



# Western Illinois University

**THE IIRA: PROMOTING LOCAL RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN ILLINOIS**  
**PRESENTATION TO THE IBHE FACULTY ADVISORY COUNCIL—APRIL 21, 2023**

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**Western Illinois University**  
**Macomb, IL 61455**

# Purpose

- Provide an overview of the Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs (IIRA).
- Discuss connection between Illinois demographic change and economic development.
- Connect our work to the IBHE Faculty Advisory Council's 2019 position paper:
  - ***Higher Education Benefits Us All.***

# Outline

- 1. Context for Rural Development.**
- 2. Overview of the IIRA.**
- 3. Strategies for Rural Development:**
  - Local
  - State
  - Federal
- 4. Conclusion and Discussion.**

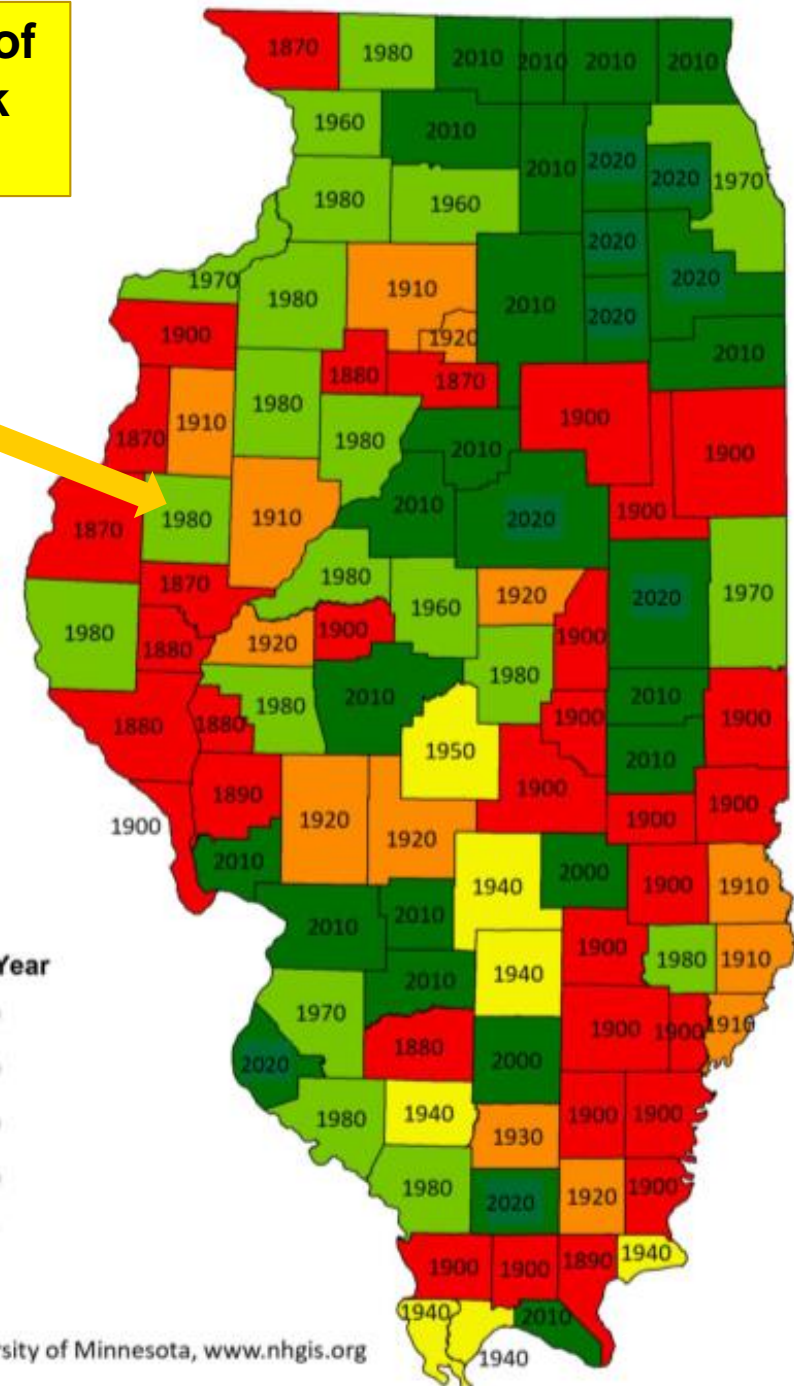
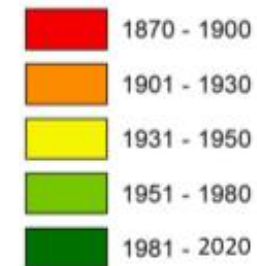
# 1. Geographic Context

- **Rural community challenges:**
  - Decades of rural depopulation
  - Youth outmigration
  - Aging population
  - Digital divide
  - Declining tax base
  - Health care access issues
  - Educational access issues
  - Main Street Economy
  - Loss of anchor institutions
  - Rural and urban manufacturing and workforce development challenges
- **Farm Belt and Rust Belt.**
  - Struggled since the 1980s (or longer)
  - What are the options?

Census Year of  
County Peak  
Population

WIU

Peak Population Year



# Getting Real About Rural America

Nobody knows how to reverse the heartland's decline.



Politically, rural America is increasingly a world apart. Maddie McGarvey for The New York Times

March 18, 2019



By Paul Krugman  
Opinion Columnist



# If Your Town Is Failing, Just Go

By KEVIN D. WILLIAMSON | October 6, 2015 8:00 AM



Downtown Booneville, Ky., in 2012. (Mario Tama/Getty)

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A prescription for impoverished communities

## 2. IIRA: Push Back Against the Negative Narrative

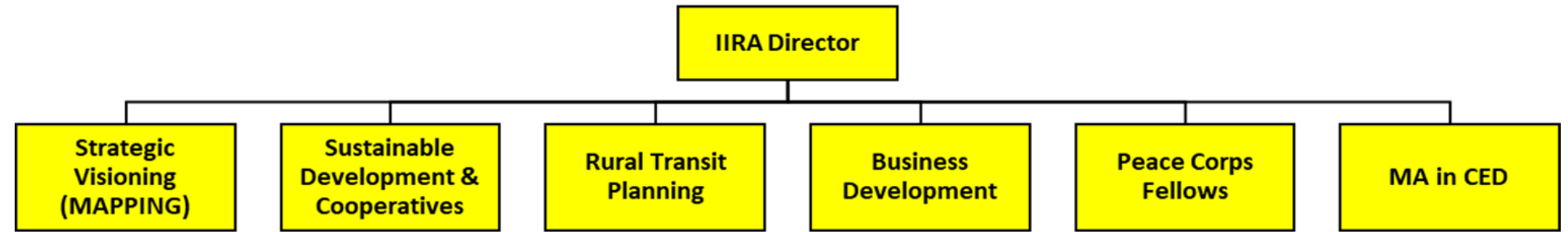
- Easy to point out **needs** of rural communities and Rustbelt cities.
- Can we help places identify their **assets**?
  - Help communities adopt a “Glass half full” mentality.
- ABCD or Asset-Based Community Development.
  - **Goal:** Help places design and implement CED strategies.
  - **Strategy:** Build on community **assets** rather than **needs**.
- Also borrow ideas from **Design Thinking** or Human Centered Design.
- The IIRA can help communities with this approach.
- Solution-oriented “think and do” tank.
- Confront pessimism and the underlying “psychology of decline.”

## 2. Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs

- IIRA founded in 1989 as a Research, Teaching, and Outreach Center at WIU.
- Governor's Executive Order recognizes IIRA as the ***"State's academic clearinghouse for rural development data and initiatives."***
- Support the Governor's Rural Affairs Council – Chaired by the Lt. Governor.
- **Statewide mandate:** Rural Illinois community economic development.
- 20 FTE and budget of \$2.5m (\$1.75m raised externally)—USDA, DCEO, EDA, IDOT, IDoA, USAID, SBA, AmeriCorps, Google, and other entities.
- IIRA is a ***tenure-granting*** academic unit at WIU, reporting to the Provost.
- **Website:** <http://www.iira.org>

# 2. IIRA Outreach: How can we help communities thrive?

**Planning + Plan Implementation = ABCD**



**(1) Strategic Visioning**

- Where are we now?
- Where do we want to be?
- How do we get there?

