

Rural Development Center Newsletter-January 1999

University of Maryland Eastern Shore

U.S. SOUTHERN ECONOMY:

Over the past two months, some 80 Southerners from eight states and the District of Columbia met in small groups to discuss the uncharted territory of the "South's new economy". Sessions were held at the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta.

Summarized:

❑ **Electronic commerce could significantly streamline the way we conduct business, increase the number of small exporters, and accelerate the shift to a service economy.**

E-commerce also challenges states to grapple with potential tax revenue losses associated with untraceable sales, educate small businesses on how to use e-commerce without compromising business secrets, and speed up efforts to prepare workers for a knowledge-based economy.

❑ **Wage levels in the U.S. are affected far more by domestic productivity levels than by wage levels overseas.** While this means trade is less of a threat than commonly perceived, it still implies that all workers must move up the skill ladder if we are to increase the standard of living.

❑ **High-tech firms tend to cluster into hub cities where there is a critical mass of infrastructure, people and rules.** High tech firms require state investments, but the market-driven trend toward hub cities runs counter to the political tendency to spread

benefits around a state. In addition, as skilled youth follow the jobs to hub cities, the community college role may shift to training non-traditional students who tend to stay in the community after graduation.

❑ **Entrepreneurship is a growing source of employment and business activity in the new economy.** As such, K-12 education should be regarded as more than just a source of future workers, but as a source of future business-owners.

WHAT MAKES A GOOD DOWNTOWN?

Downtowns, according to Alan Jacobs of the University of California, Berkeley. "achieve or create a critical mass of people, ideas, production and activities that both permit growth in trade and create growth in trade. They allow people to achieve together what they could not do alone."

Jacob, from the Department of City and Regional Planning at Cal-Berkeley said the most memorable downtowns are those to which an emotional attachments is formed.

Jacobs indicated that the electronic and computer communications changes have suggested that downtowns are unnecessary, but downtowns continue to exist. It is more than critical mass that makes city centers. They tell everyone about your city or your town.

Good downtowns are reasonably safe,

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comfortable, clean and healthy. Although they should be a welcome site to visitors, it is more important that they meet the needs of the local residents.

Jacobs suggests that if a community has a downtown for primarily tourists, then you are in the amusement park game--a Disney World game, at which you will lose every time. You are not going to beat Disney at its own game.

Jacobs offers a list of factors that make up a good downtown:

- Be diverse. Have a mixture of uses, activities, people and buildings. For examples, include residential, recreational, commercial and cultural uses. The mix brings excitement and activity to downtown.
- Stimulate the senses with much to look and experience.
- Be public and open to all.
- Allow pedestrians to walk from place to place.
- Be complex and have a level of disorderliness and unpredictability.
- Change according to need.
- Be inhabited with people living in or very near the downtown.
- Provide people with many choices of where to go, what to do and how to do it.

Jacobs said that regarding the last element, a downtown store owner can open or close his shop at will. Conversely, his shopping mall counterparts typically cannot.

Although many complain about traffic congestion in the downtown, Jacobs say this is a factor symbolic of a thriving downtown. By their very nature, they are congested. When traffic continuously flows smoothly, the downtown is in trouble.

Parking problems are also indicative of a successful downtown. Jacobs says that good downtowns have a shortage of parking. Also, if there is public transportation, it should be concentrated on the downtown, because accessibility is key to a good downtown. A good public transportation system is what brings people together.

Jacobs believes that land uses in downtowns should not be separated. Downtowns should be tight and dense. He says that downtowns are often hurt with a separation of land uses, resulting in dull, lifeless places.

Concerning street design, Jacobs believes the best street have definition, creating a sense of place. Streets that achieved definition are those where the street width is twice as wide as the buildings along it are high. For example, a 40-foot street should have buildings that are at least 20 feet high and an 80-foot street should have buildings 40 feet high, and so on.

Trees, according to Jacobs, should be closely spaced on streets, from 15 to 30 feet apart, and should be planted all the way to the street corners, despite what traffic safety people say.

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But, he says trees are not essential for a good street and should only be used if they are appropriate to the street.

Transparency is another design element for streets. Jacobs believe that the best streets have transparency--an ability to see behind or inside (or at least to think you see behind or inside of) whatever is that is defining the street. Transparency is normally achieved with windows, such as those in the fake building along Disney World's Main Street.

Walkability is another street design element. Streets should be walkable, but not too wide, and provide physical comfort and safety for pedestrians. Streets should also provide shade from the sun and protection from the elements.

Jacobs says the current trend in urban design of standards and measurements is to get larger. Too many downtowns are buildings wider streets with more traffic lanes to accommodate increasing levels of traffic. Streets designed primarily for vehicles, says Jacobs, are usually not understandable or memorable and most of the time do not evoke a positive image about the downtown.

Jacobs noted that Rome wasn't build in a day, and neither should downtown be. Good downtowns take years to develop-to achieve the diversity of uses, activities , people and buildings that make every downtown unique.

U.S. POPULATION SURPASSES 271 MILLION AS 1999 BEGINS:

As Americans rang in the New Year, the Census Bureau projected the January 1, 1999, population of the United States to number 271,645,214, up 2,578,000 (1.0 percent) from New Year's Day, 1998.

