

## **THE FACTS: IMMIGRATION AND URBAN AND RURAL COMMUNITIES**



### **IMMIGRANTS DO NOT CAUSE INCREASES IN CRIME.**

Contrary to the stereotypes perpetuated by the media,<sup>1</sup> research indicates that higher levels of immigrants have either no effect on crime or are associated with lower levels of crime and violence.<sup>2</sup> In fact, the incarceration rate of those born in the U.S. (3.51%) is four times higher than that of the foreign-born (1.86%).<sup>3</sup> Non-Hispanic White natives are twice as likely to be incarcerated as first-generation immigrants.<sup>4</sup> An influx of new immigrants to high-crime communities may actually transform and revitalize disadvantaged neighborhoods.<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately, incarceration rates rise dramatically for second-generation immigrants,<sup>6</sup> indicating that assimilation to American culture is not always positive.

### **IMMIGRANTS ARE REVITALIZING METROPOLITAN AREAS NATIONWIDE AND IN MINNESOTA.**

The U.S. Census Bureau reports that “the foreign-born population is more concentrated than the native-born population in metropolitan areas and in their central cities”.<sup>7</sup> U.S. Census figures also indicate that without new immigrants, many metropolitan areas would have lost population in the 1990s, seriously impacting labor, new businesses, and the tax-base.<sup>8</sup> During the 1990s, immigrants made up 93.8% of the net growth in the labor force in Chicago.<sup>9</sup> Increasingly, however, immigrants and other minorities are populating the suburbs of nation’s largest urban centers, making up 27.3% of the suburban population, an 8% increase from 1990.<sup>10</sup> In fact, in the nation’s largest metro areas, the rate of immigrant population growth was 42% higher in the suburbs than in the central city.<sup>11</sup>

Minnesota’s urban and suburban communities also are prospering due to the contributions of new immigrants. Since the 1990s, the Twin Cities and surrounding suburbs like Bloomington, Richfield and others have been gaining approximately 12,000 people per year due to immigration.<sup>12</sup> As Todd Graham, the Metro Council research manager, noted, “Immigrant business owners, developers and households are the partners, customers or new residents that make the area really *live*.”<sup>13</sup> For instance, on a 1.8-mile segment of Lake Street in Minneapolis, there has been a 300% growth in new businesses as a result of Latino and Somali immigration to the area. Such vitality has not been seen in that area for decades.<sup>14</sup>

### **IMMIGRANTS ARE ESSENTIAL IN RURAL MINNESOTA WHERE THE POPULATION IS AGING AND IN DECLINE.**

Minnesota as a whole has an aging population, but this is especially true in rural Minnesota. All of the counties in which more than 20% of the population is over age 65 are in rural Minnesota.<sup>15</sup> While only 30% of the state’s population lives in rural Minnesota, 41% of the state’s elderly reside there.<sup>16</sup> Young adults are leaving rural Minnesota due to limited employment, housing, and higher educational and social opportunities. In fact, five times as many college graduates moved to the Twin Cities metro area from Greater Minnesota as did the reverse.<sup>17</sup> Forty-five Minnesota counties, especially in the southwestern part of the state, are expected to lose more than 10% of their population between 1995-2025.<sup>18</sup> Immigrants to the area may often reverse or slow down the population decline.<sup>19</sup>

### **SCHOOL DISTRICTS IN RURAL AREAS DEPEND ON THE ENROLLMENT OF IMMIGRANTS AND THEIR CHILDREN.**

The exodus of young adults from rural to metropolitan areas (out-migration) dramatically effects school enrollments. Due to low birth rates and out-migration, between 1984 and 1999, enrollment has dropped in 30 counties, most of which are located in the southern, western, and northern parts of Minnesota.<sup>20</sup> Drops in enrollment affect school funding and lead to consolidations.<sup>21</sup> The influx of immigrants and their children to a school system can shore up school enrollment. In the Minnesota River Valley region in the south-central region, Latino enrollment grew by 600% from 1985-2001. Not only have school closures and consolidations been averted there, but Latino students have added 8 million dollars to the budgets of that region’s school districts based on the 2001 funding formula.<sup>22</sup>

