term (2005-2010) will be among adults 50 to 64, coinciding with growth among baby boomers. However, after 2010, growth becomes increasingly concentrated among persons 65 and older for each subsequent period. This shows how rapidly the population of the region is projected to age in the very near future.

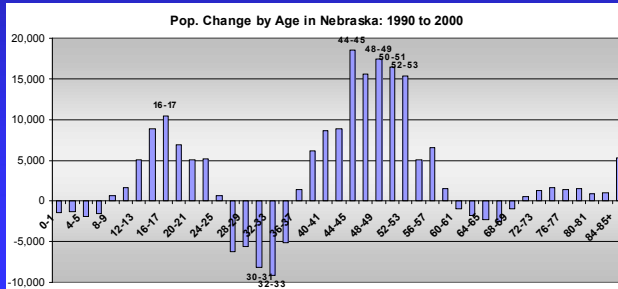
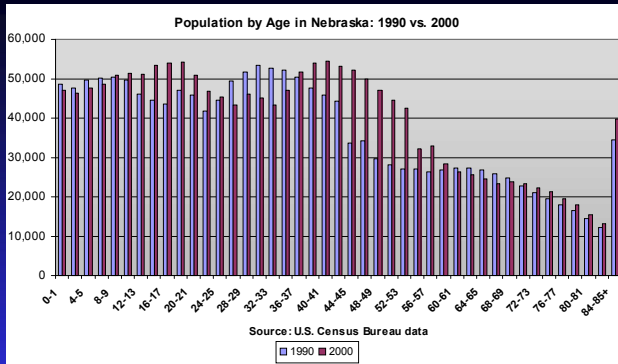


### Population by Age in Nebraska, 1990 vs. 2000

The population of Nebraska was slow-growing in the last decade – increasing from 1,583,000 people in 1990 to 1,713,000 in 2000 – an increase of 130,000 people or growth for the 10-year period of 8.3 percent.

However, much of this growth was concentrated among persons from their early 40s to mid-50s (baby boomers) and among older children in their teens and young adults in their early 20s (the children of baby boomers). There was significant population loss among adults from 26 to 36.

Over the course of the current decade, growth is shifting to older age groups.

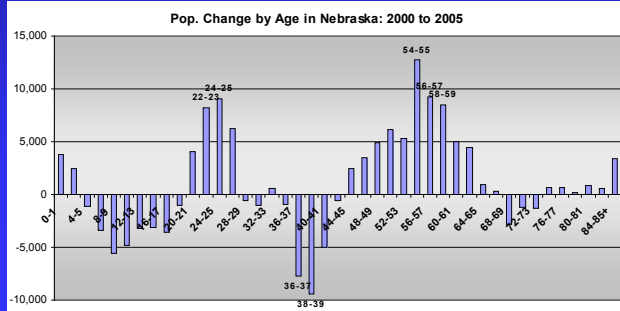
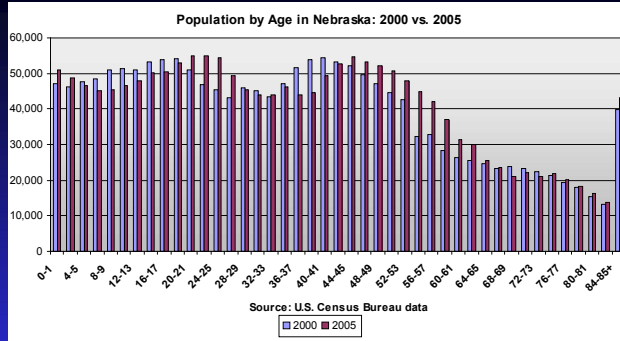


### More Recent Population Change in Nebraska by Age Group

During the period from 2000 to 2005 the population of Nebraska grew by 47,500 or only 2.8 percent. Growth in population during this period was concentrated among persons from their mid-40s to early 60s (baby boomers). There also was growth among young adults in their 20s. This, in turn, produced growth among very young children (under 4).

There was significant population loss among adults 28 to 41 and this, in turn, was reflected in population losses among children ages 4 to 19.

As the population of the state continues to age in going forward, growth will increasingly be concentrated among older adults – those 60 years of age and older. The “echo” group following behind the boomer age group is important to both retain and attract if the school age population is going to be regenerated.

