



New Resident Attraction

A Likely Entrepreneurial Development Opportunity Strategy Guide

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Our 40 years of rural community economic development work in North America is a rich learning experience. At e2, we have worked in nearly every rural region in the continental United States and many of the Canadian provinces. Our [Development Opportunity Profile](#) analysis has surfaced re-occurring likely entrepreneurial development opportunities universally available to most rural communities.

Strategy Defined

Oxford Languages defines strategy as... *“...a plan of action or policy designed to achieve a major or overall aim...”* Any strategy is a point-in-time plan for action. Just as startup entrepreneurs are encouraged to develop a venture plan, communities exploring tourism-based economic development should do the same. Your community’s tourism development strategy will change and evolve over time as new opportunities, priorities, and challenges emerge.

About our e2 Strategy Papers. At e2, we have been conducting opportunity analysis for rural communities and regions throughout North America for decades. This field-rooted work has identified and led e2 to create our 10 common and [Likely Entrepreneurial Development Opportunities](#), for many rural communities.

This strategy paper focuses on **New Resident Attraction, Development and Retention**, organized into the following sections:

- Likely Entrepreneurial Development Opportunities
- Two Related Development Frameworks
 - Rural Community Prosperity Development Framework
 - e2 Energizing Entrepreneurs Development Framework
- Imperative for Demographic Health
- Benefits of New Resident Attraction
- Entrepreneurial Development Opportunities
- Resources
- Growing a Genuine Welcoming Community





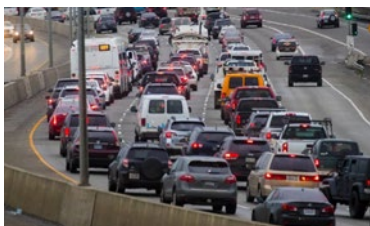
Remember Regional Development. While regional development is not one of our top 10 likely entrepreneurial development opportunities, we strongly recommend every rural community embrace, with other communities in their region of America, larger-scale regional development. When more communities in a region are thriving, opportunities are created for your community and your entrepreneurs.



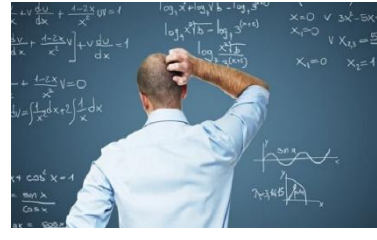


Additionally, growing entrepreneurial ecosystems is best done regionally, hopefully with state-level support. We recommend a top-down and bottom-up entrepreneurship strategy as outlined in our paper, [Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Building in Rural America, Four Decades of Learning](#).

e2's Likely Entrepreneurial Development Opportunities

Too many rural economies and societies are failing because of their narrow economies rooted in one to two changing economic sectors. Our paper, [Economic Crashes, Mini-Case Studies](#), illustrates the consequences of undiversified economies. Conversely, our story, [Ord, Nebraska, An Entrepreneurial Community](#), illustrates when a community diversifies its economy, it drives transformative change. Our likely entrepreneurial development opportunities can create genuine and robust strategies to grow a more diversified economy.

The following table provides brief descriptions of each of the top 10 development opportunities, with links to relevant strategy papers, as available.

	<p>Natural Resources. Much of rural America depends upon single natural resource industry economies (e.g., farming, mining, forestry, energy, etc.). While there are limited entrepreneurial development opportunities related to these international market industries, there are opportunities rooted in diversifying within these sectors and increasing sector related spending capture.</p>
	<p>Transportation Corridors. Urban America is connected by transportation corridors that run through rural America. Services are required to support those traveling these corridors, creating entrepreneurial development opportunities.</p>
	<p>Tourism. While the vast majority of Americans live and work in urban America, rural America provides important places to play. For a wide range of rural communities and regions, tourism represents a way to diversify area economies.</p>
	<p>Retirees. When thinking of new residents, keep in mind the tidal wave of retiring Boomers. This group represents a significant likely entrepreneurial development opportunity for most rural communities, from high amenity places to rural villages adjacent to metro centers.</p>
	<p>Commuters. Upward of 50 percent of rural workers live in one community and work in another community. These outbound commuters have embedded entrepreneurial development opportunities in creating bedroom community-related development and entrepreneurial opportunities when they end their commuting.</p>

