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# **Resident Recruitment & the New Narrative**



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# HOLLOWING OUT THE MIDDLE

*The Rural Brain Drain and  
What It Means for America*

THU SEP 20, 2012 AT 09:04 PM PDT

The slow, agonizing death of the small  
US town

**Fighting for an American  
Countryside**

**From Breadbasket to Basket Case**

In the 1980s, rural Americans faced fewer teen births and lower divorce rates than their urban counterparts. Now, their positions have flipped entirely.

# Mechanization of agriculture



# Roads & transportation



# Main street restructuring

# School consolidations

We have **survived** this  
massive restructuring.

Rural is **changing**,  
not dying or weak.

Rural is **resilient.**

# Narrative Matters



*What is your narrative?*

*Why would you move here?*

*Prepare for one of the largest  
demographic changes to rural  
America since 1930*

**75%** of rural homeowners are

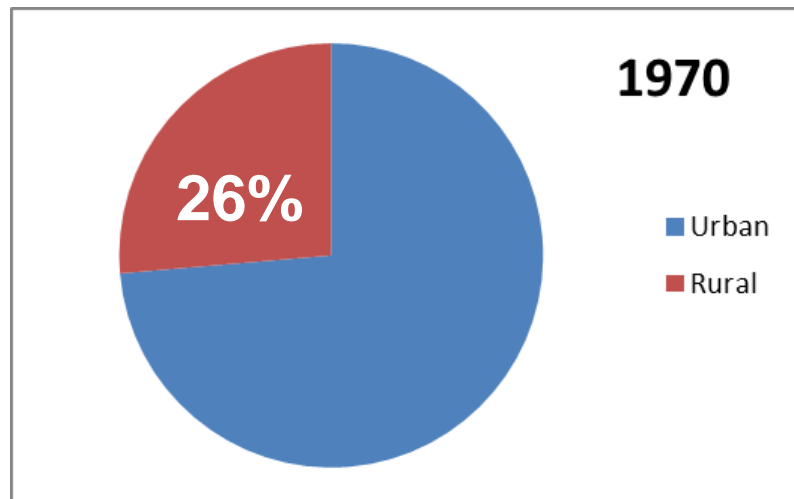
**Baby Boomers and older.**

**30% over 75 today!**

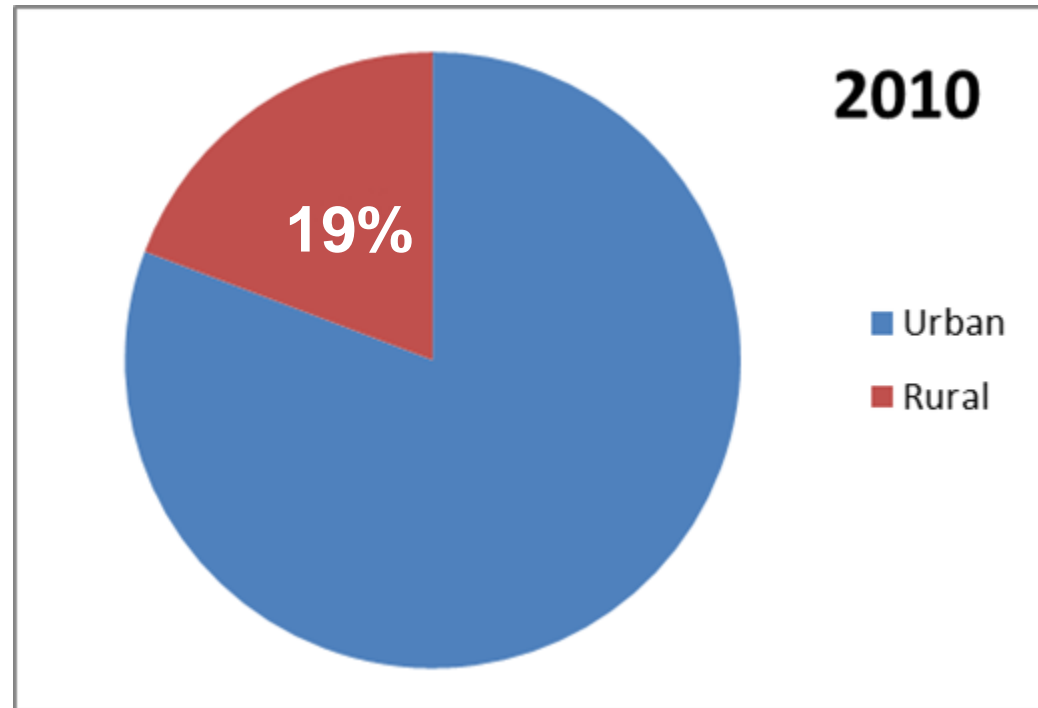
# Rural Rebound

Since 1970, rural population increased by 11%

- Relative percentage living rural decreased



203,211,926  
(53.6m rural)



308,745,538  
(59.5m rural)



# The Rural Brain Gain

They choose rural age

**30-49**

And also when they are 50-64  
(since the 1970s)

# Newcomers chose rural for:

*Simpler pace of life*



*Safety and Security*



*Low Housing Cost*



Source: 2020 University of Minnesota Extension Center for Community Vitality. Rural workforce movers study. Funded by the U. S. Department of Agriculture.