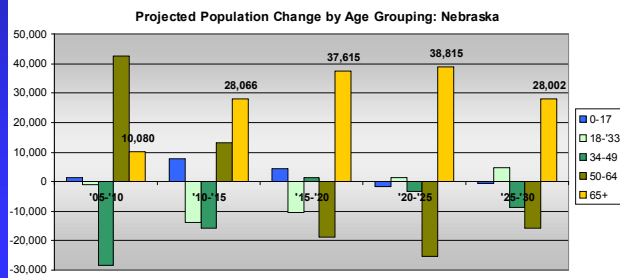
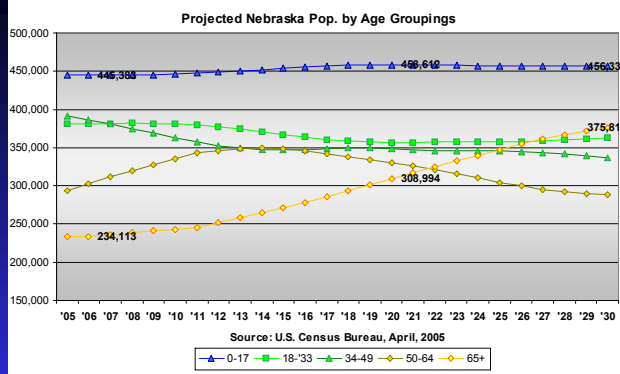


### Projected Population Change by Major Age Groupings in Nebraska

The upper chart shows how population growth is expected to play out in Nebraska under current Census Bureau population projections by age (March, 2005). Essentially what these show is that after 2015 nearly all of the state's population growth through 2030 will be among persons 65 years of age and older.

While the U.S. population as a whole is aging, certain areas of the U.S., particularly ones with slow-growing or declining populations, are aging at faster rates than others.

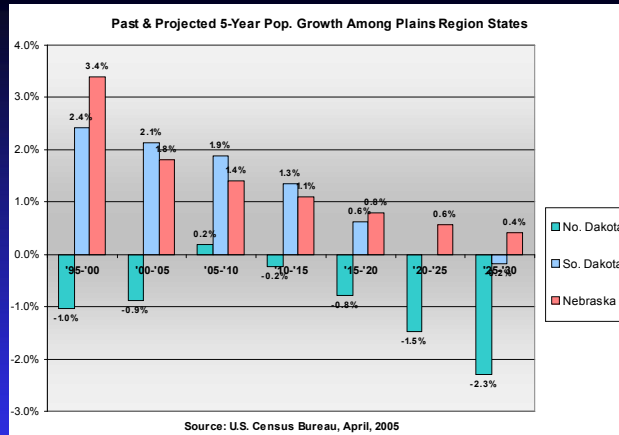
As shown in the lower chart, in the current 5-year period from 2005 to 2010, the greatest growth will occur among older adults from 50 to 64. The front “edge” of the baby boom group turned 61 in January of 2007, so growth is concentrated among those 61 and younger. However, for the subsequent 5-year period, growth shifts to the 65 and older population and shifts entirely in that direction for the next three 5-year periods through 2030.



## Past & Projected 5-Year Population Change for Plains Region States

As the population continues to age under current projections, birth rates fall and death rates rise. Where death rates rise above birth rates, overall population falls through "natural change." And where this population decline from natural change combines with net out-migration in some areas population decline can accelerate.

The chart shows what the Census Bureau currently projects for each of the three Plains region states in terms of 5-year population growth rates going into the future. North Dakota, already experiencing negative population change in recent periods, is projected to slide from very minimal growth in the 2005-10 period back into negative change, with this negative growth increasing to as great as -2.3 percent for the 2025-30 period.



South Dakota, growing by 2.4 percent between 1995 and 2000 and by 2.1 percent in the current period, would eventually slip toward negative change after 2020.

Nebraska, which grew by 3.4 percent between 1995 and 2000 and by 1.8 percent in the current period, will slide toward lower and lower growth rates going forward.

These population projections by the Census Bureau consider all aspects of population change and are based upon careful assumptions about future birth and death rates and current expectations about migration patterns.

## Lessons to Learn in Planning for Your Economic Future

**Become "Learning Communities"** Successful businesses are adaptive businesses. The same is true of communities. Success requires adaptation and adaptation requires organized and sustained learning at the community level.