	<p>Hub Cities. America’s landscape is still defined by a hierarchy of places based on size. In rural America, there are regional and area hub cities and towns that provide critical services like healthcare, shopping, and entertainment to rural areas. These communities are the “downtowns” of vast rural regions to smaller areas.</p>
	<p>Larger Employer Retention and Expansion. Many rural communities are home to large manufacturing plants, fulfillment centers and institutions including hospitals, regional universities, and parks. Ensuring the future of these larger employers is an entrepreneurial opportunity.</p>
	<p>Growth-Oriented Entrepreneurs. Nearly every rural community has growth-oriented entrepreneurs with the motivation and capacity to reach external markets with their products and services. Electronic commerce empowers this kind of entrepreneurship.</p>
	<p>Area Spending Capture. Competition is intense from box stores, franchise, and electronic commerce, but opportunities exist to increase local venture competitiveness and recapture some of these spending leakages. In doing so, rural communities can empower growth-oriented entrepreneurs.</p>
	<p>New Residents. Since the 1900s, the primary migration pattern has been from rural to urban. Today, there are counter (e.g., urban-to-rural) migration trends among 30-year-olds, retiring Boomers and others. These new residents represent a huge opportunity to energize area entrepreneurial talent.</p>

To learn more about these top 10 Likely Entrepreneurial Development Opportunities and our evolving collection of associated strategy papers, please visit our website’s [resource section](#).

Rural America has been exporting residents for more than 100 years, with massive rural-to-urban migration beginning with the First Industrial Revolution and accelerating to present times. This hollowing out of rural America and its urbanization has diminished the role, power, and vitality of rural regions across North America. Foundational to the future of rural America, its regions and communities, rests in large part in its ability to attract new residents.

Two Related Development Frameworks

Over the years in our work with development groups throughout North America, we have evolved two community economic development frameworks. The first framework embraces all aspects of rural community economic development, in what we call the [Rural Community Prosperity Development Framework](#). The second development framework focuses specifically on entrepreneur-led development and entrepreneurial ecosystem building, known as the [Energizing Entrepreneurs Development Framework](#) (e2 Development Framework for short).

Rural Community Prosperity Framework

We challenge rural communities to aspire for greater and more sustainable prosperity, as decline and failure is not destiny. Across rural America, there are communities and regions that are bucking trends and demonstrating thriving communities are possible.

Entrepreneurship – People Attraction – Placemaking – Community Capacity Building

Communities matter!

This emphasis on communities embraces a more holistic view of community economic development and is a counterpoint to traditional American development policy that was at best indifferent to communities. The logic is clear...

**Healthy Families Grow Healthy Family Members.
Vibrant Communities Enable Greater Resident Wellbeing.**

Central to our early values and theory was that community economic development should be undertaken with the idea that it creates opportunities and an environment where a community's residents – all of its residents – can thrive and achieve sustainable wellbeing. America, because of its vast size and abundance of resources, for generations had a “throw-away” mindset. Destroy the farm ground in Virginia, move to Kentucky and start over. If the core city declines, move to the suburbs. America can no longer employ the throw-away approach to development, just as older societies in Europe and Japan have learned.

Defining Rural

While e2 has worked in communities of all sizes, our work has largely focused on rural communities and regions in North America. There is a counterproductive, ongoing debate about what is rural. If you are a

mayor of a community in eastern Montana, you may chafe at being called rural as you believe you are a city. If you live in Los Angeles, you probably view Missoula (one of Montana’s largest cities) as rural. There are many technical definitions. We generally follow the U.S. Census Bureau’s definitions for metropolitan, micropolitan, and rural areas. For purposes of our prosperity work, rural is any place that lies outside mid-sized and large metro areas, including smaller metros like Missoula or my hometown of Lincoln, Nebraska.

Economy. A vibrant and thriving economy is foundational to community prosperity. Within this framework, we believe that economic development is so much more than growing a community’s gross domestic product (GDP). Economic development must also drive economic diversification and opportunities for all residents. We believe that entrepreneur-led development is foundational to stimulating, growing, and sustaining a high-value economy.