**Goal:**  
*Create a set of prioritized CED objectives through a grassroots consensus-based process.*



**(2) Technical Assistance**

- Business Planning
- Business Retention & Expansion (BR&E)
- Cooperative Development
- Economic / Fiscal Impact Analysis
- Education / School – Community Relations
- Entrepreneurship
- Feasibility Studies
- Geographic Information Systems (GIS)
- Health and Housing
- Implementation Planning
- International Trade
- Labor Market Analysis
- Renewable Energy (Wind, Bio-energy, Solar)
- Research / Survey Design & Deployment
- Retail Trade Analysis
- Sustainable Development



**(3) Implementation**

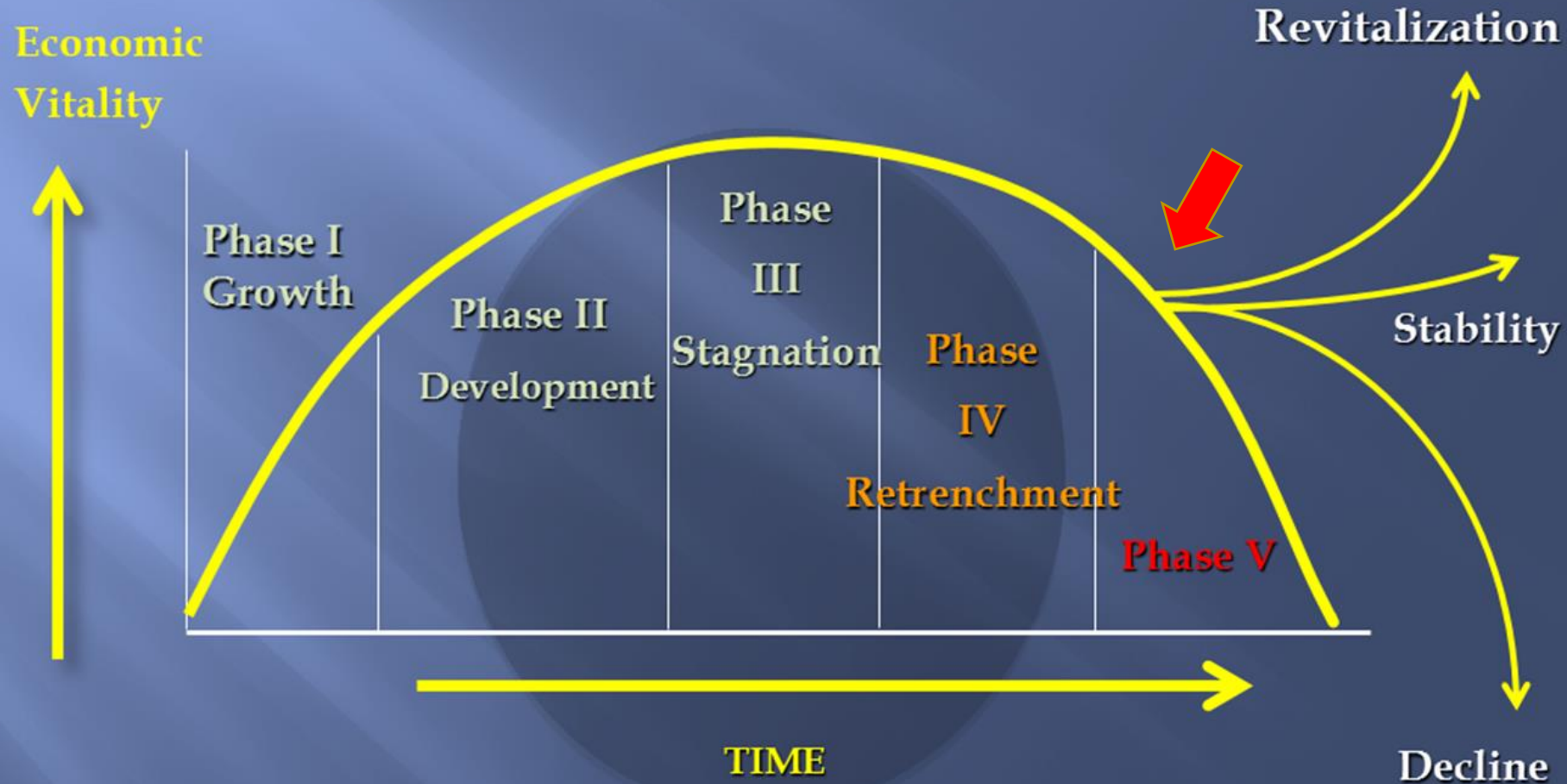
- Peace Corps Fellows
- IIRA Staff Follow-up
- AmeriCorps VISTA
- Volunteer Training
- Leadership Training
- Statewide Conference
- Regional Workshops
- Midwest CDI
- MA in CED
- Online materials
- Partners: UI Extension, USDA...

**Outcome:**  
*Improve the quality of life for the residents of rural Illinois and beyond.*





# Community Life Cycle Model



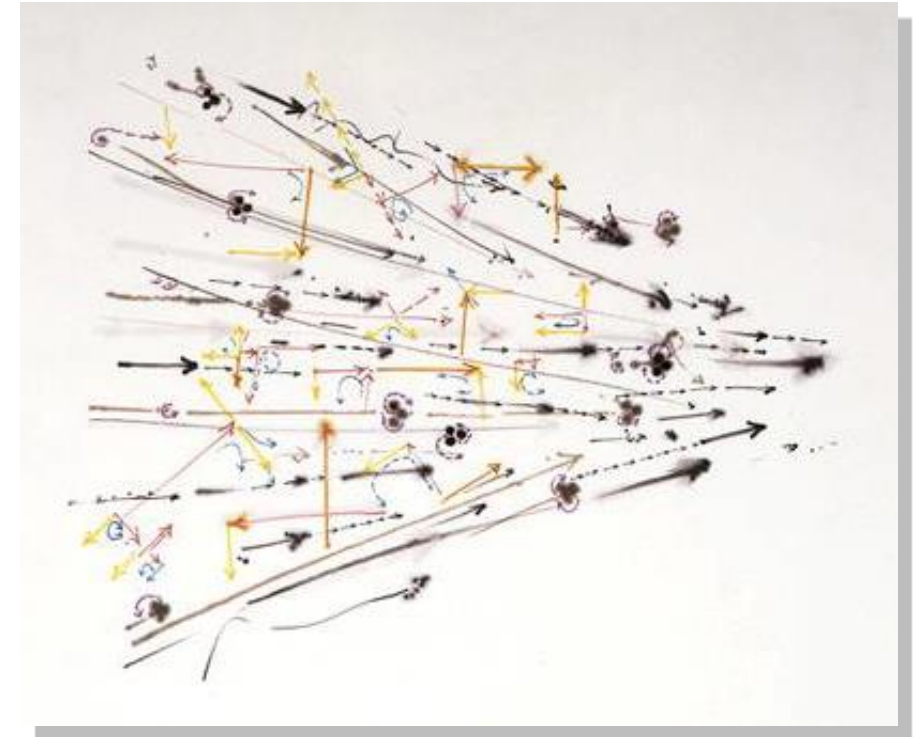
Darling (1994)

Many communities have experienced decades of population and quality of life decline.