## Newcomers: Who?

- 31% moved primarily for a job
- 25% lived there previously
- 91% have some college or bachelor's
- 75% household incomes over \$50k
- 47% have children in household
- 14% telecommute!

*The Community is Welcoming of new residents by those likely to still live in community in 5 years*

The Community is Welcoming	Likely to Live Here in 5 Years?
Strongly agree	86%
Agree	77%
Disagree	68%
Strongly Disagree	44%

# The Rural Choice

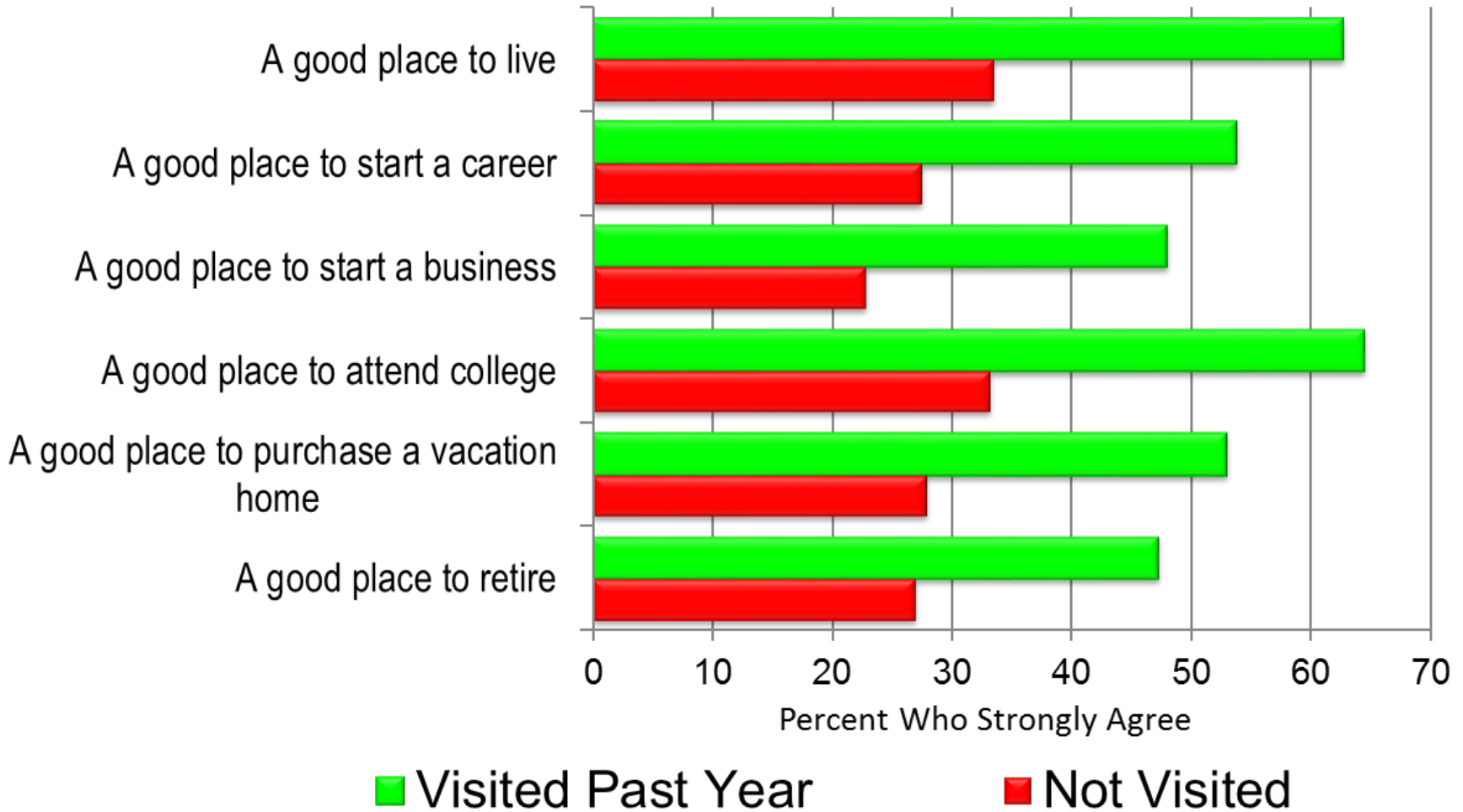
These newcomers are:

- Creating groups, building their community
- Diversifying the economy
- Buying/starting businesses, working from home
- Living in a region (no longer a 1-stop-shop)
- More than warm bodies

# resident recruitment

- Complement the industrial recruitment model of economic development
- In a tight labor market...labor has the power to choose. Why will they choose your town over another?
- Many of the factors newcomers cite for choosing are also reasons people love to visit the area! Tourism!