**Think about Community and Regional "Positioning"** A community or region cannot remake its economy. But you can find ways to better position yourself – your businesses, schools, families, work forces, governments, etc. – for future change. Anticipate future change and attempt to better position yourself for that change.

**Economic Development is more than Business Development** Achieving area economic improvement in strategic ways requires more than business retention, expansion, and sometimes recruitment – all traditional focuses of ED. It also requires initiatives regarding infrastructure and housing, workforce development and education more generally, and area quality of life.

**Customize Strategies** Needs, opportunities, and values vary widely from place to place. Goals and strategies for area economic improvement must likewise vary. There is no single "blue print" for area economic improvement. Each area must adopt strategies that fit changing area conditions and trends and shifting notions of area opportunity.

**Anticipate Changing Area Age Shifts** Recognize the "ebbs and flows" of population change across differing age groups and factor these into plans for housing, workforce, health care, schools, and all aspects of community development.

**Area Workforce Quality Matters** The economy is becoming more and more "human resource based" and quality human resources are increasingly rewarded. Well-designed, well-funded, adaptive systems for education and work force development (lifelong) are essential for area economic adaptation and sustained area economic improvement.

**Urban-Rural Relations Matter** Healthy working relationships between cities and their surrounding communities are important. Pursuing economic development town-by-town, county-by-county is often self-limiting. Influencing local economic conditions sub-region by sub-region utilizing urban-rural regional partnerships has potential.

**Community Quality Matters** The economy is becoming more and more "footloose" in that it can locate increasingly in areas of its choosing. This serves to benefit high quality communities and places to live. Recognize that the quality of your community matters in how you may grow and prosper. Invest in community livability. Protect and enhance important area environmental qualities that make the area an attractive place to live and work.

- Dr. Larry Swanson, O'Connor Center for the Rocky Mountain West, U. of Montana, Missoula

## From "Natural-Resource Amenities and the Nebraska Economy"

*By ECONorthwest, August, 2006*

*"The economic forces underlying amenity-driven growth are powerful. Spatial differences in amenities, of all types, account for about half the interstate differences in job growth. Natural-resource amenities are especially important. Most studies, though, have focused on mountains, ocean beaches, and other amenities absent in Nebraska, raising the possibility that it lacks what is needed to have any hope of using natural-resource amenities to generate jobs, income, and community stability.*

*"Evidence indicates, however, that Nebraska has its own, distinctive style of amenities potentially capable of generating amenity-driven growth: rivers and reservoirs; agricultural as well as undeveloped landscapes; opportunities for fishing, hunting, and wildlife-watching; trails; state parks; and areas with aesthetically pleasing topography and scenery.*

*"To the extent that people perceive Nebraska's natural resources to be degraded and difficult to reach, these resources are likely to exert a negative, not positive, influence on household-location decisions.*

*"Unless Nebraskans act more aggressively to capitalize [on their natural-resource amenities], the economic forces underlying amenity-driven growth are likely to work to the state's disadvantage. Some amenities in other states can generate economic growth even when trampled, hard to reach, and overlooked, but Nebraska doesn't have this luxury. Nebraska must distinguish itself from the crowd.*

## Possible Strategies for Rural Renewal in Nebraska

### *Middle Places in Middle Spaces*

*In places that are much smaller than our largest cities, but considerably larger than our smaller towns and villages, that are in areas in the "urban-rural interface, ....devise and aggressively pursue some special new programming aimed at elevating and enhancing these communities and their surrounding areas on these fronts: culture and history, architecture and built environment aesthetics, infrastructure of all types, business assistance and workforce development, and environmental amenities. If we can pull a few of these out of the spiral of decline and begin to more intentionally harness some of the emerging factors and forces in rural growth in other parts of the U.S., we can build lifelines into a few of our rural areas and use lessons learned in this very focused and aggressive work in assisting other rural communities in the state in the future.*

### *Small Places in Big Spaces*

*In a few truly "big spaces" with regionally, nationally, and potentially internationally significant environmental features and attributes (the Nebraska Sandhills, for example), devise and pursue in full cooperation with willing landowners and small area communities new strategies for rural renewal tied to more intentionally and more fully harnessing the power of area amenities to entice people to come to the area and to make communities in the area potentially more interesting and enticing places to live and work.*