The nation's population is projected to grow less during 1999 (2,316,000) than it did during 1998, primarily because of an expected rise in the number of deaths. The New Year's Day 1999 population total represents a 9.2 percent increase over the Census Day (April 1) 1990 total of 248,765,170.

POPULATION PROFILE OF THE NATION:

A report that brings together under one cover a wide range of sample survey and census data on demographic, social and economic trends for the nation was released by the Census Bureau.. The report, **Population Profile of the United States: 1997, P23-194** contains sections on national and state population trends and projections; geographical mobility; school enrollment, educational attainment and post-secondary school financing; households and families; marital status and living arrangements; fertility, child care arrangements and child support; disability, program participation and health insurance; labor force and occupation; money income and poverty; race and Hispanic-origin populations; and the elderly population. These sections highlight important facts and trends in U.S. society today, compiled from a variety of recent Census Bureau reports.

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HIGHER EDUCATION MEANS MORE MONEY:

Underscoring the significant correlation between more education and higher salaries, the Commerce Department's Census Bureau today reported in a new study that, in 1997, adults age 18 and over with a bachelor's degree earned an average of \$40,478 a year, while those with only a high school diploma earned \$22,895.

Advanced degree-holders made about \$63,229 a year, while those without a high school diploma averaged \$16,124.

The report, **Educational Attainment in the United States: March 1998** (Update), P20-513, also includes the following highlights:

- About 83 percent of adults age 25 and over completed high school and 24 percent had a bachelor's degree or more.
- The high school completion rate for young adults (age 25 to 29) was 88 percent, while 27 percent earned a college degree.
- For those age 25 to 29, college completion rates for young women exceeded those for young men at 29 percent and 26 percent, respectively.
- About 84 percent of Whites age 25 and over completed high school and 25 percent had a bachelor's degree or more. The equivalent rates for African Americans were 76 percent and 15 percent.
- About 90 percent of the employed civilian

labor force age 25 and over had a high school degree.

- High school completion levels for those age 25 and over were highest in the Midwest (86 percent) and lowest in the South (80 percent).

GROWTH IN U.S. SINGLE FATHERS OUTPACES GROWTH IN SINGLE MOTHERS:

While the number of single mothers (9.8 million) has remained constant over the past three years, the number of single fathers has grown 25 percent, from 1.7 million in 1995 to 2.1 million in 1998, according to the Census Bureau. Men now comprise one-sixth of the nation's 11.9 million single parents.

Other highlights for 1998 include:

- Of the 102.5 million households in the United States, 69 percent are family households. The share of family households fell 10 percentage points between 1970 and 1990 (from 81 percent to 71 percent) but has dropped only 2 percentage points since.
- About half (49 percent) of family households contain children under 18, down from 56 percent in 1970.
- The growth of one-parent families is slowing. They comprise 27 percent of family households with children, up from 24 percent in 1990 and 11 percent in 1970.
- Nearly 22 million adult (ages 18 or older) sons and daughters live in a home maintained by one or both parents, up from 15 million in 1970.
- The average U.S. family household consists

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of 3.18 people, down from 3.58 in 1970, but unchanged from 1990. Hispanic families are larger, with an average of 3.92 members, than either African American or non-Hispanic White families, which average 3.42 and 3.02 members, respectively.

The tabulations are contained in Household and Family Characteristics: March 1998 (Update).

Mining, manufacturing, wholesale and selected retail establishments shipped \$7.6 trillion of commodities weighing over 11 million tons in 1997, the Census Bureau reports.

☎<http://www.census.gov/prod/www/abs/97comflo.html>

The 1997 Commodity Flow Survey Preliminary U.S. Report shows increases from 1993 to 1997 of approximately 30 percent for value of shipments and 19 percent for tonnage. Trucking accounted for 72 percent of the value of shipments and approximately 69 percent of the overall tonnage.

The survey provides summary statistics on the transportation of freight, featuring characteristics such as value, weight and average miles per shipment by mode of transportation and major commodity shipped.

The preliminary report includes these findings:

A household is defined as a person or group of persons who live in a housing unit. A family is defined as a group of two or more people (one of whom is the householder, the person in whose name the housing unit is owned or rented) living together and related by birth, marriage or adoption.

U.S. BUSINESS SHIPMENTS SURPASS \$7 TRILLION IN 1997:

- More than 50 percent of all tonnage traveled less than 50 miles.
- Coal accounted for about 10 percent of the total tonnage shipped.
- The value of shipments via the U.S. Postal Service, parcel delivery services and couriers increased about 53 percent from 1993.

The 1997 Commodity Flow Survey is part of the 1997 Economic Census and continues a partnership between the Census Bureau and the U.S. Department of Transportation's Bureau of Transportation Statistics. The domestic freight statistics are used by public and private policy-makers for planning, forecasting and evaluating transportation needs.

Data presented in the preliminary report are subject to revision based upon additional processing and analysis to be conducted during 1999. Final reports at the national, state and regional levels will be released beginning in late 1999.

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Estimates from the 1997 Commodity Flow Survey are subject to sampling and nonsampling error. Sources of nonsampling error include errors of response, nonreporting and coverage. Measures of sampling variability, presented as coefficients of variation and standard errors, are shown in the tables in the report.

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