

# **Building a Brighter Future for Rural Illinois:**

Goals for Stronger Communities

**Rural Partners** members in collaboration with other  
residents across rural Illinois

*Building a Brighter Future for Rural Illinois: Goals for Stronger Communities*

Published by Rural Partners, 3085 Stevenson Drive, Suite 302, Springfield, IL 62703

August, 1998

In July 1996, a small group of public and private allies of Rural Partners undertook the task of drafting a document that would: reflect the most inherent needs and desires for effective rural development in the State of Illinois; provide an inclusive platform for further discussion, input, and collaboration; and ultimately set a direction by which rural development agencies, policy makers, and local citizens may work more effectively together to channel scarce resources and avoid duplication of efforts.

Development of this information has resulted from input from a variety of rural constituents. Representatives of public and private sector agencies have continued to work closely with Rural Partners to ensure rural Illinois' concerns and aspirations for community and economic development are accurately reflected. More than 500 comments were recorded and incorporated into the planning process following a series of eight regionally sponsored public meetings that were held throughout Illinois in the spring and early summer of 1997. In September, 1997, Rural Partners sponsored a statewide Benchmarking Conference to examine principals of benchmarking and performance monitoring for state and local development. In March, 1998, a written survey of attendees at the 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Rural Community & Economic Development Conference was distributed in an effort to identify high priority goals from a list of more than 50 potential initiatives that had been proposed through the planning process. The survey returned nearly 100 responses — a necessary basis from which the Rural Partners planning team has been able to extract "Goals for Stronger Communities."

Special thanks to the initial collaborating agencies: USDA Rural Development; Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs; Governor's Rural Affairs Council; IL Department of Commerce & Community Affairs; IL Department of Agriculture; IL Department of Public Health; IL Rural Water Association; University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; and Southern Illinois University at Carbondale.

This publication was compiled and edited by the Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs.

August 1998

What is the future of rural Illinois?

Predicting the future is never easy. The future of our rural areas depends in large part on local conditions and trends. We do know that achieving complex goals often requires detailed strategies that may take months—or even years—to put into place. It seems clear that quick fixes usually don't work.

If you talk to rural leaders, many will tell you that successful community and economic development efforts require true collaboration—a holistic approach that takes into account a variety of viewpoints and involves all parts of the community. Such collaboration usually results in the development of a community "vision" that challenges the status quo and elevates every member of the community.

The purpose of this publication is to highlight goals that will help rural residents pursue higher standards of living and better, more efficient communities, while still preserving the character of rural Illinois. It is part of an effort by Rural Partners—the state's private/public rural development partnership—to develop a strategic plan for rural development in our state. However, these goals are only a starting point. As you will see, much work needs to be done in order to move from "where we are" to "where we want to be." We need to develop action plans and "fill in the gaps" so that we can move from these goals to the specific activities necessary to carry them out. Not every goal will apply to every community, but working together, they will improve all rural areas of our state.

We need—and are looking forward to—your input. Please contact Paul Galligos at 3085 Stevenson Dr., Suite 302, Springfield, IL 62703, or fax (217) 585-8233 with your ideas and recommendations for the future and to find the names of Rural Partners members in your area. More importantly, please be active in your own community to shape these goals to fit your local situation and put them into place.

Sincerely,

Rural Partners Members  
And Board of Directors

# CONTENTS

Preface . . . . .	i
Foreword . . . . .	2
Introduction	
Mission, Vision, Assumptions . . . . .	3
Guiding Principles	
of Strong Rural Development . . . . .	4
Chapter 1: Leadership Development . . . . .	5
Chapter 2: Economic Vitality . . . . .	7
Chapter 3: Quality of Life . . . . .	10
Conclusions / What's Next . . . . .	16
Key Definitions, Acronyms and Abbreviations	
for Rural Development in Illinois . . . . .	17
Current Trends and Conditions . . . . .	19
About Rural Partners . . . . .	23

# STATE OF ILLINOIS

## RURAL COUNTIES

Adams County  
 Alexander County  
 Bond County  
 Brown County  
 Bureau County  
 Calhoun County  
 Carroll County  
 Cass County  
 Christian County  
 Clark County  
 Clay County  
 Coles County  
 Crawford County  
 Cumberland County  
 De Witt County  
 Douglas County  
 Edgar County  
 Edwards County  
 Effingham County  
 Fayette County  
 Ford County  
 Franklin County  
 Fulton County  
 Gallatin County  
 Greene County  
 Hamilton County  
 Hancock County  
 Hardin County  
 Henderson County  
 Iroquois County  
 Jackson County  
 Jasper County  
 Jefferson County  
 Jo Daviess County  
 Johnson County  
 Knox County  
 La Salle County  
 Lawrence County  
 Lee County  
 Livingston County

Logan County  
 McDonough County  
 Macoupin County  
 Marion County  
 Marshall County  
 Mason County  
 McDonough County  
 Mercer County  
 Montgomery County  
 Morgan County  
 Perry County  
 Piatt County  
 Pike County  
 Pope County  
 Pulaski County  
 Putnam County  
 Randolph County  
 Richland County  
 Saline County  
 Schuyler County  
 Scott County  
 Shelby County  
 Stark County  
 Stephenson County  
 Union County  
 Vermilion County  
 Wabash County



Warren County  
 Washington County  
 Wayne County  
 White County  
 Whiteside County  
 Williamson County  
 Grundy County  
 Henry County  
 Jersey County  
 Kane County  
 Kankakee County  
 Kendall County  
 Lake County  
 McHenry County

## METROPOLITAN COUNTIES

Boone County  
 Champaign County  
 Clinton County  
 Cook County  
 De Kalb County  
 Du Page County  
 McLean County  
 Macon County  
 Madison County  
 Menard County  
 Monroe County

Ogle County  
Peoria County  
Rock Island County  
St. Clair County  
Sangamon County  
Tazewell County  
Will County  
Winnebago County  
Woodford County