# MAPPING: What does strategic visioning do?

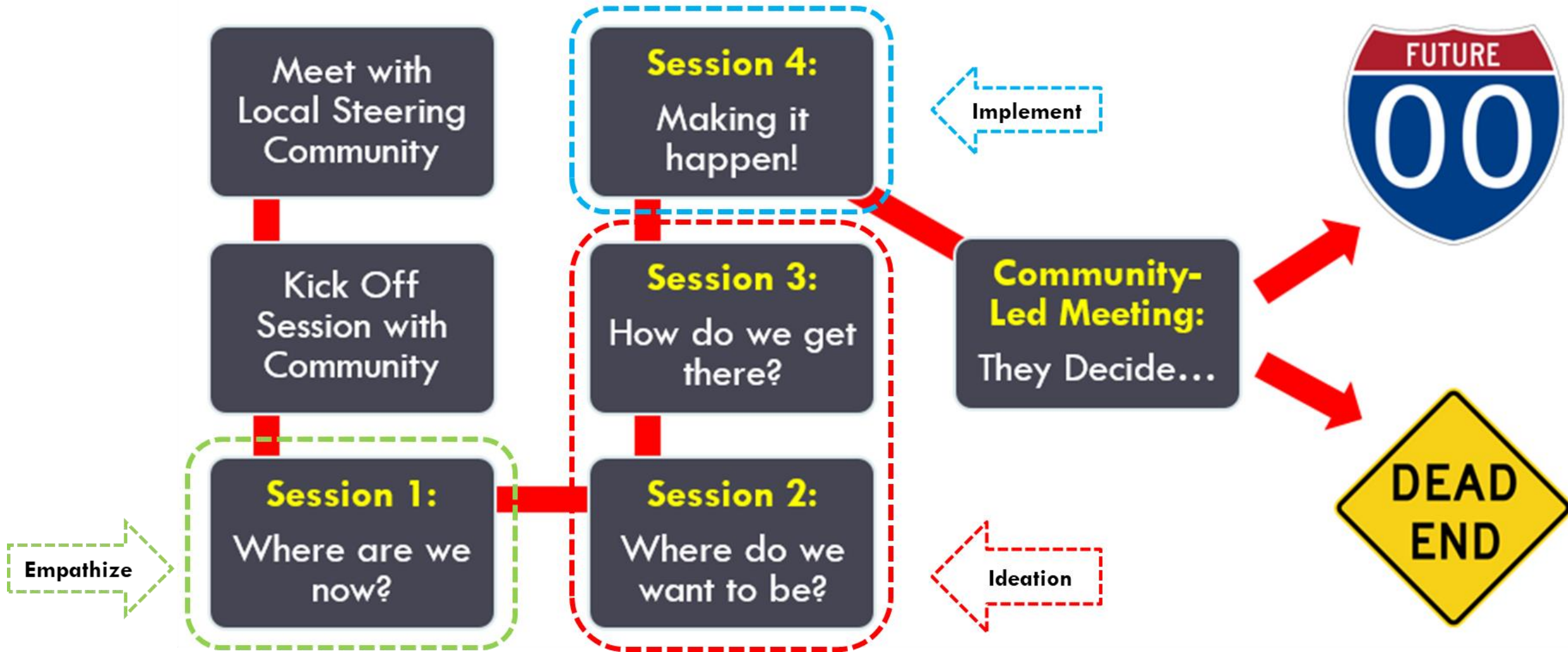


It can transform a community filled with conflicting visions and agendas.....



...into a community with a shared vision that has been generated through consensus.

# MAPPING: How does strategic visioning work?



# Strasburg Action Plan 2007

## Vision

Strasburg is RIGHT! in the Middle of Everything. Centrally located with recreation all around—we remain a cozy, quaint, and quiet community of warmhearted, caring people firmly grounded in faith and history. Our vision thrives on being on the edge of innovation—a progressive town whose dedication is moving us into the future. Known for its small town values, Strasburg is the RIGHT! place for businesses and families to locate as infrastructure improves and educational opportunities abound.

## High Priority Goals

### Goal 1:

Strasburg is the place where businesses come and entrepreneurship is encouraged. With an increase in the number of businesses, the tax base is revitalized.

### Entrepreneurship

### Goal 2:

Strasburg has the best schools in the nation, as well as the most educated workforce.

### Education

### Goal 3:

Strasburg has a wealth of spacious lots available to develop family oriented homes in a quiet, picturesque community.

### Housing

### Goal 4:

Strasburg boasts state of the art infrastructure.

### Infrastructure

### Goal 5:

Strasburg is known throughout the state as a great place to be from as a result of an inspiring trademark and top notch marketing.

### Branding

## Strategies

Focus on attracting/creating a “food” or “drinking and eating” business

Focus on increasing parental involvement

Set up a new subdivision and secure funding for development

Focus on water and sewer infrastructure

Focus on creating an active beautification effort with a visual trademark

## Projects

- Recruit a convenience store
  - Research Limited Liability Corporation or Cooperative
  - Contact a person in the convenience store business as a mentor or advisor
  - Create a survey
  - Secure funding from local bank and investors
  - Obtain property
  - Make plans and begin work

- Creation / Formation of PTO/PTA/TVA
  - Talk with Brenda Diehl—PTA field Representative
  - Obtain Starter Kit PTO/PTA
  - Combine and join efforts
  - Obtain input from students

- Create TIF District
  - Contact other communities who have created TIF Districts
  - Hire economic developer / consultant
  - Set up a new subdivision
  - Identify and market available lots
- Conduct a housing survey
  - Use to secure state/federal funding and grants
  - Use information to plan for future housing projects

- Lift Station and Sewer Lagoon
  - Educate community about problem
  - Discuss cost of fixing the problem
  - Conduct an income survey
  - Correspond with State Legislators

- Develop visual trademark
  - Develop choices of specific trademark
  - Share with public
  - Determine estimated costs
  - Examine possible funding—fundraisers, sponsorships
- New decorated water tower
  - Meet with town board and infrastructure committee about our desire
  - Determine costs
  - Contact painter
- Develop a brochure and website
  - Complete beautification projects to feature town
  - Develop budget
  - Solicit advertisers
  - Get ideas from other towns

## Action Teams

(Convenor noted in italics)

*Gary Kull*      Shane Corley  
*Cinda Held*      Nate Wascher  
 Gary Brehmer      Brad Friese  
 Linda Oakley      Wayne Wirth  
 Amie Corley      Mark Luce  
 Bob Schlechte

*Evelyn Augenstein*      Michael Mohr  
*Jodie Quast*      Chris Kramer  
 Esther Becker      Ramona Radloff  
 Carmen Mars      Cody Locke  
 Eli Dollarhide      Chad Smith  
 Tami Mathis      Molly Manhart  
 Alicia Kessler

*Michael Antonacci*      Karen Kull  
*Barry Wittenberg*      Wayne Wirth  
 Janet Antonacci      Mark Luce  
 Doug Quast  
 Gary Kull  
 Greg Spannagel

*Steven Becker*      Chris Kessler  
*Larry Giertz*      Ron Mulvaney  
 Dave Ballinger      Dean Kessler  
 Doug Quast  
 Jason Durbin  
 Monte Mars

*Sarah Gracey*      Patsy Lenz  
*Lisa Shelton*      Chris Storm  
 Esther Becker      Carmen Mars  
 Jodi Quast      Shelby Storm  
 Laura Dollarhide      Tami Mathis  
 Lisa Rincker      Wayne Wirth  
 Karen Kull      Michael Mohr  
 Bob Roley