**Incorporated Places in Nebraska, South Dakota, and North Dakota between 4,500 and 25,000**

Middle Cities in Nebraska					Middle Cities in South Dakota						
	'90	'00	'05	1990-2005 Chg.		'90	'00	'05	1990-2005 Chg.		
<b>Hastings</b>	22,837	24,064	25,437	2,600	11%	<b>Aberdeen</b>	24,927	24,658	24,098	-829	-3%
<b>North Platte</b>	22,605	23,878	24,324	1,719	8%	<b>Watertown</b>	17,592	20,237	20,265	2,673	15%
<b>Norfolk</b>	21,476	23,516	23,946	2,470	12%	<b>Brookings</b>	16,270	18,504	18,715	2,445	15%
<b>Columbus</b>	19,480	20,971	20,909	1,429	7%	<b>Subtotal</b>	58,789	63,399	63,078	4,289	7%
<b>Subtotal</b>	86,398	92,429	94,616	8,218	10%						
						<b>Mitchell</b>	13,798	14,558	14,696	898	7%
<b>Scottsbluff</b>	13,711	14,732	14,814	1,103	8%	<b>Pierre</b>	12,906	13,876	14,052	1,146	9%
<b>Beatrice</b>	12,354	12,496	12,890	536	4%	<b>Yankton</b>	12,703	13,528	13,716	1,013	8%
<b>Lexington</b>	6,601	10,011	10,085	3,484	53%	<b>Huron</b>	12,448	11,893	11,086	-1,362	-11%
						<b>Vermillion</b>	10,034	9,765	9,964	-70	-1%
						<b>Subtotal</b>	61,889	63,620	63,514	1,625	3%
<b>Alliance</b>	9,765	8,959	8,331	-1,434	-15%	<b>Spearfish</b>	6,966	8,606	9,355	2,389	34%
<b>York</b>	7,884	8,081	7,888	4	0%	<b>Madison</b>	6,257	6,540	6,223	-34	-1%
<b>McCook</b>	8,112	7,994	7,680	-432	-5%	<b>Sturgis</b>	5,330	6,442	6,260	930	17%
<b>Blair</b>	6,860	7,512	7,765	905	13%	<b>Belle Fourche</b>	4,335	4,565	4,675	340	8%
<b>Nebraska City</b>	6,547	7,228	7,035	488	7%	<b>Subtotal</b>	22,888	26,153	26,513	3,625	16%
<b>Plattsmouth</b>	6,412	6,887	7,023	611	10%						
<b>Seward</b>	5,634	6,319	6,776	1,142	20%						
<b>Sidney</b>	5,959	6,282	6,442	483	8%	<b>Middle Cities in North Dakota</b>					
<b>Crete</b>	4,841	6,028	6,308	1,467	30%	<b>Mandan</b>	15,177	16,718	17,225	2,048	13%
<b>Holdrege</b>	5,671	5,636	5,349	-322	-6%	<b>Dickinson</b>	16,097	16,010	15,666	-431	-3%
<b>Chadron</b>	5,588	5,634	5,320	-268	-5%	<b>Jamestown</b>	15,571	15,527	14,826	-745	-5%
<b>Wayne</b>	5,142	5,583	5,163	21	0%	<b>Williston</b>	13,131	12,512	12,193	-938	-7%
<b>Schuyler</b>	4,052	5,371	5,327	1,275	31%	<b>Subtotal</b>	59,976	60,767	59,910	-66	0%
<b>Ogallala</b>	5,095	4,930	4,696	-399	-8%						
<b>Falls City</b>	4,769	4,671	4,218	-551	-12%	<b>Wahpeton</b>	8,751	8,586	8,220	-531	-6%
<b>Subtotal</b>	92,331	97,115	95,321	2,990	3%	<b>Devils Lake</b>	7,782	7,222	6,816	-966	-12%
						<b>Valley City</b>	7,163	6,826	6,439	-724	-10%
						<b>Grafton</b>	4,840	4,516	4,248	-592	-12%
						<b>Subtotal</b>	28,536	27,150	25,723	-2,813	-10%

Note: Losses of more than 5% between 1990 and 2005 shown in red.

Cities in Bold: Tentative "candidates" for "middle city community development" strategies and initiatives in the 3-state Plains. (Swanson, 2007)



**Alliance**



**Chadron**

Source: Virtual Nebraska



**York**



**Lexington**

Source: Virtual Nebraska



**McCook**



**Hastings**

Source: Virtual Nebraska