## FOREWORD

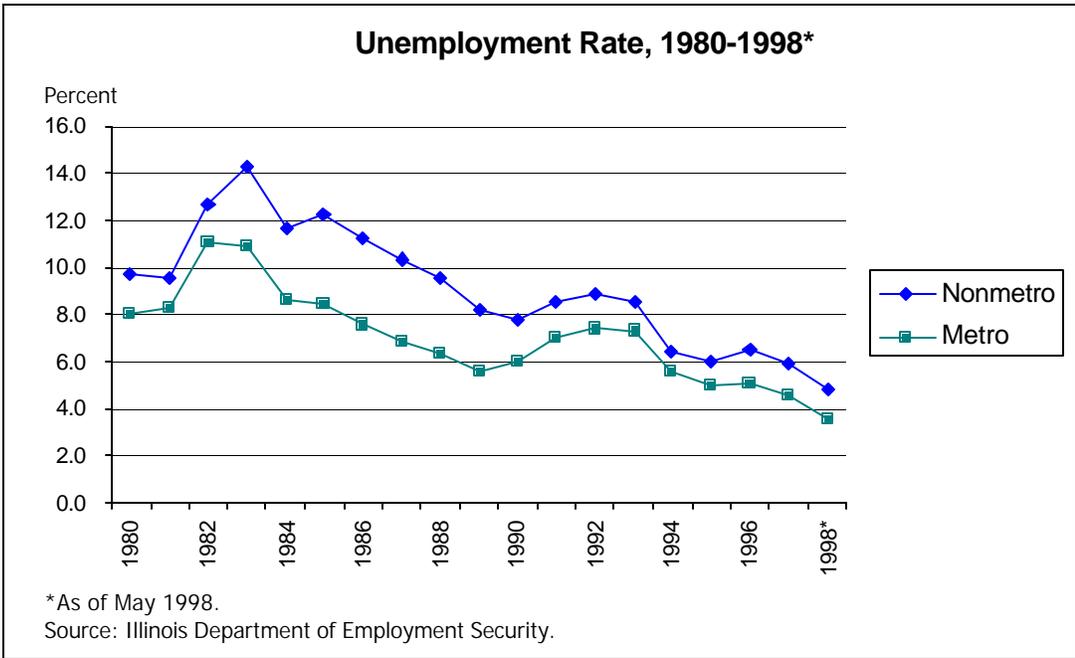
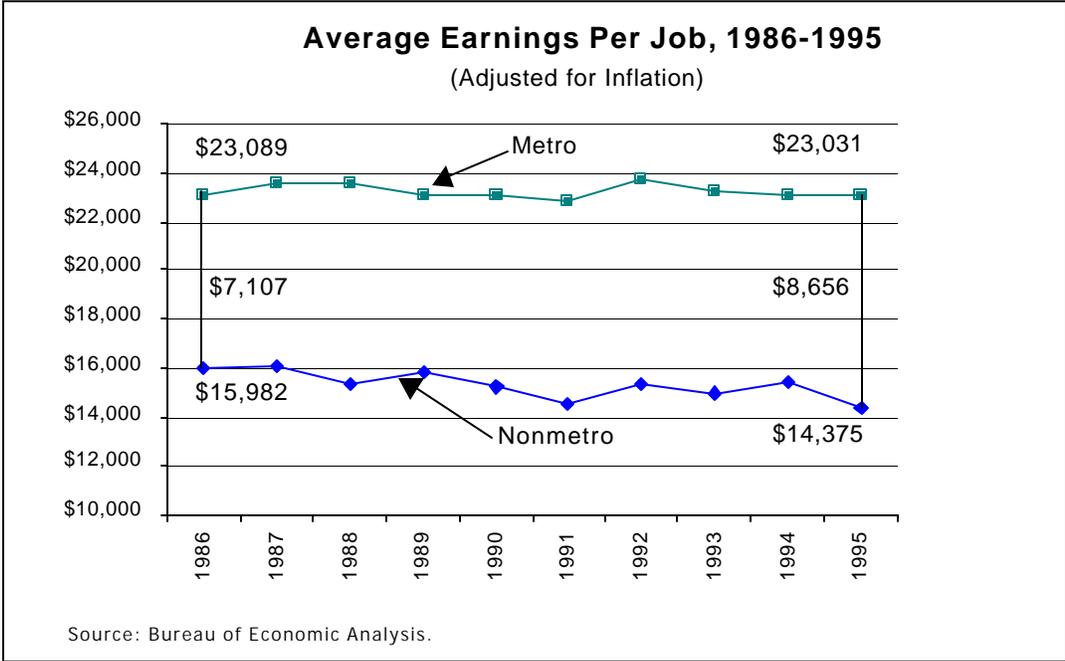
The 1990s brought a new era to many rural Illinois counties. After losing significant numbers of residents in the 1980s, many counties have experienced population gains since 1990, in some cases substantial increases. In the 1970s, many rural counties that had experienced population declines for decades grew in population and, overall, nonmetro areas increased more rapidly than urban areas. Because the growth was short term and declines resumed in the 1980s, some dismissed the experiences in the 1970s as an aberration. The question now is whether the 1970s or the 1980s were the unusual period.

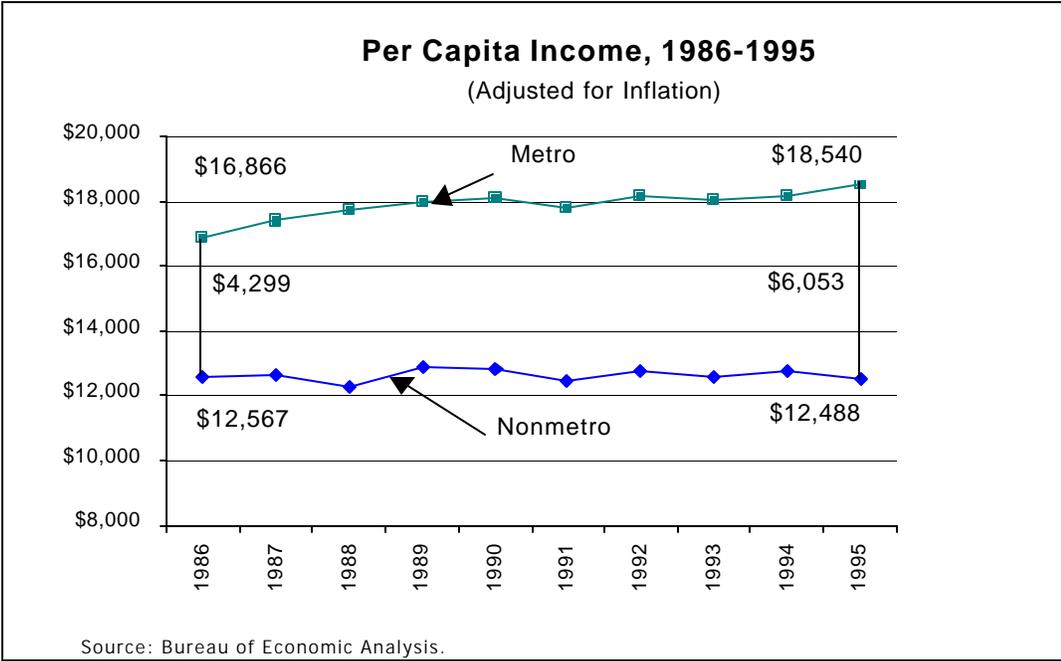
Two distinct groups of counties appear to characterize the 1990s. On one hand are those with population increases and relative economic prosperity. On the other are counties—usually in more remote agricultural areas—with high unemployment and population declines. Each county group faces different policy issues. Small communities in growing counties have housing shortages and infrastructure deficiencies. Declining counties must aggressively attract, retain, and expand existing industry to generate better employment opportunities. State policies must recognize both county types and assist local leaders working to improve the future of their communities.

This document addresses a wide variety of needs throughout rural Illinois. Several key definitions are provided on subsequent pages to

bring readers and contributors together on select terminology. However, a definition for “rural community” is conspicuously omitted, because the intent of this rural development plan is to address various communities of interest, rather than to assume that “one definition fits all.”

A initial planning group organized by Rural Partners started this effort to provide a forum for future discussion, input, and decision making. A short list of trends and conditions generated by this group included the following items (for more information, contact the Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs at 800-526-9943).





# INTRODUCTION

Throughout the strategic planning process, to date, several reoccurring themes have arisen. The Rural Partners planning team offers the following mission, vision, assumptions and guiding principles as a basic foundation to achieve long range goals for rural community and economic development.

#### MISSION

“The partners in this statewide strategic plan seek to strengthen and to support local, regional, state, and federal efforts to elevate the quality of life and economic capacity in rural Illinois through a coordinated use of public and private resources at local, state, and federal levels.”

#### VISION

“All rural communities in Illinois have developed the leadership and economic vitality to maintain a high quality of life for all of their citizens.”

#### ASSUMPTIONS

1. Effective approaches for rural development are based on local ownership and collaborative efforts between and among communities. Grassroots ownership and multi community cooperation/collaboration are essential for rural development in Illinois.
2. A coordinated and comprehensive rural development approach will be most effective. Coordinated and specialized assistance by public and private agencies is needed to avoid duplication of services and to help leaders and policy-makers in rural Illinois make decisions that are consistent with local needs, goals, and values.
3. Rural development activities encourage the use of an integrated approach. Integrated decision making involving disparate groups and constituencies is essential for designing a holistic approach for development of the community before development in the community can occur.
4. Rural Illinois has a diverse base of social and economic support. Rural is not necessarily

synonymous with agriculture.

5. The private sector plays a leading role in rural development. Government should not subsidize people and communities to do what the private sector is willing to do better.
6. Solutions cannot come from state and federal government alone. State government should support local efforts to find solutions—local initiative, involving all levels, is essential.
7. With continued research analysis, effective policy development and advocacy, rural areas can reach full potential. Based on a solid understanding of rural issues, statewide services provide infrastructure needed for local policies to succeed and result in long-term, sustainable improvements.