Increasingly specific

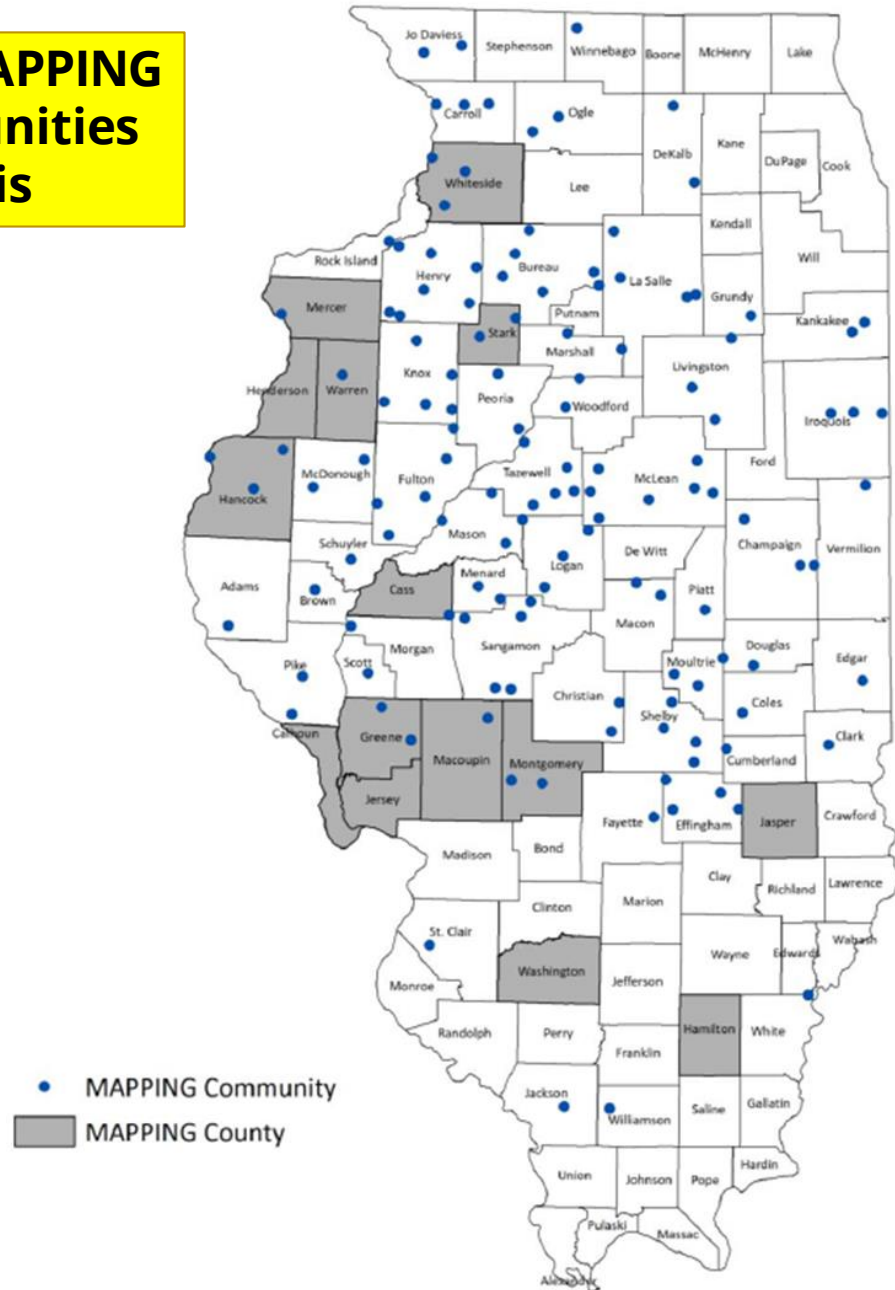
## 2. Strasburg Community Outcomes by 2017

- **Community innovation requires collaboration.**
  - 10 years between visioning processes (2007 to 2017).
  - Dependent on volunteers and robust local leadership.
- **Strasburg innovation used local assets:**
  - ABCD: Asset Based Community Development.
  - TIF (Tax Increment Financing) district to raise funds.
  - Built 8-house residential subdivision.
  - 24-hour fitness center is former school gym.
  - Recruited a gas station / convenience store / restaurant.
  - Renovated community center.
  - Created a Community Foundation.
  - ***CED is hard work.***