# Halo Effect: Visitation and Image



# resident recruitment

Community Development

Economic Development

Tourism

*On the Map – Over the Edge – Welcome Home*



# Invitation Activities



- Graduates / class reunions
- Tourism locations – narrative @ gas station
- Existing resident networks – lift up voices of newcomers
- Media / Facebook



# Economic Activities

- Business succession
- Co-working spaces (broadband)
- Auxiliary skills of newcomers
- Connect to remote worker employers
- HR and “the job” is not enough

# Welcoming Activities

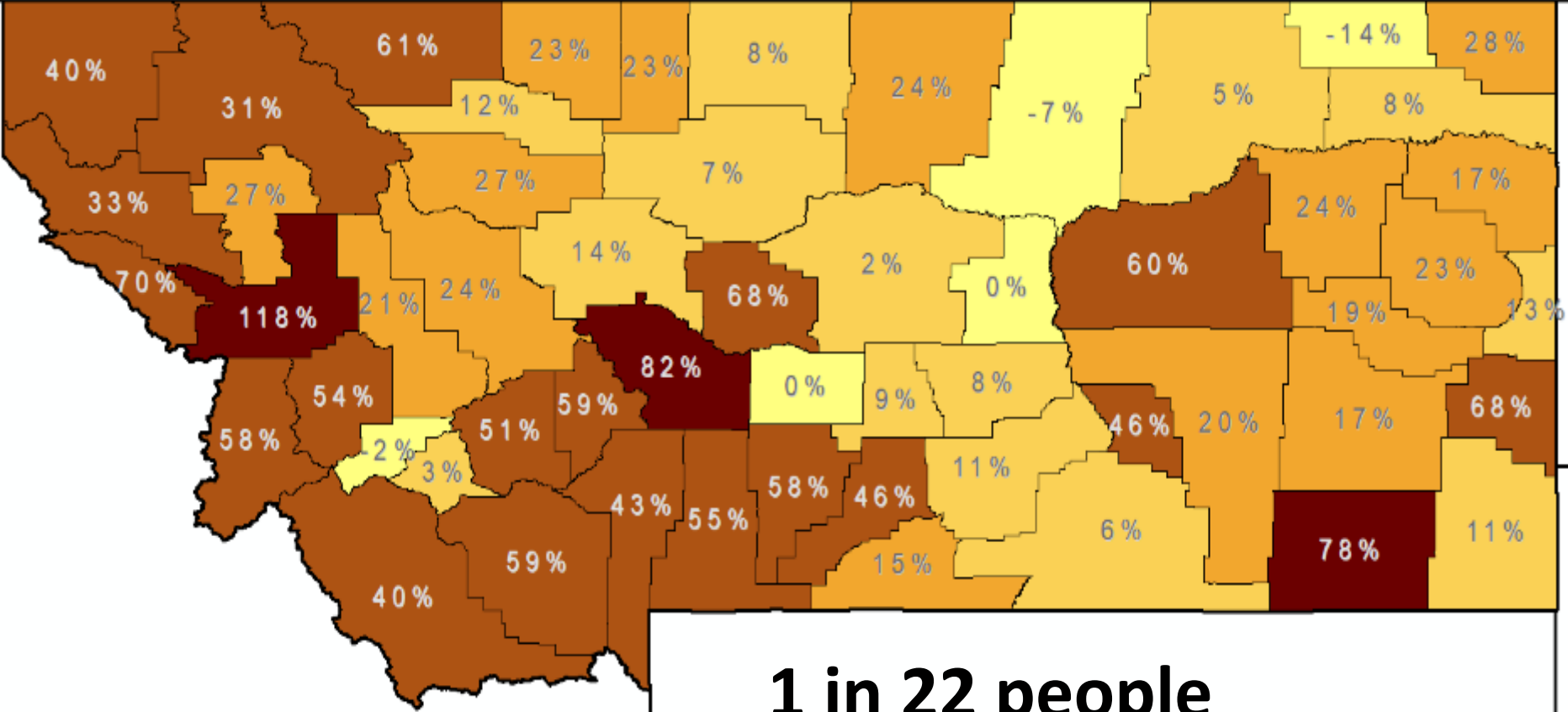


Front lines: Real estate agents,  
property managers, city clerks

- Grab-a-bite
- Newcomer supper
- Social after work



# Civic Engagement Activities Impact Retention



**1 in 22 people  
must LEAD\***

\* Assumes 3 people per new group

# Civic Engagement Activities

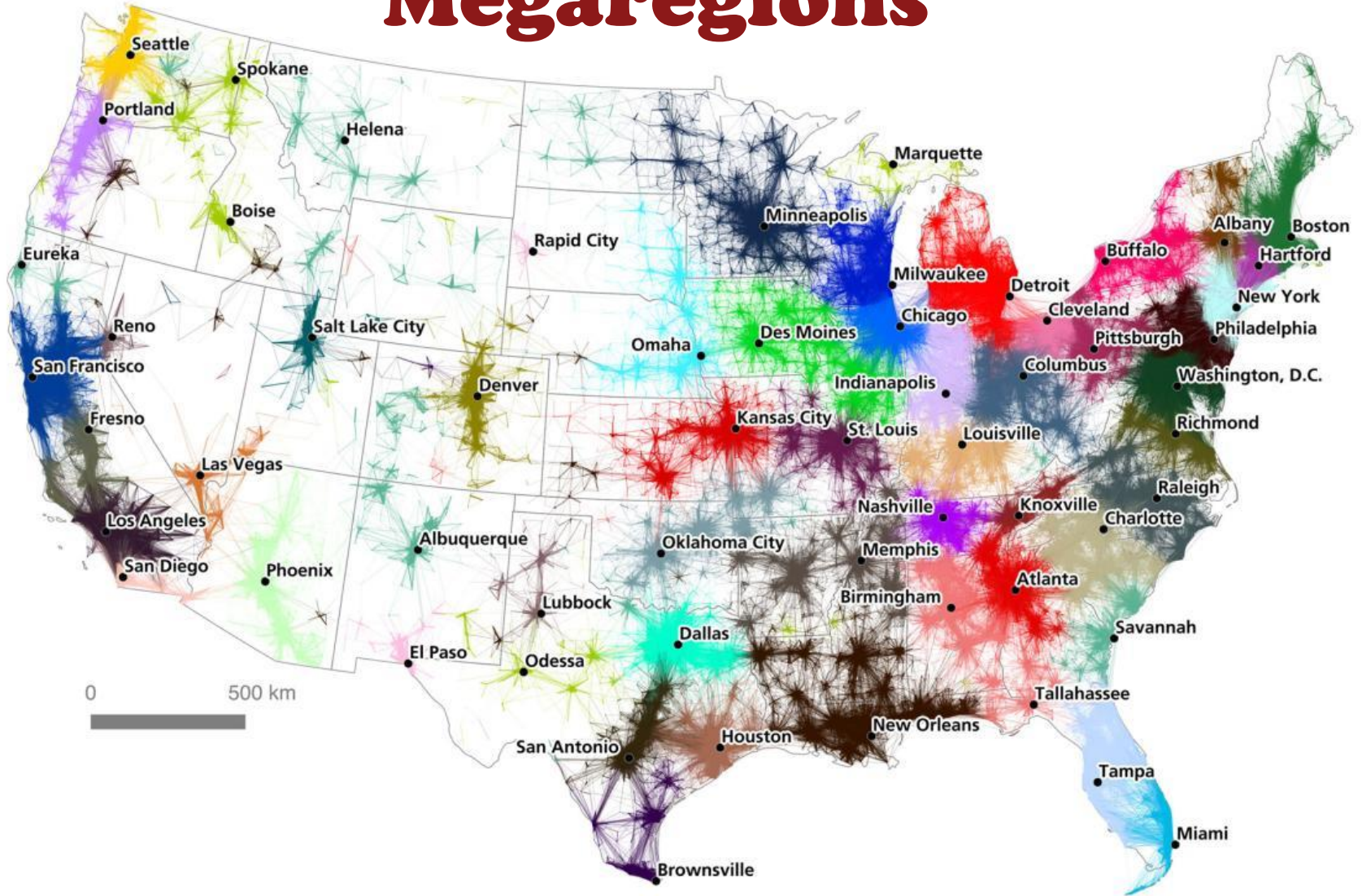
- Regional events
- Involvement starts with a small request
- Make room for newcomers to define groups for themselves
- Leadership development programs