## Guiding Principles of Strong Rural Development

1. **Local Solutions:** With public and private leadership, community-based planning, and capacity-building, successful rural development will occur from a social, physical, and financial perspective.
2. **Informational Resources:** Leadership capacity and effective community-decision making are enhanced through the use of timely and accurate information resources; affordable access to information technology is essential.
3. **Recognized Measures of Success:** Continuous improvement in the condition of rural communities must be monitored using appropriate measures of success, particularly in evaluating public sector involvement.
4. **Problem-Solving Networks:** It is essential that collaborative environments be created that foster cooperative efforts between rural leaders and public and private resources.
5. **Stronger Foundations for Growth:** Six basic foundations for growth must be strengthened to improve the competitive positioning of rural communities: a skilled and adaptive workforce; access to capital for business growth and expansion; necessary basic and advanced infrastructure; access to technology and business modernization resources; pro-competitive policies affecting the rural business climate; and the social, cultural and physical amenities necessary for a high quality of life.
6. **Greater Business Growth Opportunities:** The competitive positioning of rural businesses will be improved by strengthening ties to foreign and domestic markets.
7. **Options for Rural Residents:** Residents of rural communities must be enabled to plan successful futures through access to the opportunities and resources needed to make early choices for advancement.

# CHAPTER 1

## LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

### INTRODUCTION

Rural Illinois faces many challenges but also has many opportunities to take advantage of future opportunities. Populations in metro areas are often interested in living in small communities where housing costs are lower and the lifestyle is more pleasant. At the same time, however, these residents expect high quality public services and recreational opportunities compatible with their former lifestyle.

Creating a strong positive future for many rural communities requires effective planning and decision-making by a broad cross-section of the community. Community development involves building social capital and demands strong leadership from residents and elected officials.

Effective programs in which local and state agencies cooperate to build a well-informed local leadership base will pay rich dividends for rural communities and they make decisions that literally will affect the community for generations to come.

**GOAL # 1:** Local leaders possess the knowledge, skills, and abilities to make effective decisions about the future of their communities and are engaged in the rural development process.

#### Objectives

- a) Leaders accept responsibility for the community's future well-being and are positive in approach.
- b) Rural leaders understand trends and opportunities.
- c) Rural citizens are better informed and actively involved in selecting local leaders.
- d) Newly-elected local officials are oriented to and educated for public service.

#### Benchmark(s)

- a) Increase in number of state and local practitioners earning CED and other designations.
- b) Number of communities completing a strategic visioning process increases at least 10 percent annually.
- c) Total number of cities involved in CDAP, lending, and related development programs increases

annually.

**GOAL #2:** Rural youth are widely included in community and economic development efforts providing them with opportunities to develop leadership skills.

#### Objectives

- a) Youth are directly engaged in local visioning and action planning activities.
- b) Junior and senior high school age students assume responsibility for leading efforts to achieve a portion of the community's development plan.

#### Benchmark(s)

- a) The number of youth involved in community visioning programs increases each year.
- b) Rural youth actively participate in School-to-Work and entrepreneurship education programs.

**GOAL #3:** Community leadership development efforts in the public and private sectors are closely coordinated.

#### Objectives

- a) Public awareness of projects successfully completed with local, state, federal, and private-sector participation exists and the public actively supports these efforts.
- b) State agencies participate in local community development planning programs (e.g., MAPPING, Main Street, CCI) emphasizing successful results.

#### Benchmark(s)

- a) The number of public-private partnerships supporting local projects increases each year.
- b) The volume of applications for subsidized housing and business loans increases more than inflation annually.

**GOAL #4:** Rural leaders have access to effective leadership training and capacity-building programs.

Objectives

- a) Community development leadership training is available for all state and federal employees.
- b) Faculty and students of regional and/or state institutions of higher education actively engage in local leadership training.
- c) Local officers and volunteers involved with the administration of community and economic development corporations, school districts, etc., can access educational opportunities to learn new financial management and revenue-building strategies.

Benchmark(s)

- a) DCCA, IIRA, CES and other state and federal groups coordinate to provide an integrated set of training programs for local public officials and practitioners.
- b) The number of rural counties and cities that participate in local leadership programs, such as provided by CES, increases annually.

**GOAL #5:** Systematic efforts assess the capacity of governments and citizen groups to undertake community and economic development projects.

Objectives

- a) Leadership styles and models are flexible and effectively understand the local dynamics of rural community development.
- b) State and federal-level agency representatives conduct regular evaluations to raise public confidence and assure accountability.

Benchmark(s)

- a) Local officials and community development groups are surveyed annually to determine their potential and needs for development programs.
- b) Sessions are held at the annual IIRA/Rural Partners conference on issues identified in the survey.

**GOAL #6:** Community and economic development efforts include a method(s) for sustaining an effective leadership component.

Objectives

- a) Methods for recruiting, retaining, and rewarding local leaders are a fundamental part of the community and economic development process.
- b) Effective communication between local leaders and resource agencies (e.g., via Internet connections) increase exchanges of more timely information in rural areas.

Benchmark(s)

- a) A review of succession programs in other states is completed by IIRA and Rural Partners.
- b) Based on a review of options, recommendations are made to the General Assembly regarding a business succession program in Illinois.

## CHAPTER 2

# ECONOMIC VITALITY

### INTRODUCTION

Most rural communities were adversely affected by the national recession in the 1980s and only recently have some been able to rebuild the economic base. In some cases, local officials have accepted a bleak future for their cities; in other cases, public officials and local leaders have taken stock of community assets, have designed an economic development approach, and have found a niche for the future.

Rebuilding a local economy requires social capital, physical capital and financial capital. The social capital was described previously. Local leaders and state agencies can work together to create a positive business climate including a strong infrastructure allowing businesses to access markets. Equally important is that local businesses can access financial capital to start or expand operations.

In the next decade, technology may be the single most important driving force for economic vitality. While technology can overcome the disadvantages of distance, it also is more expensive to provide in rural areas because of low population density. Nevertheless, rural areas must be competitive with metro areas in technological advancements if they are to attract businesses and employment.

**GOAL #1:** A skilled and adaptive workforce possessing a balanced set of basic skills, professional or managerial skills; and entrepreneurial talents.

#### Objectives

- a) Local workers are equipped with strong basic skills (i.e., reading, writing, math, communication, ethics and critical thinking); basic technological literacy; and access to continuing adult education.
- b) The local workforce possess specific technical or administrative skills including specialized technical knowledge, higher-order problem solving and communication skills, the ability to work in teams and adapt to rapid change.
- c) The local workforce includes professional or

managerial skills including advanced technical knowledge, global orientation, strategic perspective and the ability to encourage innovation among others.

- d) People in rural communities are encouraged to apply their professional skills toward new entrepreneurial ventures.

#### Benchmark(s)

- a) Illinois' ranking in number of participants and expenditures for work force training increases annually.
- b) The placement rate of welfare recipients in permanent jobs increases in rural areas at least at the national average.

**GOAL #2:** Rural areas have a basic and advanced infrastructure including public services, transportation facilities, and communication technology to support local production and export - related activities.

#### Objectives

- a) Statewide assessments of basic infrastructure facilities are available to rural development agencies and they have full and unrestricted access to current information about local, state, and federal funding alternatives.
- b) The community comprehensive capital improvement plans are integrated with long-range action agendas and are based on citizen input.
- c) Local leaders are aware of and trained for the latest developments in basic technologies and provide effective delivery of services using that technology (e.g., use of Internet access).
- d) Affordable access to telecommunications technologies is available in rural areas.

#### Benchmark(s)

- a) Illinois' spending, in constant dollars, on highways and telecommunications in rural areas increases annually.
- b) The percentage of rural phone lines that can reliably transmit data at medium speed is at least at the national average.
- c) Real per capita outlays for public facilities is competitive with national rates.

- d) Access to telecommunications in rural areas is becoming more affordable.

**GOAL #3:** Rural entrepreneurs have access to and knowledge of creative or innovative funding strategies. Examples include adequate access to capital for business start-ups; expansion of young companies; expansion of existing firms; export opportunities; and modernization strategies for firms seeking to finance new technology for products or processes, workforce improvements, or marketing efforts to maintain overall competitiveness.

Objectives

- a) Public awareness of benefits realized from local cooperatives (e.g., school programs, health services, Internet access and retail trade) leads to more business formation.
- b) Continuous entrepreneurial training is available to all rural business owners and aspiring entrepreneurs.
- c) Organized/coordinated efforts to market rural Illinois through the formation of a network of state marketing cooperatives are underway.
- d) Greater support for Illinois companies seeking to enter the global marketplace.