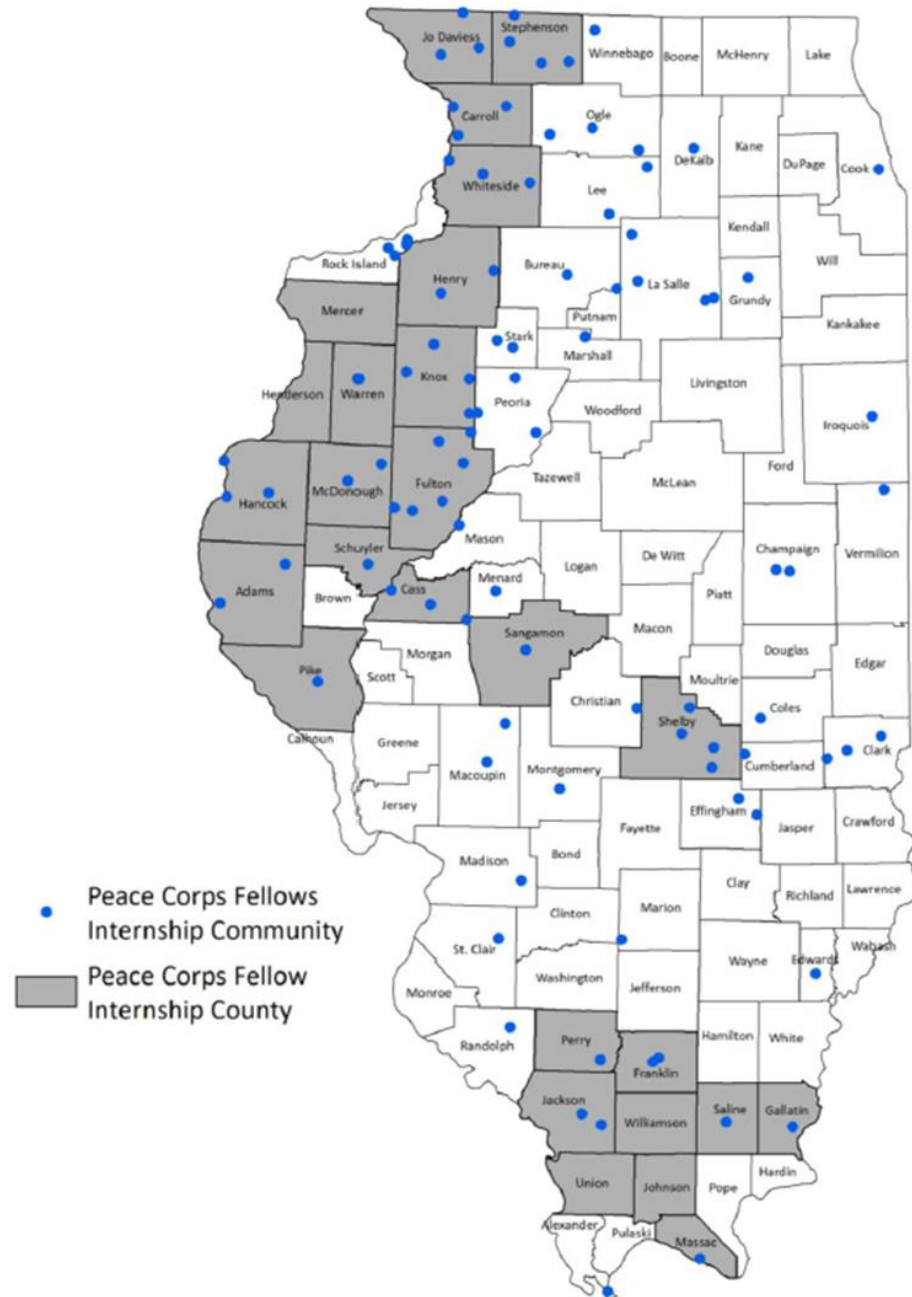


# MAPPING Communities, 1990 to 2021

**140+ MAPPING  
Communities  
in Illinois**



# Peace Corps Fellows Communities, 1995 to 2021



## 2. Recent IIRA + Community Outcomes

- **Rushville.** The **\$7,000,000 Rushville Fitness** center opened up in November 2021. This project emerged as a priority goal after Rushville went through the MAPPING process. Here is a newspaper account explaining how the IIRA MAPPING process was the catalyst for this project: <https://www.myjournalcourier.com/news/article/Anonymous-donor-antes-up-for-fitness-center-14001118.php>.
- **Dieterich.** The “Movin' Dieterich” MAPPING group has raised over **\$3 million for their recreation/child care complex**, with Wright's Furniture family recently donating \$300,000, giving them naming rights: <https://www.facebook.com/DieterichCommunityCenter/>. This news report documents how the MAPPING program helped Dieterich secure a \$2,000,000 grant from the state of Illinois: [https://www.effinghamdailynews.com/news/local\\_news/state-awards-dieterich-2m-grant-for-community-center/article\\_e6dca960-883a-11eb-b2c9-fb28bb0ba7c5.html](https://www.effinghamdailynews.com/news/local_news/state-awards-dieterich-2m-grant-for-community-center/article_e6dca960-883a-11eb-b2c9-fb28bb0ba7c5.html).
- **Pana.** “Pana Pride” completed an update in November 2021 and completed a successful “quick win” project, raising **\$72,000 for their Christmas lights** display in 2021: [https://www.wandtv.com/news/pana-pride-collects-72k-for-holiday-lights-display/article\\_add37786-53e9-11ec-b0af-bb9924f897d1.html](https://www.wandtv.com/news/pana-pride-collects-72k-for-holiday-lights-display/article_add37786-53e9-11ec-b0af-bb9924f897d1.html).
- **Hillsboro.** Hillsboro's Hilltop **Coop co-working space / business incubator** recently opened. The MAPPING program helped Hillsboro start this project: <https://www.thejournal-news.net/stories/the-coop-officially-opens-in-downtown-hillsboro,74779>. Here is the website: <https://www.thehilltopcoop.com/>.
- **Pittsfield.** The “Picture Pittsfield” group that formed out of the Pittsfield MAPPING process and the City completed a new walking path. The “Picture Pittsfield” group helped to raise **\$18,000 for the project**: <https://www.myjournalcourier.com/news/article/Pittsfield-finishing-up-new-walking-path-16483773.php>.
- **Winchester.** Helped to start a **rural grocery store** cooperative to address rural food desert issues. This is one of four that my colleague Sean Park has started since 2018. The *New York Times* reported on this effort: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/05/us/rural-farm-market.html>.
- **Mattoon.** Mattoon went through our MAPPING strategic visioning process and hosted a Peace Corps Volunteer. Their “Mattoon in Motion” initiative the grew out of the strategic planning process secured a **\$250,000 Google Impact Challenge Award**: <https://chicago.suntimes.com/2019/2/17/18314029/google-reveal-downstate-group-wins-250k-tech-giant-expanding-workforce-here>. Their “Move to Mattoon” initiative led by our Peace Corps Fellow was just covered by *Fortune Magazine*: <https://fortune.com/2022/07/29/cities-and-towns-paying-remote-workers-to-move/>.
- *I have fabulous colleagues...*

# Great Scott Market, Winchester, IL



Source: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/05/us/rural-farm-market.html>



# Rural Fresh Markets

Award Category:	Place
Submitted By:	<a href="#">Western Illinois University, Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs</a>
Program Info:	<a href="#">Learn More</a>



### Awards Quick Links

- [About the Awards](#)
- [This Year's Finalist](#)
- [UEDA Summit Inf](#)





## Rural ED Conference

The annual Rural Economic Development conference is held each year in the spring. Find out more about this event now.

[Find out more »](#)

## Master Degree in CED

Get a degree at WIU with the Master degree in Community and Economic Development (CED).

[Find out more »](#)

## Midwest CDI

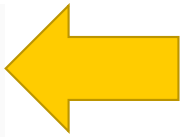
The Midwest Community Development Institute (Midwest CDI) provides top-notch training to those who are actively engaged in building a vibrant and better community.

[Find out more »](#)

## Publications/Research

Get access to the entire IIRA publication and research library. The library includes work done since 1994 to our most recent publications.

[Find out more »](#)



### [Employers looking to tap the 'labor reserve' for new workers may need to be willing to meet them halfway on their needs](#)

Dr. Adee Athiyaman reports that about 26,000 rural Illinoisans are classified as part of the "labor reserve," or nonparticipants in the workforce who would join under more favorable conditions. But enticing them to apply for a job may require some accommodation of their needs.

### [Some Empirical Aspects of Manufacturing Sector During the Covid-19 Pandemic](#)


Did Covid-19 shutter proportionally more small businesses (including manufacturing businesses) in the metro or the nonmetro? How do rural manufacturers in Illinois adapt to and cope with the threats of Covid-19? Is variability in adapting to Covid-19 workplace health and safety measures correlated with the characteristics of the business and the sociodemographic of the business location? This paper addresses these and other similar questions using a combination of primary and secondary data. [Read the entire report...](#)

### [Rural Doctors Are Using Influence To Get Their Patients To Take The COVID-19 Vaccine](#)

Many county health departments are under-resourced, facing significant staffing shortages or don't have the expertise to create messaging about the vaccine, according to Adee Athiyaman, a researcher at the Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs. [Read the full story...](#)

### [Grocery store closing is part of a bigger issue](#)

The current situation in Nokomis is what some researchers, including Western Illinois University's Sean Park, call a 'food swamp.' Park said, "...the food that you have access to is at the local gas station or the dollar store...What you're getting isn't healthy, fresh foods; it's usually beef jerky or chips or soda." [Read the full story here...](#)

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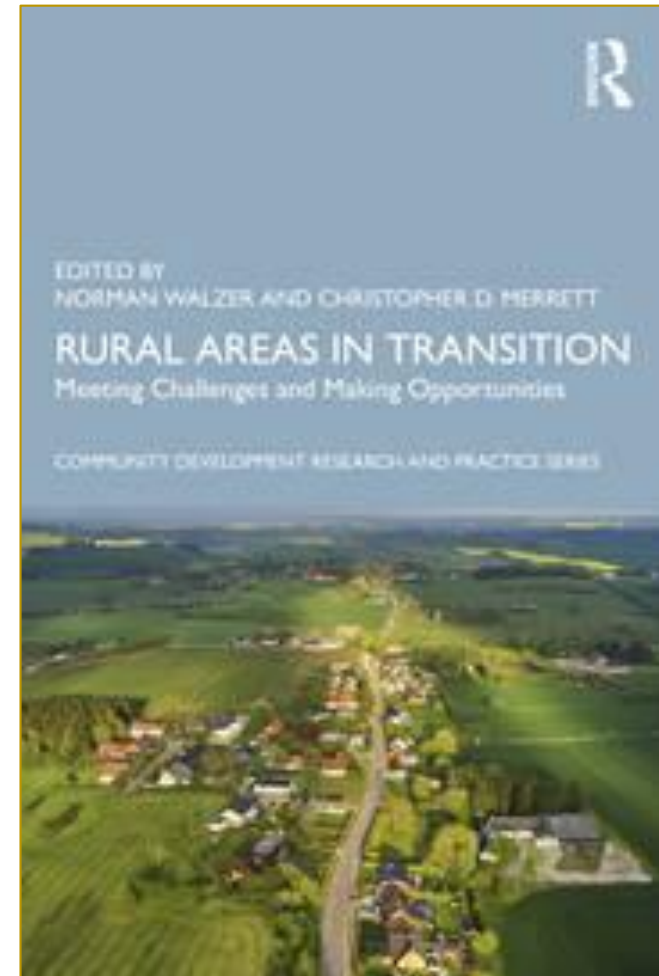
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powered by MailChimp!

Source: <https://www.iira.org>

# Recent IIRA Research

- Impacts of **Automation** on Employment: Metro vs Nonmetro IL.
- An Analysis of the Attributes of New and **Beginning Farmers** in IL.
- US **Rural Education** in Charts, 2000-2022.
- Coronavirus **Vaccine Refusal**: Metro vs. Nonmetro Differences.
- Supplier-Induced Demand and **Telemedicine** in Rural Illinois.
- The **Opioid Epidemic** and its Impact on Labor Productivity in IL.
- **Social Capital** Manifestations in Illinois Counties.
- **Dollar Stores** in Illinois: Trading Areas, Consumer Behavior, and Impacts on Commercial Structure and Incumbent Retailers.
- Source: <https://www.iira.org>



# Rural Research Report



Fall, 2019  
Volume 29, Issue 1

By  
Adee Athiyaman, Professor,  
Chris Merrett, Director  
Tolulope Olupona, Graduate Asst.  
Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs

Co-Editors  
Adee Athiyaman, PhD  
Chris Merrett, PhD

## Editorial Review Board

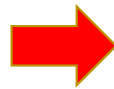
Christopher Connor PhD  
Tim Collins PhD  
Kim Pierce  
Andrea Runge

## Dollar Stores in Illinois: Trading Areas, Consumer Behavior, and Impacts on Commercial Structure and Incumbent Retailers

### 1.0 Introduction

The structure of the US retail sector is changing, the exit or closing rate of US malls has tripled in the last few years and the 25% of the remaining malls are expected to close in the next seven years (Zomok, 2018). In contrast, the brick and mortar, small format, retail stores are growing eight to nine percent annually (Mergent, 2019). The growth in small format stores can be attributed to at least two factors: demographic shifts and changing consumer demand.