# Key Shifts to Regional Living



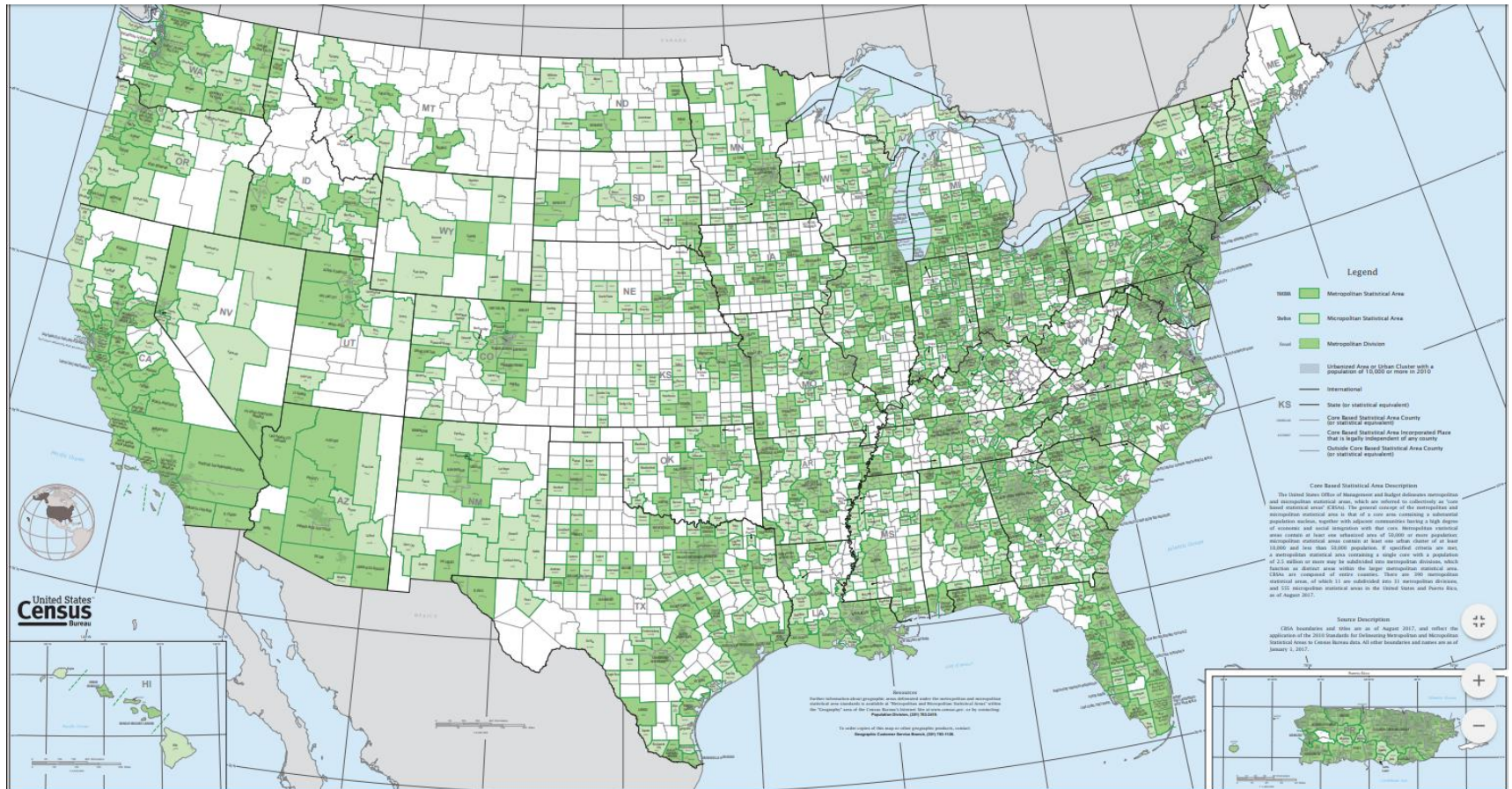
***Balancing Home, Work, Shop, and Play***

# Megaregions



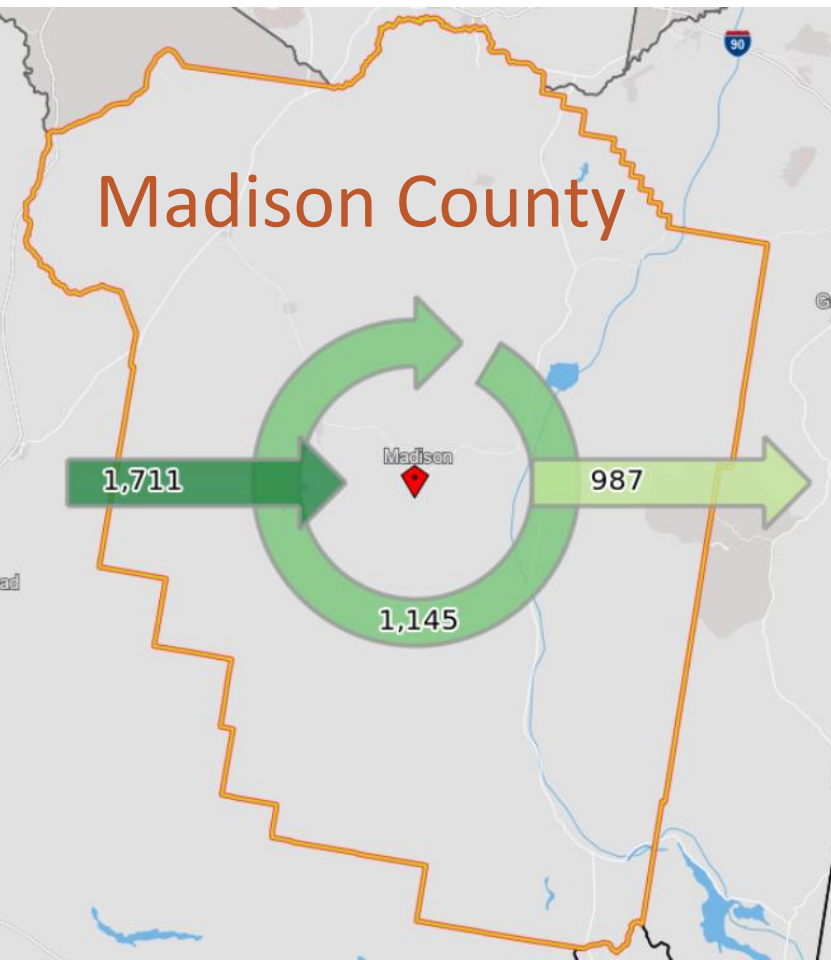
<http://discovery.dartmouth.edu/megaregions/>