Benchmark(s)

- a) Net number of new businesses filing tax returns in the State of Illinois increases each year.
- b) Net number of new corporate charters filed in Illinois increases each year.
- c) Net number of new partnerships and/or sole proprietorships registering with county clerks increases each year.
- d) Percentage of total state exports accounted for by small firms (i.e., businesses employing 500 or fewer people) increases annually.

**GOAL #4:** Rural areas have adequate access to technology and business modernization resources such as current product and process technologies; applied research leading to new local (product or process) innovations; and basic research in multi disciplinary fields offering economic potential to be competitive globally.

Objectives

- a) Research and development activities leading to new jobs utilizing renewable resources (e.g.,

soy, grain, wood) are a high priority for the State of Illinois.

- b) Regional incentives for expanding business activity are tailored to needs of the various regions (e.g., value-added agriculture, elder-friendly industries willing to employ senior citizens in other areas).
- c) Research, training and service expertise available in universities and community colleges is accessible and well communicated.

Benchmark(s)

- a) Percentage of industrial sites in DCCA listing that are technology ready increases annually.
- b) Illinois' ranking in private research funding per capita increases faster than the national average.
- c) The number of businesses and manufacturers using university and community college resources increases annually.

**GOAL #5:** Rural communities have adequate resources to capture the economic and social benefits of local tourism.

Objectives

- a) Innovative incentives are available to rural communities with inter-community projects that benefit to the public.
- b) Rural communities are encouraged to expand, improve, and promote lesser known parks and recreational facilities for use by the general public (e.g., schools, abandoned railroads, church properties).
- c) A monitoring process exists to keep track of tourism usage and its impact on the state and local economies. This information is available to local offices.

Benchmark(s)

- a) Illinois' rank on expenditures for tourism promotion in rural areas increases.
- b) The rural share of tourism traffic at least keeps pace with the state average.
- c) Rural officials and community leaders actively pursue funding for cultural and historical attractions.
- d) Expenditures to preserve and develop historic landmarks for future generations increase in constant dollars.

**GOAL #6:** Illinois residents and policymakers are better informed about community and economic development goals of rural areas.

Objectives

- a) A statewide public information plan systematically informs to the general public and legislators about rural Illinois and its needs.
- b) Every Illinois municipality has a site on the World Wide Web offering an up-to-date profile of current initiatives and goals for community and economic development.
- c) A state agency, such as the Governor's Rural Affairs Council or the Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs, has responsibility for monitoring Illinois' progress toward achieving long range goals for rural development.
- d) Inter-agency collaboration and trust raises the quality of life for all Illinois residents.
- e) Illinois' most successful (rural) programs and services remain active through broader promotion and (coordinated) utilization at the local level — a program's survival is based on public demand and not fiscal limitations.

Benchmark(s)

- a) The annual report on the status of rural, prepared for the Governor and General Assembly monitors progress toward meeting the objectives and benchmarks in this plan.
- b) The annual meeting of Rural Partners at the economic development conference provides an update on the status of rural Illinois using agreed-upon indicators.

**GOAL #7:** A pro-competitive business climate encourages prudent use of tax dollars (e.g., education, transportation, research), stable tax rates, and competitive tax burdens between jurisdictions.

Objectives

- a) Rural areas consistently reflect a business-friendly climate where tort reform, local tax structures, and liability and workers compensation insurance laws are competitive with those in adjacent states.
- b) State resources, including financial and technical assistance, and educational

programs, are available to work with community development organizations that have an organized approach to local development.

Benchmark(s)

- a) Business tax structures in Illinois are competitive with surrounding states.
- b) Rates for programs such as workers compensation are in line with other Midwestern states.

**GOAL #8:** Economic development recognizes the preservation and advancement of social, cultural and physical amenities essential to a high quality of life.

Objectives

- a) Local community action planning processes address a broad spectrum of economic development (e.g., industrial, retail, tourism, etc.), as well as, community development (e.g., education, recreation, health care, etc.) issues.
- b) Communities and employers work more effectively together to ensure that the benefits of employment improve the employees' quality of life in the community.

Benchmark(s)

- a) An increasing percentage of rural employees have adequate access to health care, affordable day care, and other essential services.
- b) Innovative training programs for newly emerging, diverse industries (e.g., day care, arts, and culture) are introduced to rural communities.

## CHAPTER 3

# QUALITY OF LIFE

### INTRODUCTION

Technology advancements that freed workers from their work site have opened up many economic opportunities for rural communities, especially those with recreational attractions or retirement opportunities. Suburban residents are becoming more interested in escaping from high taxes, traffic congestion, and other distractions. They seem interested in a simpler lifestyle and a smaller community with lower housing costs as long as the public services and recreational opportunities are compatible with the needs.

Quality of life is more often mentioned as a factor in business location decisions as companies encounter greater difficulties attracting an adequate labor force. Rural areas which can offer a high quality of life including adequate public services and high quality housing have a decided advantage in attracting businesses and/or retirees.

Rural communities must pay significant attention to the quality of public services such as education and health care. They also must be able to provide these services at reasonable tax rates. Protecting the environment is always a major concern and must be at the heart of an economic development strategy that emphasizes quality of life as a component.

Goals and objectives for an improved quality of life impact the lives of all residents. Improving education, for example, must involve universities and community colleges in partnerships with primary and secondary schools to ensure life-long learning opportunities are available to all residents of rural Illinois.

**GOAL #1:** Educational opportunities for all rural Illinois students (i.e., children, workers, and life-long learners) are of high quality.

#### Objectives

- a) Basic statewide funding equities exist among Illinois schools, but local areas have the option of investing more resources in the community's educational system (e.g., through the formation of local educational foundations), when desired.

- b) Efficiency in educational structure, operations, and organizations is acknowledged and rewarded for exceeding state standards.
- c) Basic skills curriculum in rural schools has been improved to eliminate disparities among regions in Illinois. Illinois schools adopt a holistic approach to learning including greater understanding of the environment, a deeper appreciation for interdependencies between urban and rural populations, and effective use of technology to improve curriculum for all students.
- d) Opportunities to strengthen in-service educational opportunities for public school teachers exist for rural areas.
- e) Districts are encouraged to foster inter-school (i.e., between districts, community colleges, and universities) cooperation to improve educational opportunities for all age groups.
- f) Opportunities exist for entrepreneurial or vocational education and education-to-careers transitions (i.e., enhanced access to community colleges and universities).
- g) All rural school districts are adequately equipped (i.e., curriculum and/or facilities) to offer high quality education to students with special needs (e.g., learning disabilities).
- h) Few if any, impediments (e.g., unfunded mandates) exist that are disproportionately detrimental to rural schools.

#### Benchmark(s)

- a) Real per student outlays for public schools in rural areas is comparable with urban areas.
- b) Rural students have access to vocational training programs suitable for local economic development opportunities.
- c) The range of course offerings in rural areas allows rural students to compete effectively in higher education or the job market.
- d) Rural schools achieve the same academic standards as urban schools.

**GOAL #2:** Rural schools have a high level of

respect and usefulness in community activities.

#### Objectives

- a) Locally-integrated planning involves regional employers to help schools (i.e., especially secondary and post-secondary levels) offer more relevant curriculum and job training opportunities.
- b) Schools are regarded as life-long learning and cultural centers where community residents are continuously invited to acquire new skills and civically engage one another (e.g., through learning and fellowship activities). Schools are regarded as essential members of local community and economic development networks.
- c) Local programs for latch key children and other family issues reflect the school's commitment toward positive family and youth development.

#### Benchmark(s)

- a) Rural residents report satisfaction with curriculum and other educational opportunities as part of periodic surveys.
- b) The acceptance rate of rural students into institutions of higher education compares favorably with urban areas.

**GOAL #3:** Reasonable access to high quality affordable primary health care services exist for all rural Illinois residents.