According to the US Census Bureau around 82% of the U.S. population lives in urban areas, up from 64% in 1950. For retailers this demographic shift translates to a business model focused on small stores, urban areas present limited real estate. Furthermore, present day consumers tend to spend less time in stores, online purchases replace more of the routine and stock-up shopping trips (Ogle, 2017). For the quick trips, in which a small amount of money is spent on immediate consumption, customers visit small format stores which support customers' on-the-go lifestyle (Ogle, 2017).



Video Ad Feedback



## Dollar stores are everywhere. That's a problem for poor Americans

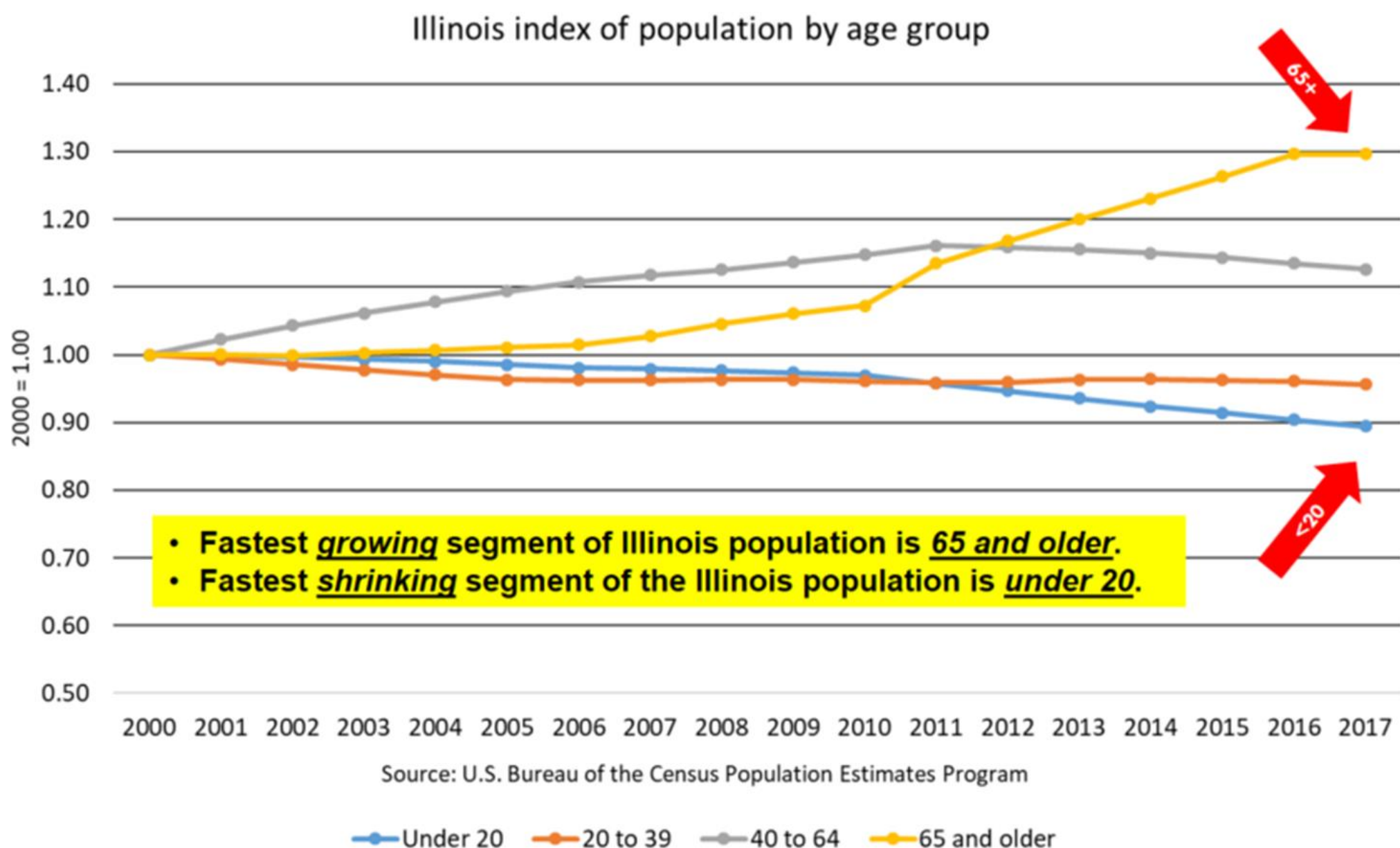
By [Nathaniel Meyersohn](#), CNN Business

Updated 9:43 AM EDT, Fri July 19, 2019

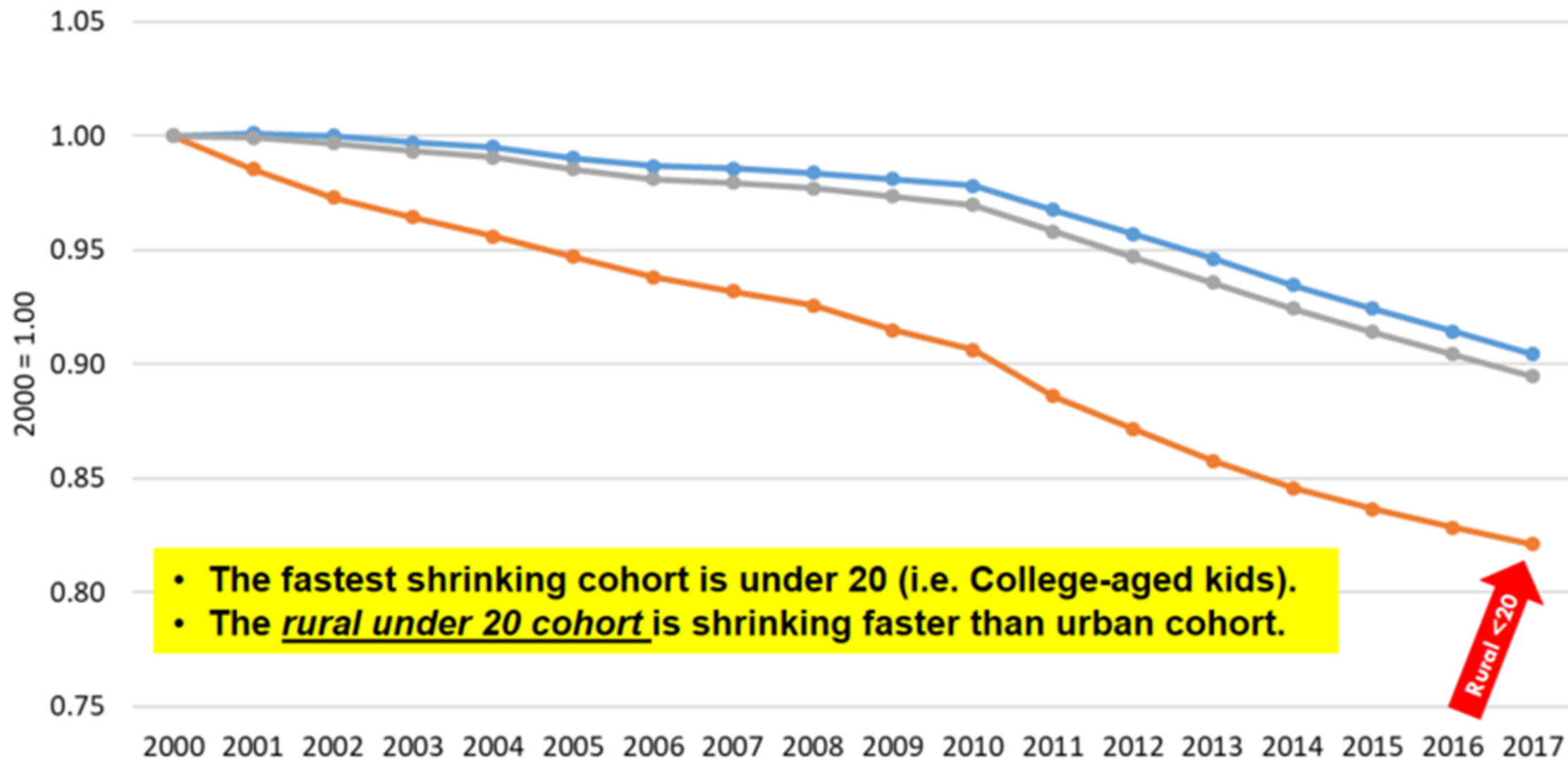
# 3. Strategies for Rural Development

- Using Strasburg as a benchmark, ***we are a success!***
  - Population grew from 467 (2010) to 531 (2020).
  - However, despite our best efforts, other IIRA community clients have declined.
  - Rushville **declined** from 3,192 (2010) to 3,005 (2020).
- Local CED efforts are a necessary ***but insufficient response.***
- Many issues affecting rural development are driven by forces beyond the local: ***State, National, and Global.***
  - Rural depopulation and youth outmigration.
  - Loss of anchor institutions (e.g. grocery stores, schools).
  - Digital divide is real (i.e. both broadband and cell phone coverage).
  - Education gap (e.g. funding and student performance).
  - Workforce development and labor shortages.
  - Technological change increases farm productivity but farm number decline.
  - The more rural a county is, the more likely it is to be in decline.