Place. Place is where we live, work and play. Place is central to the wellbeing of residents and the ability of entrepreneurs to help grow both economies and communities. Over time, quality-of-life placemaking (or community development) has increased in importance within the Framework. We now understand the equal importance of placemaking with economic development. Check out our paper, [Quality of Life Placemaking](#). This paper will give you a better picture of what we mean by placemaking.

Community Capacity Building. Capacity is the ability to do work. Community capacity is the ability of a community to take on its own development. Community capacity building is the process whereby a community becomes better able to envision, engage in, and sustain smart and robust community economic development that enables a more prosperous community to evolve. Central to community capacity building is community leadership. Empowering effective community leadership can help a community optimize its potential, stretch its vision, and mobilize resources necessary for investing in itself. Our fieldwork supports the view that there is massive potential to increase the capacity of communities to undertake and sustain development.

Figure 1 - The Four Essentials of the Rural Community Prosperity Development Framework

<p style="text-align: center;">Economy</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Diversification through Entrepreneurship</p> <p>Every community must grow a vibrant, competitive, and resilient economy. For rural America, where so many communities depend upon one or two economic sectors or industries, economic diversification through entrepreneurship is key.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Place</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Quality of Life Placemaking - Community Building</p> <p>Quality of place matters. There are the physical (e.g., vibrant downtowns) and cultural aspects (e.g., welcome to diversity) elements of quality-of-life placemaking. Thriving communities in the 21st century must invest in asset and opportunity-based placemaking.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">People</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Demographic Health - Diversity</p> <p style="text-align: center;">People Attraction, Retention & Development</p> <p>People are the reasons we have communities and need economies. People or human talent is the magic essential for smart and impactful community economic development.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Community Capacity Building</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Leadership & Organizational Development</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Visioning – Strategic Planning, etc.</p> <p>Community leadership is the cornerstone of all successful community economic development. Community capacity building is foundational.</p>

Brain Drain Myth

The “Brain Drain” myth implies the “best and brightest” are deserting rural America and leaving behind those with less ability. Our extensive fieldwork across America challenges this myth. Yes, there has and continues to be rural-to-urban migration. For distressed rural communities, out-migration is one of the outcomes of failing economies and societies. What we are observing is those who are leaving are the “risk-takers.” They have the capacity to leave what they know to take a chance on something they do not know in order to improve their opportunities. This is common with the waves of emigrants who have moved to America and across America in the Westward Expansion. The loss of risk-takers is a greater threat to rural communities than the brain drain and is likely one reason why some rural communities have become ultra-conservative, challenged by change, and more insular.

People. Ultimately this is all about people and particularly the residents within each community. People attraction, development, and retention is the fourth essential for community prosperity. We are not necessarily talking about absolute population growth as the goal. Rather, we are focused on **demographic health** or the ability of a community to reach a desired population with balanced age cohort populations. With climate change and intense stress on Mother Earth, we need to rebalance demographic health from yearly population growth. No rural community can thrive by just focusing on one or two of the four essentials of place, economic, capacity building, and people.

But at the same time, people attraction, development, and retention is foundational to thriving rural communities. We continue our people attraction exploration, focusing on why people attraction is so foundational to the future of rural America.

HomeTown Competitiveness

Foundational to both of these development frameworks is our 20 year-long work with HomeTown Competitiveness (HTC), a “come-back, give-back” approach to community economic development. With funding from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and others, our HTC collaborative evolved this highly employed (e.g., North America) and impactful development framework. (More on HTC later in this paper.)

e2’s Energizing Entrepreneurs Development Framework

This framework focuses on how rural communities and regions can grow economies through entrepreneurship that empower placemaking, people attraction, and greater economic prosperity. The framework focuses specifically on growing a stronger entrepreneurial venture community, economy, community, and culture. In this strategy paper, we will not spend a lot of time digging into the e2 Development Framework, but here are some resources for deeper insight:

- [*Energizing Entrepreneurial Communities – A Pathway to Prosperity* \(book\)](#)
- [*Introduction Guide to e2’s Entrepreneurship Development Framework*](#)
- [*Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Building in Rural America – Four Decades of Learning*](#)
- [*Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Building 101 – Lessons from Northwestern Missouri*](#)

Our next stop in this strategy guide is the **Imperative for Demographic Health**.