#### Objectives

- a) Rural leaders create effective health care systems that do not duplicate services or deny small communities adequate access to health care services (e.g., area hospitals focus more on clustered/regional collaboration to provide the best possible care to area residents).
- b) An effective network (or access to one nearby) of rural health care infrastructure consisting of hospital care, clinical services, emergency medical treatment and ancillary services exists in all rural areas.
- c) Collaborative partnerships between rural health care providers, local leaders, and citizens lead to an integrated development plan for communities.
- d) Illinois is a leading state for investment in telemedicine and other technologies for

improving access to health care services in rural areas.

- e) Affordable health insurance is no longer an impediment for rural residents who need access to primary health care, prenatal/obstetrical care, or dental services.
- f) Medical transportation and emergency services in rural areas are managed as a shared responsibility in and among rural municipalities, counties, and townships so as to ensure that all residents live within a minimum desired response time.

#### Benchmark(s)

- a) The percentage of Illinois population living in Health Professional Shortage Areas decreases.
- b) Illinois' ranking among states in health care costs declines.
- c) All pre-hospital trauma center providers are trained and authorized to administer advanced life-support procedures.
- d) Non-emergency transportation provided by all transportation systems in rural Illinois including those systems operated for specific clientele is expanding.

**GOAL #4:** Rural communities are committed to the future growth and well-being of more productive, responsible and value-oriented families and children.

#### Objectives

- a) Local community information systems are utilized by residents, health care providers, and social service agencies to better coordinate residents' ability to obtain the help they need.
- b) Family-centered delivery systems that take a complete view of the family circumstances rather than treating specific symptoms exist throughout rural Illinois.
- c) Youth mentorship and leadership programs to teach independence and self-sufficiency skills are available to all rural teens.

#### Benchmark(s)

- a) The number of communities and/or the percentage of rural youth involved in structured youth development programs is increasing.
- b) Total membership in organized youth groups/organizations is increasing.

**GOAL #5:** Comprehensive public transportation programs in rural areas enable rural Illinois recipients better job opportunities and easier access to health care and human services.

Objectives

- a) Rural public transportation is recognized as a state priority issue whereby adequate funding is provided and:
  - Funding inequities in rural areas are alleviated through a conscientious effort to follow a statewide intermodal transportation improvement plan (i.e., surface, air, and water) for the State of Illinois;
  - Recommendations for regional improvements are submitted by local leaders are eventually integrated with a (10 year) statewide development plan; and
  - Planning for the future of transportation in rural areas receives broad-based input.
- b) All transportation providers are committed to coordinating services – making more seats and routes available to individuals for employment and health care purposes.
- c) Non-categorical funding resources are available for communities that enhance public transportation systems.
- d) Existing rural transit districts are encouraged to expand public transportation services into contiguous counties.
- e) The mobility of rural residents is supported through a combination of public and private initiatives whereby:
  - All residents have access to non-emergency public transportation services in rural areas;
  - No one in rural Illinois is denied the opportunity to work because basic transportation is lacking;
  - State incentives promote the development of creative approaches to accommodate public transit needs in rural areas; and
  - Regional interstates, secondary highways, airports, railways, and rural road and bridge systems in rural Illinois are of high priority for enhancing public safety and economic development in rural areas.

Benchmark(s)

- a) The number of rural counties without public

transit service declines.

- b) State spending on local public transit in rural counties increases in constant dollars.
- c) The number of Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF) recipients entering the work force is increasing because of the availability of transportation.
- d) The percentage of rural residents with access to public transit routes offering evening and weekend service is increasing.
- e) The number of miles of bus routes throughout rural Illinois that enable residents to travel between counties for medical treatment and employment is increasing.
- f) Information about new successful models for public transportation is created and shared with all rural community leaders.

**GOAL #6:** Rural public leaders and officials are skilled at assessing local needs and creatively seeking appropriate financing from public and private agencies (e.g., grants/loans, conventional credit, partnerships and other sources).

Objectives

- a) Rural leaders and public officials receive timely announcements of grants, technical assistance, and loan programs.
- b) Ongoing reviews of socioeconomic profiles are maintained locally to more quickly process assistance applications.
- c) Rural leaders have ongoing access to continued education and training of local government techniques and policies.

Benchmark(s)

- a) Number of requests to state agencies for information about grants, loan programs, and technical assistance is increases.
- b) Rural per capita receipt of federal and state dollars is at least equal to the national average.

**GOAL #7:** The State of Illinois recognizes the hardships created by unfunded mandates on units of local government and aggressively works to provide solutions for rural areas.

Objectives

- a) Rural Illinois constituencies maintain a strong

- presence on both state and federal level legislative agendas to ensure that differences between rural and urban areas are addressed.
- b) Solid access and knowledge about organizations providing technical assistance and/or funding for public and private projects seeking compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is available.
  - c) Local governments assume a leadership role in public and private sector planning for the ADA.

Benchmark(s)

- a) The effects of unfunded state mandates on rural governments are estimated annually by the appropriate state agency and the aggregate costs are published.
- b) Rural Partners, working with local government organizations, makes recommendations regarding ways to eliminate or reduce the impacts of unfunded state and federal mandates on rural governments.
- c) The number of unfunded state mandates on rural governments is reduced during the next five years.

**GOAL #8:** Broad inter-community/inter-governmental cooperation to maximize economic benefits from development projects that would otherwise exclude some rural areas is underway across rural Illinois.

Objectives

- a) The State of Illinois aggressively supports the formation of new and promotion of existing multi-community development organizations, intergovernmental cooperation, and regional planning in areas where it makes good economic sense for such collaborations to occur.
- b) State educational programs and technical assistance exist to help local areas identify and create innovative partnerships for community and economic development.

Benchmark(s)

- a) The benefits of collaborations on local economic development projects are promoted through training programs and incentives by state agencies.
- b) A growing number of rural communities are formally aligned with each other (e.g.,

collaborative partnerships, networks).

- c) The number of economic development projects involving multiple governments and regional approaches increases.

**GOAL #9:** Effective and efficient units of governments in rural areas are created through careful analysis and/or reorganization whereby impediments for economic development are removed and duplication of public services is minimized.

Objectives

- a) Rural community residents have acceptable standards for public services so local officials may more easily communicate future needs and performance expectations with various agencies.
- b) A sense of continuous improvement and efficiency permeates all levels of public service in the State of Illinois (e.g., seamless/coordinated delivery systems, lower administrative costs, customer-friendly approaches).

Benchmark(s)

- a) Seminars and training programs on the benefits of collaboration and contracting to reduce the costs of public services are provided to rural leaders.

- b) The per unit costs of providing services in rural areas is comparable to similar agencies nationwide and impediments to reorganization are removed.

**GOAL #10:** Rural Illinois residents have access to activities bringing cultural enrichment and exposure to the arts.

Objectives

- a) State funding and technical assistance programs help small communities develop a strong base in cultural and artistic resources.
- b) A monitoring approach exists statewide, regarding traffic and use of resources so that local decisions are based on solid information.
- c) State agencies, universities, and community colleges assume more responsibility for introducing cultural enrichment to rural

communities.

Benchmark(s)

- a) The number of theater productions, plays, and art exhibits are increasing in rural areas each year.
- b) Young people in rural areas will have increased opportunities to develop their creative talents.

**GOAL #11:** Key historic and cultural landmarks depicting early American architecture, heritage, and cultural themes pertaining to specific ethnic groups are preserved and promoted in rural Illinois communities.

Objectives

- a) Rural community leaders have access to technical assistance to document community history, educate the public about local heritage, and integrate information about the past into plans for the future.
- b) Locally-driven plans to identify, preserve, and present historical structures and sites (e.g., downtowns, barns, historic districts) are designed to promote civic pride, educate young people, and share the community's history with the public.
- c) Local historical sites are user-friendly (e.g., signs, directories) and fully accessible (e.g., promoted at the regional and state levels, accommodate people with disabilities) to the public.
- d) The State of Illinois supports local initiatives to engage residents in decision-making processes focusing on the restoration of historically significant areas.
- e) Ongoing collaborative efforts (e.g., exhibitions, programs, and publications) among public and private sector entities enhance the public's appreciation for conservation and research of Illinois' heritage.