# Local Development Strategies are not Enough to Address These Demographic Trends



# Illinois Index of Population Under 20 Years



- The fastest shrinking cohort is under 20 (i.e. College-aged kids).
- The rural under 20 cohort is shrinking faster than urban cohort.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census Population Estimates Program

—●— Metropolitan   —●— Nonmetropolitan   —●— State

# 3. For the Future: Look Beyond the Local

- **What policy changes at the state and federal level can help?**
- Demographics might be the most important issue to address:
  - Persistent Rural Depopulation
  - Youth Outmigration
  - Workforce Development Challenges
  - **Rural Illinois has experienced a “demographic cliff” for decades.**
- Where will the next generation of farmers, business owners, teachers, and other community leaders come from if we don't address these demographic issues?
- ***Higher Education Benefits Us All (2019)*** might provide direction.
  - Investment in Higher Education.
  - Serves as a demographic and economic development catalyst.



# 3. Higher Education Benefits All of Us

## 1. Higher education benefits society by:

- producing a highly educated workforce.
- serving as an economic engine and a backbone of Illinois' economic development.
- being an incubator of innovative ideas in fields as diverse as technology, health care, commerce, and agriculture.
- making Illinois an innovator and a leader.

## 2. Higher education needs legislative and financial support that provides students the opportunity to complete programs and degrees in Illinois.

- Higher education is a public good.
- When we adequately fund higher education, **we will reverse outmigration**. Students earning degrees in Illinois are more likely to work and raise families in Illinois after graduation. **We cannot afford a brain drain.**
- Today's students should not be saddled with a **crushing debt** that older Illinois citizens did not have. We need to treat the next generation fairly.
- Illinois should ensure academic opportunities by **offering financial packages that competitively match out-of-state offers.**

# 3. State Policy: Higher Education



- **Standard *business development* strategies include:**
  - State leaders go on trade missions to recruit factories and jobs.
  - Tax breaks and other incentives to keep or recruit ***businesses***.
- **In Illinois, we need to invest in students like we invest in businesses.**
  - Universities from other states come to Illinois and recruit our students away.
  - We are losing our best and brightest to other states.
  - Illinois funding for higher education peaked in 2002.
  - State Higher Education Policy is failing downstate and rural Illinois.
- **We need to compete for students like we try to compete for business.**
  - Illinois college tuition should be less expensive than neighboring states.
  - Budget impasse devastated higher education in our state.
  - Illinois has driven hundreds of thousands of students to other states.
  - 16,461 students (net) left Illinois for college in 2016 alone.
  - 75% of New Trier college-bound HS Students left the state in 2016.
  - The way we treat higher education is driving depopulation especially downstate.
  - Lower tuition in Illinois would:
    - Help keep Illinois students at home and recruit students from other states.
    - Reduce student debt to help them buy homes and settle in the state.

# University Costs Prompt Entire Families to Leave Illinois



News / Opinion / Editorials

## Editorial: Illinois exodus: Flight of the expats

### The Carpenters

For former Naperville resident Bruce Carpenter and his wife, the decision to move out of Illinois rested on a number: \$52,000. That's roughly how much they saved in college tuition costs by turning down engineering school for their son at the University of Illinois and moving south.

They bought a larger, more expensive home in Atlanta, in a neighborhood with high-performing schools and property taxes half of Naperville's. Paying tuition for their son, now a freshman at the University of South Carolina, is significantly less than in-state tuition at the U. of I. would have been, due in part to scholarship money and grades that qualify him for the in-state rate even though his family's in Georgia.

Not only are Illinois university tuition prices high, a state budget impasse that lasted until July — and ended with a 32 percent income tax hike — tightened the screws on schools that rely heavily on state funding. Freshmen enrollment at Eastern, Western, Southern and Illinois State universities dropped substantially last year, a consequence of the Illinois exodus.

The New York Times

## Lessons From Rust-Belt Cities That Kept Their Sheen

By Eduardo Porter

May 1, 2018

Midwestern states like Illinois, Wisconsin and Missouri, which are starving many of their public universities of funds, the takeaway would be: Stop.



## Growing brain drain: University of Alabama's gain in drawing Illinois students is a loss for Illinois



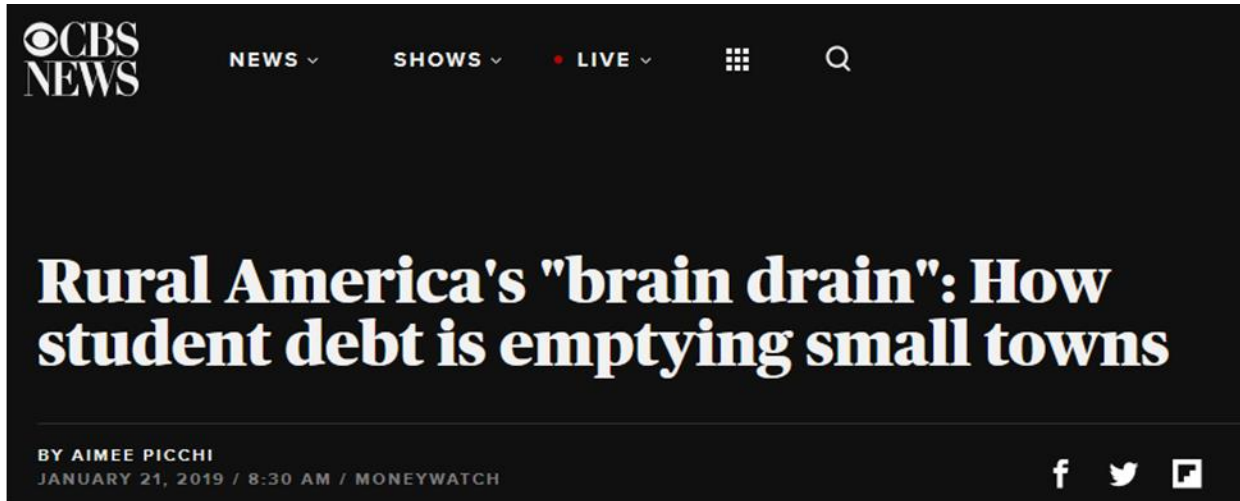
Jessica Tobin, a freshman from Oak Lawn, is studying chemical engineering at the University of Alabama. Illinois is one of Alabama's biggest feeder states and is the top supplier outside the South. (Gary Crosby Jr. / Chicago Tribune)

## Letter: Why I won't go to college in Illinois

APRIL 4, 2018, 2:29 PM


I couldn't agree more with your editorial "Illinois Exodus: Flight of the expats." As an 18-year-old who is about to embark on my endeavors as an adult, I too am fleeing Illinois for many of the same reasons as the families you interviewed.

The first is college tuition, cited by the Carpenter family. I am one of the only people I know who did not apply to University of Illinois or any Illinois school for that matter. The Illinois school system is broke and gives very little merit aid to in-state residents.



## Rural America's student debt problem

Rural America is increasingly old, shrinking in population and falling behind when it comes to its share of educated residents. About 19 percent of rural residents held college degrees in 2016, compared with 33 percent of urban residents, a gap that's widened over the past few decades, the Agriculture Department said last year.

To be sure, the Federal Reserve said it couldn't determine whether the student loan debt is causing young college grads to move to cities. Nevertheless, the trend is notable: About half of rural residents who took out student loans remained in those areas six years later, compared with two-thirds of rural residents who didn't take out loans. And the grads with the most debt were the most likely to leave, they found. 