## **COMMUNITIES WITH FOOD PROCESSING PLANTS BENEFIT FROM IMMIGRATION.**

The food processing industry has grown into a multi-billion dollar business and has expanded dramatically in the Midwest. In Minnesota, the food processing sector, concentrated in the south-central region of the state, grew by 32.3% between 1988 and 1996 (compared to 21% nationally).<sup>23</sup> Latino, Asian and African immigrants are attracted to jobs in food processing because they do not require high-level skills or English proficiency.<sup>24</sup> Communities with large food processing plants have benefited from population and school district stabilization or growth due to the influx of immigrant workers and their families.<sup>25</sup>

## **REGION 9: A RURAL SUCCESS STORY IN THE MINNESOTA RIVER VALLEY**

Region 9, which includes the counties of Blue Earth, Brown, Faribault, LeSueur, Martin, Nicollet, Sibley, Waseca and Watonwan, had lost 5,659 residents from 1980-1990. By 2000, there were 6,469 new residents, of whom 77% were Latino.<sup>26</sup> Latinos in that region made up 33% of the employees in the food

processing industry. The Latino workforce directly and indirectly generated more than 7,800 additional jobs filled by non-Latinos and \$484 million in annual contributions to the local economy.<sup>27</sup> The state and local government has spent money to accommodate the social service needs of new immigrants in the region (\$24.5 million), but the tax revenue generated by the immigrant workforce is more than enough to cover the added expenses (\$45 million).<sup>28</sup>

## **IMMIGRATION HAS DRIVEN THE GROWTH IN THE HOUSING MARKET AND IS LINKED TO RISING PROPERTY VALUES.**

A study carried out over an 18-year period in Washington D.C. revealed a positive correlation between the number of immigrants in a neighborhood and increasing property values.<sup>29</sup> The housing market has also been bolstered by new immigrants who account for more than 1/3 of the household growth this decade and are expected to contribute even more in the future.<sup>30</sup> From 1998-2001, immigrants purchased about 8% of new homes and 11% of existing homes sold.<sup>31</sup> Van Davis, the president and chief executive of Century 21 Real Estate, predicts that the “gigantic growth of the Hispanic population – both from immigration and birthrate – will be the most significant factor in the first-time home market during the next decade”.<sup>32</sup> In 2000, immigrants made up 12% of the first-time home buyers.<sup>33</sup> Undocumented immigrants have low rates of homeownership, due to their legal status and economic characteristics. However, if the market were more accessible to them, there are an estimated 216,000 potential homeowners among Latino undocumented households.<sup>34</sup>

*“Regions that look on minority populations as an economic opportunity, not a problem, will thrive.”*

-Minnesota Planning Director Dean Barkley<sup>35</sup>



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For

## Sources for “Immigration and Rural and Urban Communities”

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<sup>2</sup> (when controlling for poverty and residential instability) Martinez, Ramiro Jr. *Coming to America: The Impact of the New Immigrants on Crime, Chapter 1*. Accessed in July, 2006 from <http://www.nyupress.org/webchapters/0814757049chapt1.pdf>.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Martinez, Ramiro Jr. *Coming to America: The Impact of the New Immigrants on Crime, Chapter 1*. Accessed in July, 2006 from <http://www.nyupress.org/webchapters/0814757049chapt1.pdf>.

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<sup>7</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. “Profile of the Foreign-Born Population in the United States 2000.” December, 2001. Accessed in July 2006 from <http://www.census.gov/prod/2002pubs/p23-206.pdf>.

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Proscio, Tony. “Taking It to the Street: How roadway design helped shape a neighborhood’s development.” April 2005. Accessed July, 2006 from [http://www.c-d-g.org/resources/transportation/guidelines\\_and\\_studies/LakeStreet/PLCP-intersection.pdf](http://www.c-d-g.org/resources/transportation/guidelines_and_studies/LakeStreet/PLCP-intersection.pdf).

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Minnesota Planning Critical Issues. “Implications of rural Minnesota’s changing demographics” July 2000. Accessed July 2006 at [http://www.mnplan.state.mn.us/pdf/2000/rural\\_01.pdf](http://www.mnplan.state.mn.us/pdf/2000/rural_01.pdf).

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