# Regional Centers

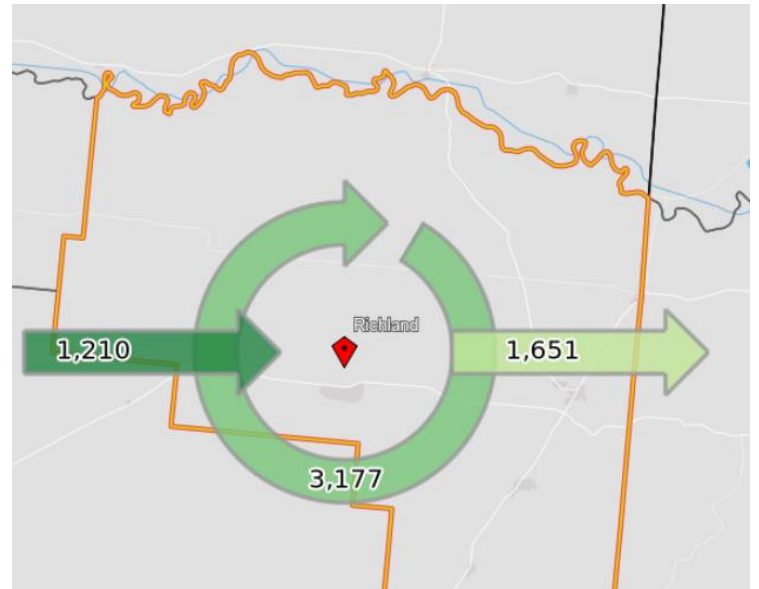


*Economic growth in regional centers*

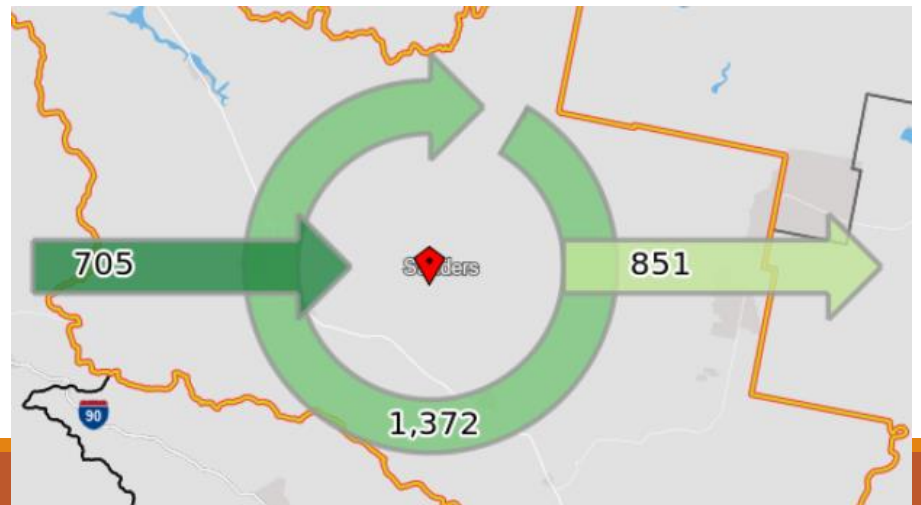




# Richland County



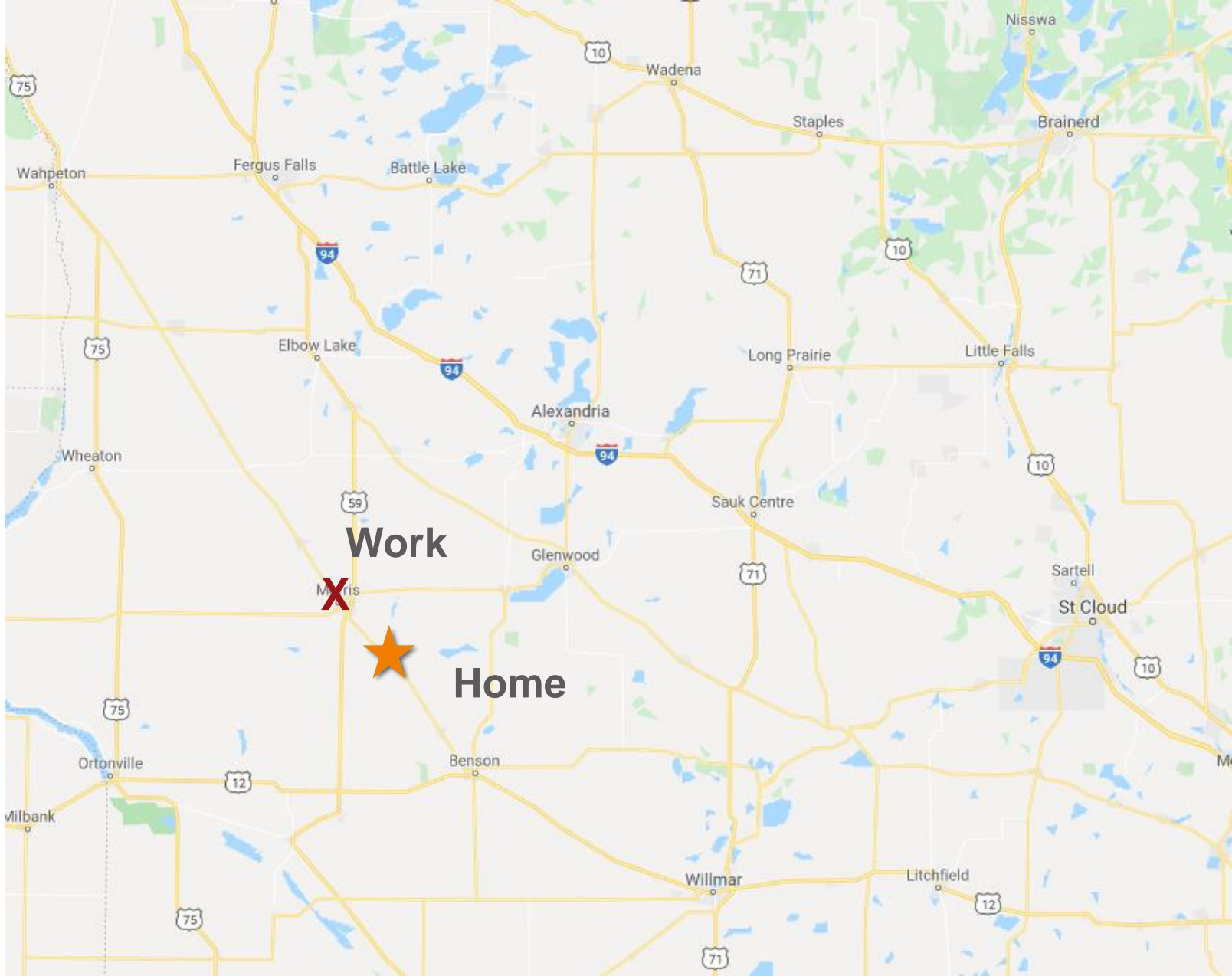
# Sanders County



**We live in a REGIONAL  
COMMUNITY.**



**in the Middle of Everywhere**

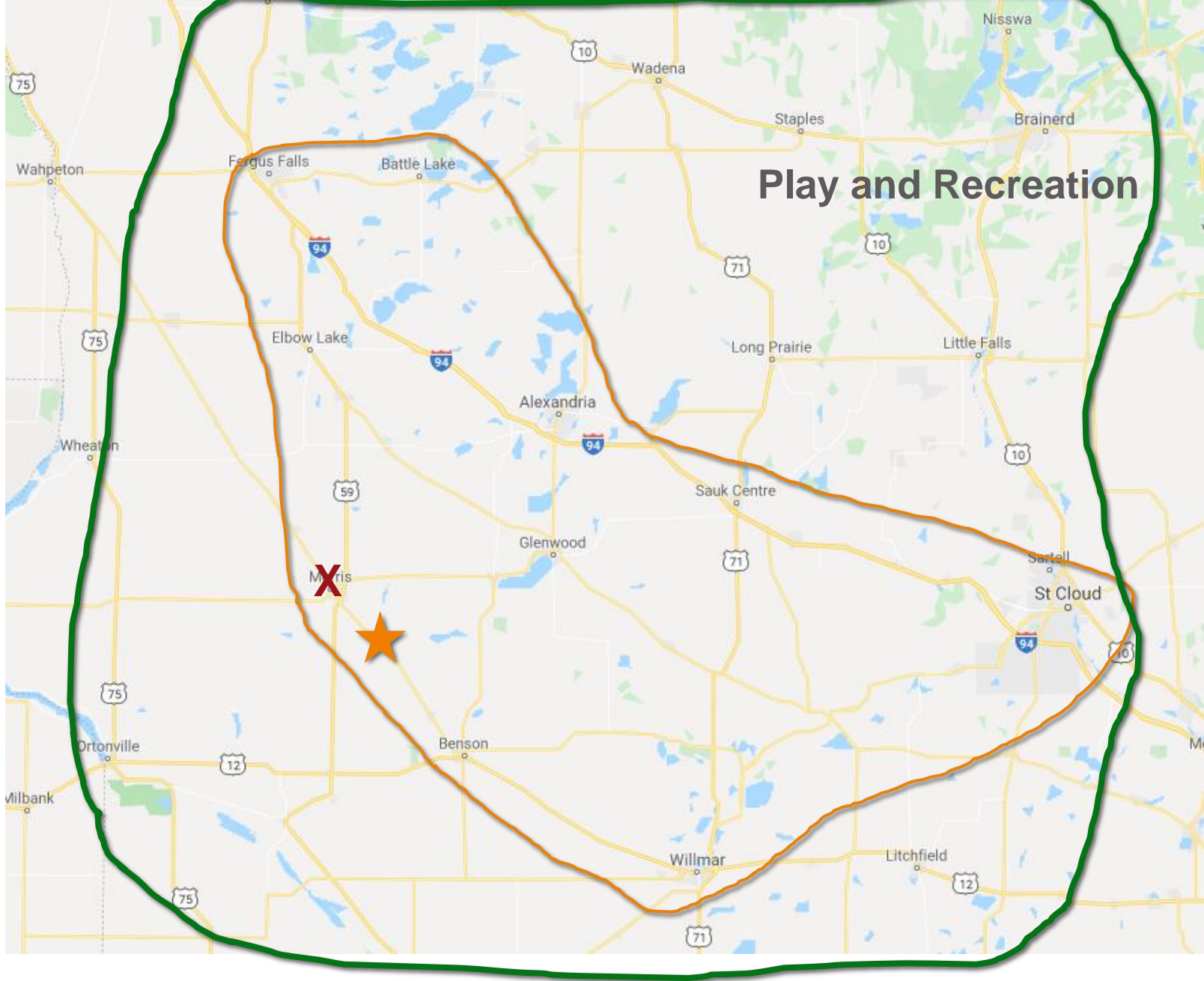




## Shop and Eat Out

~~Morris~~





# Play and Recreation

**X** Morris



# Rural Life-Shed

No town is a one-stop-shop

- Home → Work: 30/45 minutes
- Home → Eat/shop: 60 minutes
- Home → Play – 2+ hours!

# Middle of Everywhere

How can we make local decisions while at the same time respect the reality of lives?

**The REGION is the primary unit of interest**

**Mayor, how do you market your town if you don't know what's going on around you?**

# What can you do?

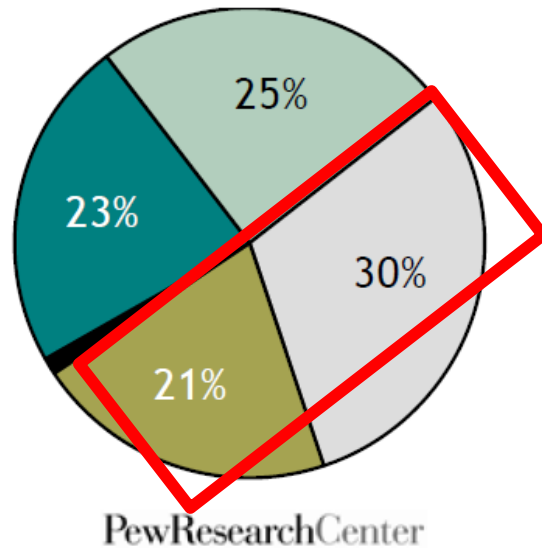