Benchmark(s)

- a) The number of educational workshops presented in rural areas by historic preservationists is increasing.
- b) The number of communities actively engaged in historic preservation and the restoration of cultural landmarks is increasing.

- c) An increasing percentage of rural community strategic action plans contain a specific cultural/historic preservation component.

**GOAL #12:** Cooperative planning between public and private rural leaders to maintain a balance between the utilization and preservation of natural resources is underway throughout Illinois.

Objectives

- a) Rural community leaders collaborate with public and private partners to create a comprehensive long range development plan that clearly delineates agricultural, commercial, industrial, residential, and public space throughout the community.
- b) A desired growth pattern for the community is considered and concerns for potential loss of prime farmland or the degradation of other natural resources are addressed.
- c) Zoning and land use ordinances protect the rights of landowners as well as preserve the natural beauty and attractiveness of rural areas (e.g., commercial and industrial areas, farmland, wetlands, solid waste sites exist in harmony).
- d) Local comprehensive (land use) plans work in tandem with other long range community goals to guide development decisions.

Benchmark(s)

- a) Rural public officials and community leaders have access to programs and seminars on the potential outcomes of comprehensive land use planning.
- b) State agencies and regional planning councils provide technical assistance in drafting land use plans.
- c) Geographic information systems (GIS) are increasingly used to support public policy decision-making.

**GOAL #13:** Statewide development of "safe-community" plans are developed through coordinated interagency efforts, consistent with state and regional policies, and, are driven by standard measures for law enforcement effectiveness.

Objectives

- a) Law enforcement and civilian participation in planning the local public safety strategy are

integrated into the overall community development process.

- b) Regional crime statistics and issues related to the community's proximity to larger urban areas are reviewed in public forums.
- c) Innovative practices for expanding rural law enforcement services and designing an effective plan are responsibilities shared by all community residents and authorities.
- d) Citizens are educated on ways to reduce risks for serious crimes and are encouraged to utilize volunteer approaches to supplement local law enforcement activities (e.g., neighborhood watches, auxiliary appointments, volunteer crossing guards, etc.).

#### Benchmark(s)

- a) Rural communities meet the statewide police training standards.
- b) The number of communities that initiate effective community policing approaches increases.
- c) The number of public institutions (e.g., schools, hospitals) implementing public safety plans is increasing.
- d) According to traditional measures of law enforcement effectiveness, public safety in rural areas increases.
- e) Surveys of rural residents disclose that respondents are satisfied that they live in a "safe" environment.

**GOAL #14:** Affordable housing for all rural residents including individuals with special needs is available.

#### Objectives

- a) Accepted definitions of "affordability" are based on localized assessments of need which may vary from one location to another, depending on several variables (e.g., income, labor markets, mobility, etc.).
- b) Local, state, and federal agencies establish one common definition of "rural" so that statutory population limits do not hinder a community's eligibility for more than one complementary housing program.
- c) Local governments address local ordinances, policies, and programs by referencing the State's Consolidated Plan (for affordable housing) and related documents.

- d) Strong emphasis is placed on programs supporting assisted living facilities, elder-friendly, and other multi-family variations of affordable housing in rural areas with direct linkages to transportation and health and human services.
- e) Cooperative housing opportunities (e.g., condominiums, zero-lot-line housing) through existing loan programs and other creative financing methods are in sufficient supply in rural areas.
- f) Rural areas offer specialized transitional or sheltered housing to homeless families who are actively engaged in welfare-to-work initiatives.
- g) Local leaders have access to up-to-date information about the availability of grants and loans for housing repair, rehabilitation in rural areas.
- h) Application procedures for housing projects are streamlined and funding requirements for various state housing programs are standardized so as to prevent unnecessary delays or failures.

#### Benchmark(s)

- a) Percentage of rural housing units classified as substandard declines.
  - b) Prospective home owners in rural areas have access to affordable financing.
  - c) The complexity of participating in federal housing programs is reduced.
  - d) Illinois is a leading recipient of grants and loans for housing repair.
-



## CONCLUSIONS / NEXT STEPS

Since the late 1980s, Illinois has had a rural development strategy and a variety of programs. The Governors Rural Affairs Council was assigned the responsibility of coordinating a comprehensive strategy involving state agencies with rural programs. Rural Partners expanded the statewide initiative by including members from the private sector.

It has been more than a decade (1986) since the initial Rural Initiative was undertaken in Illinois. "Building a Brighter Future for Rural Illinois" is an effort by Rural Partners and other private/public agencies to re-examine the needs of rural Illinois for the next decade and to present ways for public and private partnerships to enhance the future of rural Illinois.

Not everyone will subscribe to each and every goal presented in this document. However, there are numerous ways for individuals and groups to become involved

in efforts to help rural areas reach their potential and the present effort provides one set of approaches.

Planning for the future is typically the easiest part of the revitalization process. What lies next is to implement programs that will accomplish the state objectives. To succeed, there must be a monitoring process and suggested benchmarks have been stated when appropriate. The Rural Partners planning group has met with representatives of state agencies and tried to incorporate the measures they use to monitor the success and adequacy of their programming efforts. To the extent possible, these benchmarks have been included.

This report is presented to stimulate discussion and to identify needs as well as opportunities for local groups, state agencies, the private sector, and federal departments to work together to find a better future for rural Illinois. It is only through a combined effort that the potential of rural Illinois can be reached.

# KEY DEFINITIONS FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN ILLINOIS

**ACTION STEPS:** are the equivalent of the “to do” list for a broad strategy. Generally, action steps are assigned to an individual or group and are regarded as tasks requiring specific resources for short periods of time.

**BENCHMARKS:** standards, or measures of success derived from the core philosophy, principles, and assumptions that determine “how we’re doing.” Specific items (i.e., those for which numbers and other performance measures can be identified) are incorporated into the agenda. Benchmarks enable participating agencies, departments, communities, and organizations to more effectively articulate a scope of work that complements the overall vision.

**BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT:** Generally regarded as a subset of economic development, it is defined as an activity geared to improve competitiveness and profitability of firms within a given community of interest. It also includes the attraction of businesses to a given locale.

**COMMUNITY:** A shared state-of-mind or basis for leadership focusing on a particular area of interest (e.g., may be defined by geographic, ethnic, or other unique characteristics).

**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT:** A holistic, people-

oriented concept encouraging local participation and decision-making. Community development involves building social capital, as well as physical and financial capital. Community development precedes, or is necessary to economic development.

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:** Often defined in terms of more jobs, income increases, or tax base growth. In a rural context, economic development is often viewed as a process requiring community development also.

**GOALS:** are descriptions of expected results that, when completed, will indicate a successful effort toward achieving a vision. Goals provide a supportive framework for identifying strategies and other action-oriented activities that will progressively translate into programs, projects, and tasks affecting citizens at the local level. Goals are commonly regarded as long-term (e.g., 2 or more years out) and may be further categorized as improvements related to local infrastructure (i.e., physical, financial, and human), values, or administrative capacities.

**MISSION:** is generally regarded as a description of what we will do in order to achieve the vision. The statement is typically brief, declarative, and simple. No two agencies, departments, organizations, or people for that matter share exactly the same mission — nor should they.

**OBJECTIVES:** quantify what will be accomplished and when. Therefore, objectives provide milestones of success as a plan is implemented. Objectives state what will be done, how much will be done, and when it will be accomplished.

**PARTNERSHIPS:** collaborative alliances that are formed among various public sector and private sector entities to advance community and economic development outcomes more quickly or to a level beyond what might otherwise occur through an independent initiative.

**PRINCIPLES:** assumptions, and philosophy are synonymous with values or guideposts by which we measure the rightness of a direction. For example, development efforts will promote the active and representative participation of citizens in such a way that community members can meaningfully influence decisions that affect their lives.

**PRIVATE SECTOR:** All profit or not-for-profit organizations, groups, and individuals whose primary source of funding is sources other than any unit of local, state or federal government.

**PUBLIC SECTOR:** All local, state or federal units of government; including any organization, group, or individual whose primary source of funding is from public tax-based revenue sources.