There's a good reason why young workers with student loans would head for the big city. Cumulative job growth since 2009 -- after the recession ended -- surged almost 14 percent in cities with at least 1 million residents, compared with 2.7 percent for rural areas and small cities, according to Goldman Sachs.

Source: <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/rural-americas-brain-drain-how-student-debt-is-emptying-small-towns/>

# 3. Local / State Policy: Community Foundations

- **Mechanism to capture wealth as estate is transferred.**
  - Legacy – Seniors bequeath estate to survivors but leave a portion of their estate (0.5%, 1.0%, 5.0%, or more) to ***local*** community foundation.
  - State of Nebraska and Iowa are far ahead of Illinois.
  - Need Illinois State action to promote community foundations.
  - **Illinois rural youth outmigration = rural wealth outmigration.**
- **How are community foundation funds used?**
  - Health care (e.g. new MRI machine for hospital).
  - Education (e.g. K-12, higher education / ***promise programs***).
  - Business (e.g. RLF, façade upgrades, broadband, entrepreneurship).
  - Quality of life (e.g. playground, recreation center).
  - ***Preserve downstate wealth*** to spur downstate CED.
- **Several community foundations serve downstate.**
  - Community Foundation of Central Illinois.
  - Community Foundation for the Land of Lincoln.

EDGAR COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION  
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## STEM LAB

Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics



# 3. Promise Programs

- **Strategies created by local communities to send local students to college tuition-free.**
  - Strategy to keep students local.
  - Improve local workforce.
  - Students attend community colleges and universities in region.
- **Funding comes in many forms:**
  - Community Foundations.
  - Wealthy benefactors.
  - Local tax revenues.
  - Galesburg, Quincy, Peoria, Rockford, Palatine, and Chicago have Promise Programs.
  - **State Action:** Could help smallest communities use local sales taxes to support Promise Programs.



## The Town That Decided to Send All Its Kids to College

Residents of Baldwin, Michigan, pooled together their money to provide scholarships for everyone, and it changed the town profoundly.

ALANA SEMUELS | AUG 18, 2015 | BUSINESS

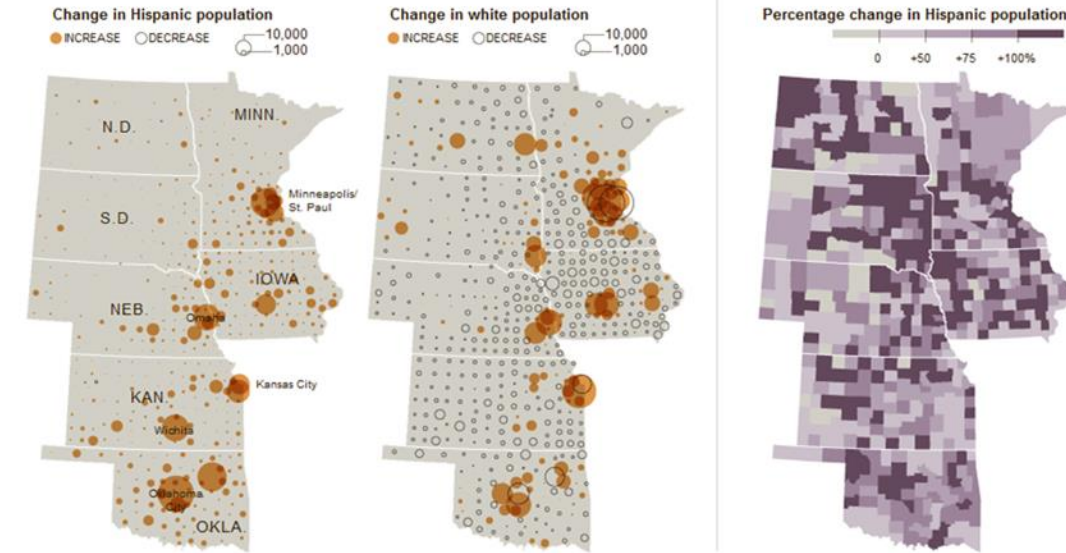
# 3. Federal Support for Rural Development

- Federal reforms needed to reverse downstate / rural decline. Two suggestions include:
- ***Increase support for USDA Rural Development (USDA-RD) programs.***
  - Paradox of federal support for rural communities.
    - **USDA** investments in agricultural exports and efficiencies spur farm consolidation and rural depopulation.
    - Majority of farm households need off-farm employment – ***need diverse rural economy.***
    - **USDA-RD** investments support **rural non-farm economy** – community facilities, water, entrepreneurship.
  - Recent Farm Bills increase money for programs that promote export and efficiencies and cut support for USDA-RD and non-farm rural development.
    - **This only accelerates rural depopulation.**
- ***Immigration Reform***
  - Research based on 2010 US Census showed that many rural counties had stabilized or even slightly increased population due to influx of immigrants from Mexico and Central America.
  - Mayor from Ulysses, Kansas, acknowledged that rural depopulation is a huge problem. Hispanic influx has overall been a good thing for rural places.
  - He said that, “this immigration is happening and the communities that extend a hand are going to survive” (Sulzberger 2011).

Sulzberger, A.G. 2011. Hispanics Reviving Faded Towns on the Plains. *The New York Times*. November 13, 2011. Available online: <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/14/us/as-small-towns-wither-on-plains-hispanics-come-to-the-rescue.html>.

## Changing Face of the Rural Plains

Growth in the population of Hispanics in the Great Plains — especially in rural areas, where even small growth can have an outside impact — is filling some of the void left by a declining white population. The Hispanic population in the seven Great Plains states shown below has increased 75 percent, while the overall population has increased just 7 percent. [Related Article »](#)



For generations, the story of the small rural town of the Great Plains, including the dusty tabletop landscape of western Kansas, has been one of exodus — of businesses closing, classrooms shrinking and, year after year, communities withering as fewer people arrive than leave and as fewer are born than are buried. That flight continues, but another demographic trend has breathed new life into the region.

## Hispanics Reviving Faded Towns on the Plains

By A. G. SULZBERGER NOV. 13, 2011



A game of pick-up basketball at the school gym at Kepley Middle School in Ulysses, Kan., where the Hispanic population is increasing. Steve Hebert for The New York Times

Hispanics are arriving in numbers large enough to offset or even exceed the decline in the white population in many places. In the process, these new residents are reopening shuttered storefronts with Mexican groceries, filling the schools with children whose first language is Spanish and, for now at least, extending the lives of communities that seemed to be staggering toward the grave.

The study, from the nonpartisan Chicago Council on Global Affairs, concludes that immigration has been “a demographic lifeline” that has helped several Midwestern cities partially reverse decades of population loss among native-born residents.

“For the cities of the Midwest, restricting current immigration levels is the last thing they need: an unnecessary tourniquet applied to a precious supply of new regional residents and workers,” reads the report, written by demographer Rob Paral, a non-resident fellow at the council.

## CITYLAB

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## The Rust Belt Needs Legal Immigration

RONALD BROWNSTEIN SEP 18, 2017

A new study finds that the Midwest is heavily dependent on this “demographic lifeline.”

The Rust Belt states that tipped the 2016 presidential election to Donald Trump could be among the biggest losers from the proposed reductions in legal immigration that he has endorsed, according to a [new study](#) released Monday.



# 4. Conclusion and Discussion

- Rural Illinois and other parts of the Midwest are losing population.
  - Rural places are shrinking faster than urban areas.
  - The loss of **young people** is the biggest problem (***at least IMHO***).
  - Current policies and recent actions have actually **accelerated outmigration** of young people from downstate and rural Illinois.
- Concern for rural and downstate Illinois should prompt us to implement plans and policies that address three things:
  1. Retain downstate people through local action.
  2. Implement state policy changes: Higher Education and Philanthropy.
  3. Recruit new people:
    - Immigration may replenish downstate places.
    - Is a more progressive immigration policy good rural development policy?
- If we don't address population decline, the **downward demographics** augur a dismal rural and downstate **economic destiny**.

# 4. Conclusion and Discussion

**Questions and Comments Welcomed**

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**Thank you**