Rural communities, in order to thrive, must sustain adequate demographic health capable of supporting a viable community with economic opportunities, essential amenities like grocery stores and medical clinics, and desired amenities like a coffee shop, bakery, or unique cafés. In our **Rural Community Prosperity Development Framework**, we identify new resident attraction, development, and retention as imperative, as one of our four essentials for community prosperity.

Imperative for Demographic Health

Too many rural landscapes have, or are experiencing, failing economies and societies. Check out our paper, [Economic Crashes – Mini-Case Studies](#), for more information on this topic. Rural landscapes, and the communities within them, manifest failing economies, and societies in three primary ways:

1. Chronic and severe net outmigration and depopulation.
2. Rising and stubborn unemployment and under-employment.
3. Rising and chronic poverty, and working, low-income populations.

We explore each of these three outcomes of failing economies and societies, and then the human and community fallout associated with them:

Poverty. Whether many Native American Reservations, the Black Belt, the Mississippi Delta or Central Appalachia, rising and chronic poverty is the primary manifestation of failed or failing economies. The lack of living wage and venture economic opportunities trap residents in poverty that roots as multigenerational poverty, creating a challenging culture for individual, family, economic, and social renewal.

Under- and Unemployment. In parts of the industrial Midwest, former economic engines like upstate New York or mining, timber, or energy regions in the West, under- and unemployment is the primary outcome of failed or failing economies. These once-thriving regions, saw a unionized autoworker leave high school, get a job with the area's auto plant, and eventually make \$50, \$60, and even higher wages per hour, with great benefits. Often there is a "stickiness," where these displaced workers, due to offshoring, plant closures or automation, stay where they have family, friends, and real estate assets. Places with chronically higher unemployment and under-employment experience both lower labor force participation, higher disability rates, and deepening poverty (as well as working low-income).

Net Outmigration and Depopulation. When a community or a region fails to provide sufficient economic opportunities, some - and often many - choose to pick up roots and move to new regions where there are jobs and better opportunities. An example is the great African American migration from the South to the industrial cities in the north and west. In another example, for decades, rural communities across America have been losing high schoolers who leave their rural hometowns for a larger rural regional employment hub or growing metros like Boise, Denver, or Atlanta. Net outmigration and depopulation is a universal challenge for much of rural America. This strategy paper focuses on the all-important development game plan of new resident attraction, development, and retention.

Hollowing Out of Rural America – The Necessity of Attracting New Residents

In their 2009 book, [*Hollowing out the Middle – The Rural Brain Drain and What IT Means for America*](#) (Beacon Press – Boston), Patrick Carr and Maria Kefalas capture the deep and complex dynamics of rural migration and depopulation. While e2 has a somewhat different view (see previous section) of the “rural brain drain,” we greatly appreciate these authors work and find it very insightful.

The fact is, worldwide, rural people have been migrating to cities for a long time. The first, and then the second industrial revolutions, coupled with automation of rural natural resource industries from commodity agriculture to coal, have driven rural people to the wage and salary jobs cities offered. In much of rural America, peak rural populations occurred in the 1930s and the Great Depression; this is particularly true for my home region of the central Great Plains. Illustrating the hollowing out of rural America, let’s explore four very different communities across America.

Sheridan County in Northwestern Nebraska. European-American settlement came late by American standards to Sheridan County with the county being legally formed in 1885. But settlement came in a boom with an 1890 population of 8,687 residents. The county peaked in 1930 during the Great Depression with 10,793 and by 2018 posting 5,109 residents representing a 53 percent population decline from peak population to present.

Desha County in the Arkansas Delta. Desha County, in the Mississippi Delta region, was founded in the 1830s, posting a 1940 Census population of 1,598 residents. This rural community peaked in 1940 with 27,160 residents and today (2019 estimate) posts a population of 11,361 residents, representing a 58 percent decline from peak population to present.