**RURAL DEVELOPMENT:** Part of a broader strategy not synonymous with business development. In the broadest context, it includes aspects of human

resource development, organization development, community development and economic development.

**SOCIAL CAPITAL:** The trust and reciprocity within communities that enhance the ability of residents to identify alternative approaches to community and economic development and choose among them; an increase in social capital enhances the community's awareness of its human, financial and natural resource capacities by helping local leaders invest them appropriately to meet desired goals.

**STRATEGIES:** descriptions of how the agenda proposes to put action behind each goal. Within the context of a larger agenda for rural development, strategies provide a means for participating groups to identify a niche, or a tactical contribution to the overall effort.

**TACTICAL PLANNING:** Within each strategy, an agency or department may elect to work on a variety of tactical imperatives (very short-term tasks) for which their respective staffs are best equipped to manage on an annual basis.

**VISION:** represents a collective dream that can easily be communicated and shared with public and private agencies, citizens and other stakeholders throughout the state.

**Frequently Used Acronyms and  
Abbreviations in this Publication**

CDAP	Community Development and Assistance Program
CES	(University of Illinois) Cooperative Extension Service
CCI	Competitive Communities Initiative
DCCA	(Illinois) Department of Commerce and Community Affairs
IIRA	Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs
IRLP	Illinois Rural Life Panel
MAPPING	Mapping the Future of Your Community Project
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture

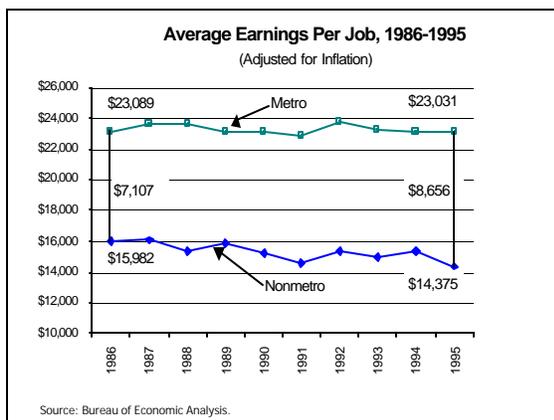
## CURRENT TRENDS AND CONDITIONS

**1. Populations in many rural Illinois counties have reversed the population declines and have increased during the 1990s (based on 1997 population estimates).**

- Reversals have occurred naturally in adjacent, retirement and recreation counties.
- 46 counties have had positive population reversals, 15 remote counties, 24 adjacent counties, and 7 metro counties.

**2. Despite some encouraging estimates, many remote and rural counties continue to lose populations (based on 1997 population estimates).**

- Between 1990 and 1997, 19 remote counties and 11 adjacent counties lost population.
- 19 remote and 11 adjacent rural counties in Illinois declined in population since 1980.
- 14 counties have a population of less than 10,000.
- 3 counties have populations of less than 5,000.
- In 1997, elderly represented 16.4 percent in rural versus 11.7 percent in metro counties.
- 56 of the 74 nonmetro counties lost elderly population in the 1990s, 29 of the 56 were remote counties. 15 remote counties and 5 adjacent counties have had declines greater than 5 percent.



**3. There is a strong tie between rural population growth and proximity to urban centers.**

- Larger cities have gained more in population.
- Cities in metro counties are growing more rapidly than in rural areas.
- 10.4 percent of the cities in nonmetro counties have had continuous population gains since 1980, compared to 44.7 percent in metro counties.

**4. Growth in rural jobs continues to be in lower-paying service employment.**

- From 1986-95, there has been a 16.8 percent growth in service jobs in rural; 32.2 percent in urban.
- 25.3 percent decline in farming employment occurred between 1986 and 1995; farming and agricultural related employment declined 4.3 percent during the same time period.
- Rural manufacturing was relatively stable (slight increase) in the 1980s and outperformed metro areas.
- Entrepreneurship in small towns is down and many closed businesses are not replaced.
- The average rural manufacturing job 1995 paid \$33,293, a service job in the same area averaged \$17,273, and a retail job averaged \$12,742.

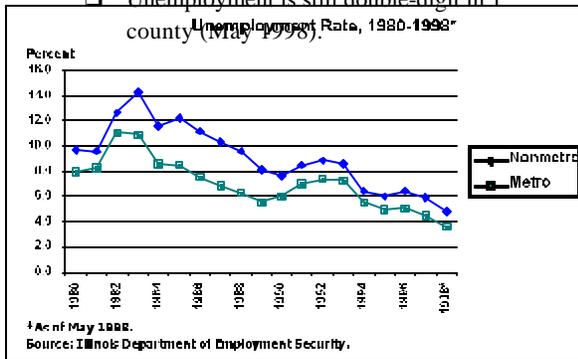
**5. There is a growing divergence between pay for jobs in metro and nonmetro areas (see Figure 1)**

- The urban/rural differential in per capita income was \$4,299 (1986) and \$6,053 (1995)\*.
- The urban/rural differential in earnings per job was \$7,107 (1986) and \$8,656 (1995)\*.
- Earnings per manufacturing job were \$46,084 (urban) and \$33,293 (rural) in 1995.
- Earnings per service job were \$31,236 (urban) and \$17,273 (rural) in 1995.

\*Adjusted for inflation.

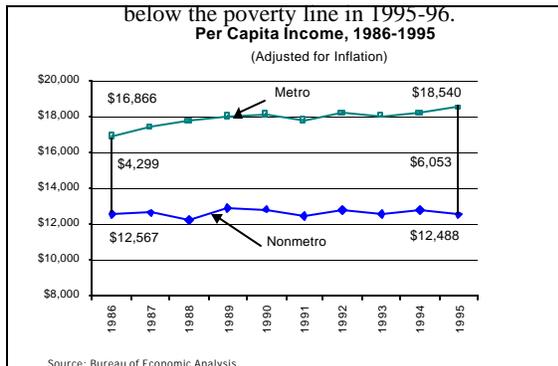
**Rural unemployment has declined substantially in the 1990s (see Figure 2).**

- ❑ Remote unemployment rate was 8.4 percent in 1990. By 1997, the rate was 6.2 percent. Adjacent counties went from 7.1 percent to 5.6 percent during the same time period.
- ❑ As of May 1998, Illinois' unemployment rate was 3.8 percent. Metro counties had the lowest rate (3.6 percent), followed by adjacent (4.4 percent) and remote counties (5.2 percent).
- ❑ Unemployment is still double-digit in 1 county (May 1998).



**6. The numbers of rural Illinois residents living below poverty levels are increasing (see Figure 3).**

- ❑ Families below poverty level in rural areas in 1989 represented 10.5 percent compared to 8.7 percent in metro areas.
- ❑ 12.3 percent of Illinois' population was below the poverty line in 1995-96.



**7. Expenditures for public education and the levels of education attained by rural residents are lagging behind urban areas.**

- ❑ Total spending per pupil was \$5,014 in nonmetro counties versus \$6,633 in metro counties (1994-95).
- ❑ 34.9 percent of persons over 25 in rural areas have had some college experience, compared to 48.6 percent in metro areas.
- ❑ 87.6 percent of the 1995 Illinois Rural Life Panel (IRLP) respondents reported an *urgent to moderate* need to strengthen schools.
- ❑ 51.2 percent of the 1995 IRLP respondents said they were willing to pay more taxes for K-12 education.
- ❑ 14% of the 1996 IRLP respondents said that the quality of high school education declined in the past five years. Elementary and junior high education were rated similarly at 11 percent and 13 percent, respectively.

**8. There is a growing use of telecommunications in business, but use of this technology is not fully realized in rural areas.**

- ❑ 65.6 percent of the 1995 IRLP respondents said they would like to see improved use of telecommunications by local businesses, schools and government.
- ❑ 71.9 percent of the 1995 IRLP respondents reported an *urgent to moderate* need to strengthen telecommunications.
- ❑ 37% of the 1996 IRLP respondents have a computer at home.
- ❑ About 40% of the 1996 IRLP who use the internet must dial long distance.