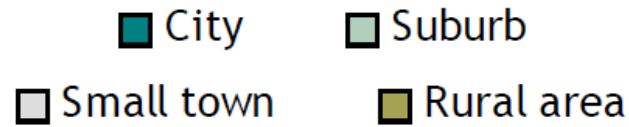
- Consider resident recruitment as a possible outcome in your marketing efforts
- Learn about newcomers in your community
- Consider that some visitors might be looking for this information already...make it easy to find when they arrive





# Where We Live and Where We'd Like to Live

by community type



**20% live rural/small town**

**51% would PREFER to**

**MOVING IN : Demand for rural and small town living!**

Source: "For Nearly Half of America, Grass is Greener Somewhere Else". Pew Research Center, 2009.

**On the map.** How can or do future residents locate information about our communities? This can include job boards, community events, and tourism opportunities as a few examples.

## Considerations

**Over the Edge:** Considering the Community. Once potential residents are looking into the region, what types of recruitment activities will put them “over the edge” in choosing our region over other locations.

**Welcome Home:** Now that residents are moving to the community, what can we do to help make it their home in their first days, months, and year. Ultimately these retention activities will keep them here.

# ***The Rural Choice: Opening New Doors and Welcoming New Neighbors***

The bottom line is people WANT  
to live and move here for  
**what you are today and will be tomorrow,**  
not what may have been!

Rural **Revitalization** is Upon Us!

Remember the housing statistics?  
***How welcoming IS your community?***