Pitkin County in Colorado’s Rocky Mountains. Pitkin County, and its lead community of Aspen, located in the heart of the Colorado Rocky Mountains, was founded in the 1880s as a silver mining boom town. By the 1890 Census the county posted 8,929 residents. By 1930 its population dropped to just 1,770 souls, representing a 90 percent decline from peak (1890 to 1930). This was common in the Rocky Mountain west with many rural mining years. Old maps in states like Colorado list all the once-thriving ghost towns. But unlike the communities that failed, Aspen reinvented itself as a high-amenity resort community rooted in drop-dead landscapes and world-class skiing, renewing both its economic relevance and vitality. Today (2019 estimate), Pitkin County posts 17,768 permanent residents and during peak visitor seasons the population is much larger.

Washington County on Maine’s Atlantic Coast. Our oldest rural community is Washington County on the Atlantic Coast of Maine founded in 1789. In the 1790 Census, this community posted a 2,890 population. Washington County peaked in 1940 with 45,232 residents, but by 2019, this population had fallen to 31,379 permanent residents, a decrease of 31 percent.

Loss of Rural America to Urbanization

A powerful, yet simple, reason rural America is losing population while urban America is growing is some of the fastest growing parts of rural America (e.g., largely located adjacent to metro areas and cities) are being reclassified as urban. For the rest of rural America, the story is largely one of outmigration and depopulation driven by undiversified economies, by economic structural changes, economic crashes, and loss of attractiveness due to increasing decay and parochialism.

We could share illustration after illustration of the hollowing out of rural America, but this does not need be the case. There are opportunity trends and powerful economics that can empower demographic renewal for those rural communities willing to do the hard and smart work of people attraction.

Distress and Negative Outcomes

Where we have stickiness (e.g., where displaced workers and families stay versus leaving for greener opportunities), there is a cascade of additional negative outcomes addressed in our paper [Marginalized Rural Americans](#). Following are some documented negative outcomes associated when we have chronic and severe poverty, working low-income, under-employment and unemployment:

- Declining Labor Force Participation
- Increasing At-Risk Behaviors:
 - Substance Abuse
 - Domestic Abuse
 - Reckless Behavior (e.g., drunk driving)
 - Criminal Activity
- Increasing Incarceration and Criminal Records
- High and Rising Disability Rates