**9. Housing shortages are increasing in rural areas.**

- ❑ Inadequate trades and skills are common in rural areas.
- ❑ Difficulty obtaining financing for middle-class homes is found in rural areas.
- ❑ Problems obtaining land at affordable prices exist.
- ❑ 58.5 percent of 1995 IRLP respondents said their community needs a new subdivision; 74.0 would like to see construction of retirement housing.

**11. Taxes in nonmetro area often are substantially less than in metro areas.**

The per capita equalized assessed valuation was \$7,764 in nonmetro counties compared to \$14,177 in metro counties in 1994.

In 1994, the property tax extension in nonmetro counties was \$557 per capita; the per capita extension in metro counties was \$1,181 (an extension is the actual dollar amount of tax billed to property taxpayers in a taxing district).

**12. A chronic shortfall in spending for infrastructure exists in rural Illinois as of 1994.**

86.3 percent of county and 53.1 percent of township highway officials expect to have road budget shortfalls; \$4,554 per mile in counties and \$1,507 in townships.

70.6 percent of county and 54.7 percent of township highway officials expect to have bridge budget shortfalls; \$7,435 per bridge in counties and \$4,616 in townships.

74.6 percent of county and 54.2 percent of township highway officials expect to have inadequate revenues for general road and bridge work.

52.1 percent of the 1995 IRLP respondents reported being willing to pay more taxes to improve roads.

19.4 percent of the 1995 IRLP respondents said the quality of drinking water was low; 11.1 percent of respondents reported low quality sewer and septic disposal.

20 percent of the 1996 IRLP respondents stated that the quality of state highways have declined in the past five years; 25 percent said local roads had declined; 16 percent said bridges had declined; and 24 percent said county and township roads had declined.

19 percent of the 1996 IRLP respondents stated that the quality of the drinking water had worsened.

35.5 percent of the rural counties responding to a County Privatization Survey in 1996 reported inadequate revenues for county services. 13.3 percent of the rural counties had to reduce services because of the shortfall. Looking into the future, 20.5 percent of the counties will have to reduce services due to inadequate revenues.

A Municipal Privatization Survey in 1995 revealed that 31.2 percent of municipalities in rural counties had

inadequate revenues, compared to 22.3 percent of the municipalities in metro counties.

**13. Public transportation in rural Illinois will become more of an issue in the future, especially for growing numbers of elderly residents.**

Currently 30 rural counties are without public transportation.

There are four components of transit dependency: households without cars; persons 65 and over; persons with mobility limits; and persons in poverty.

31 percent of the 1994 IRLP respondents preferred access to inter-city bus or rail service.

83.3 percent of the 1995 IRLP respondents pay more taxes for more public transportation.

Between 1991 and 1996, 10 percent of the 1996 IRLP respondents said that the quality of public transportation had declined and 27 percent don't have public transportation available.

**14. Despite some improvement, access to affordable health care remains a serious concern.**

According to the Illinois Department of Public Health, all or parts of over 34 percent of rural Illinois counties are designated as Health Professional Shortage Areas.

In 1989, 24 percent of family practice physicians in Illinois practiced in rural counties. In 1996, 21 percent of Illinois' family practice physicians were practicing in rural counties.

**15. Crime rates in rural counties are lower than in metro areas – 5,656.44 per 100,000 inhabitants\* compared with 5,786.11 in metro.**

27 percent of the 1996 IRLP respondents stated that the quality of law enforcement had improved.

According to 35 percent of a 1996 Municipal Police Questionnaire respondents, during the past three years, the overall crime problem had improved. Only 15% reported the problem had worsened.

**16. The number of elderly residents living in some areas of rural Illinois is increasing; access to public services and elder-friendly amenities is**

**a growing concern as well.**

- ❑ 55.8 percent of the 1995 IRLP respondents stated that job opportunities were needed for elderly residents, 43.4 percent stated a need for educational programs, 53.6 percent stated a need for recreational opportunities, and 56.0 reported a need for appropriate housing.
- ❑ The 1995 IRLP respondents stated that the following services were needed (*percent stating services was needed in parentheses behind service*): group meals (52.8 percent), home meal delivery service (62.9 percent), bus for elderly (56.5 percent), visiting nurse/home health (68.2 percent), elder daycare (65.0 percent) respite help for care givers (52.0 percent), shelter housing (48.1 percent), home help with house and yard care (63.5 percent), information about senior services (48.2 percent), long-term care facility (63.8 percent), recreational and educational facilities (58.6 percent).

**17. While rural Illinois has shown great improvements in the 1990s, there are still serious concerns and additional attention is needed.**

\* The crime rate equals the crime index divided by the population and multiplied by 100,000).

## Current Trends References

Applied Social Research Unit. 1998. *1996-1997 Illinois Rural Life Panel Survey Final Report*. Applied Social Research Unit, Community Research Services, Illinois State University.

Illinois Department of Employment Security. 1998. *LAUS Estimates for April/May 1998 and May 1997*. Illinois Department of Employment Security. (Online) Available: <ftp://ftp.ice.net/pub/home/lmides/lausfiles/lausdata.wk1>

Illinois Department of Employment Security. 1998. *Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS), Annual Averages for Counties, 1974-1997*. Illinois Department of Employment Security. (Online) Available: <ftp://ftp.ice.net/pub/home/lmides/lausfiles/countyaa.wk1>.

Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs. 1996. *Illinois Rural Life Panel, Winter 1995 Survey* [Database]. Macomb, IL.

Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs. 1995. *Illinois Rural Life Panel, Winter 1994 Survey* [Database]. Macomb, IL.

Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs, National Association of Counties, and National Association of County Engineers. 1994. *Survey of County Highway Officials* [Database].

Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs, and National Association of Towns and Townships. 1994. *Survey of Township Highway Officials* [Database].

Illinois Law Enforcement Executive Institute and Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs. 1996. *Survey of Municipal Police* [Database]. Macomb, IL.

Illinois Office of the Comptroller, Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs, and Illinois Municipal League. 1996. *County Privatization Survey* [Database]. Macomb, IL.

Illinois Office of the Comptroller, Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs, and Illinois Municipal League. 1995. *Municipal Privatization Survey* [Database]. Macomb, IL.

Lamison-White, Leatha. 1997. *Current Population Reports, Consumer Income, P60-198, Poverty in the United States: 1996*. U. S. Bureau of the Census, Washington, D. C. (Online) Available: <http://www.census.gov/prod/3/97pubs/P60-198.PDF>

U.S. Bureau of the Census. 1998. *Estimates of the Population of Counties and Demographic Components of Population Change: Annual Time Series, July 1, 1990 to July 1, 1997*. Population Estimates Program, U.S. Bureau of the Census, Washington, DC 20233. (Online) Available: [http://www.census.gov/population/estimates/county/co-97-4/97C4\\_17.txt](http://www.census.gov/population/estimates/county/co-97-4/97C4_17.txt).

U.S. Bureau of the Census. 1997. *1996 Population Estimates of Places and Minor Civil Divisions*. Population Estimates Program, Population Division, U. S. Bureau of the Census, Washington, D. C. (Online) Available: <http://www.census.gov/population/www/estimates/mcdplace.html>.

U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis. 1997. *Regional Economic Information System 1969-95*, U.S. Department of Commerce, Economics and Statistics Administration, Bureau of Economic Analysis. (CD-ROM)

University of Illinois. 1997. *1997 Illinois Statistical Abstract*. Office of Research, College of Commerce and Business Administration, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Table 1-2 p. 6-7, Table 26-6 p. 786-787, Table 27.1 p. 790-791, Table 4.11 p. 140-141, and Table 4-15 p. 148-149.

## About Rural Partners

Rural Partners is the Illinois Private/Public Partnership for Rural Community Development. The organization is a not-for-profit corporation and was formed in 1989 by a sixteen-member steering committee. The stated mission for Rural Partners is as follows:

"Rural Partners is a member-driven forum that links individuals, businesses, organizations and communities with public and private resources to maximize the potential of rural Illinois."

Rural Partners convenes annual spring and fall conferences, which provide access to innovative rural development strategies and networking opportunities. For more information about Rural Partners, membership and member services, contact Paul Galligos, Partnership Manager, 3085 Stevenson Drive, Suite 302, Springfield, Illinois, 62703 (tel: 217-585-9242).