Figure 2. US Incarceration Rates, 1978 to 2016

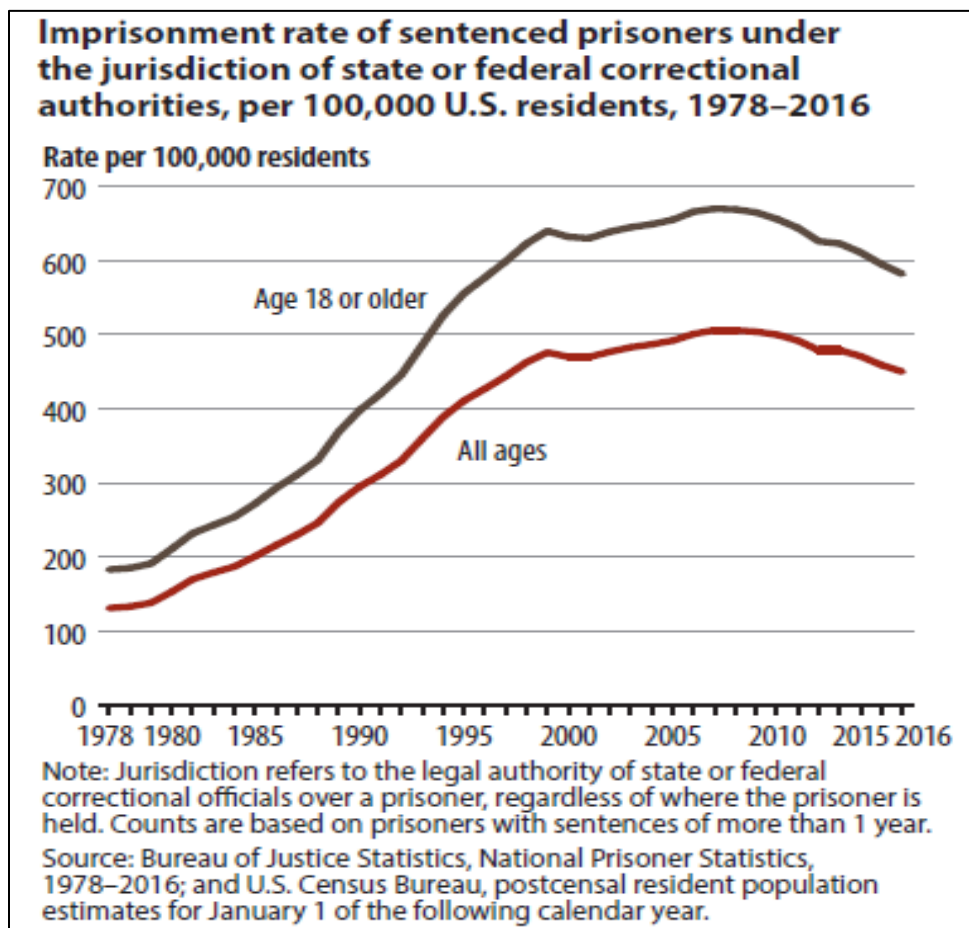
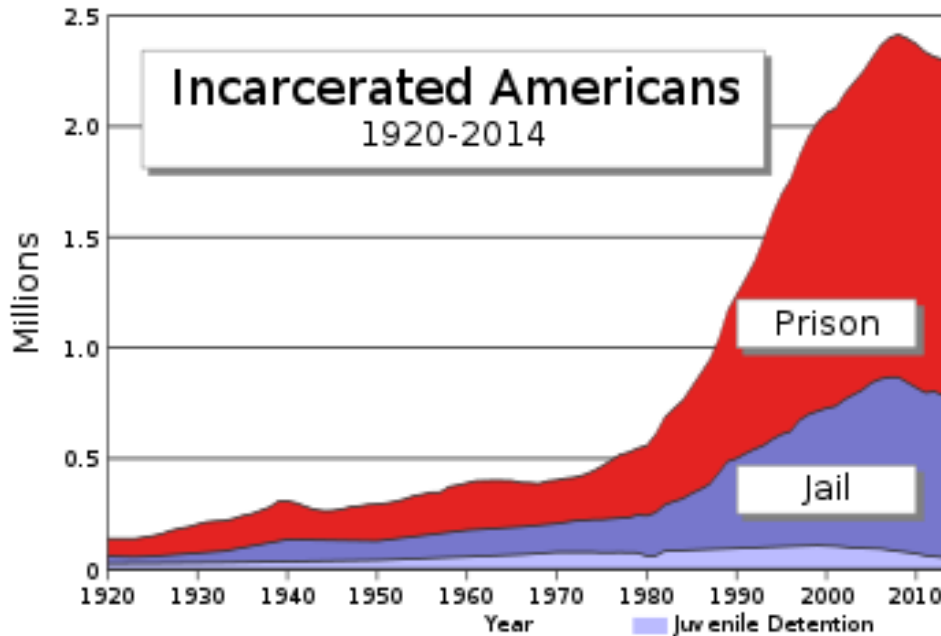


Figure 3. Soaring U.S. Incarceration Rates, 1920 to Present



Source: Wikipedia 1

U.S. incarceration rates are among the highest in the world. They are moderating beginning in the mid-2010s due to over-crowding and the need to move prisoners out of prisons and jails either due to court orders or administrative actions. Increasing incarceration/criminal records and high and rising disability rates are apex outcomes associated with failed or failing rural economies and societies. Persons engaging in at-risk behavior often become disabled due to addiction or accidents caused by reckless behavior (e.g., shooting guns with friends while on drugs, for example). These same negative outcomes can and do occur in rural areas, with net outmigration and depopulation associated with the residual population.

Demographic Health. By demographic health, we mean a stable population with a balanced age cohort profile. Healthy demographics include the ability of a community to renew its population through natural (e.g., more births than deaths) and migration (e.g., more residents moving in versus leaving). Communities do not necessarily need to have absolute population growth to be vibrant and sustainable. But chronic and severe depopulation eventually undermines community vitality and adds to America's growing list of name place communities and ghost towns.

For rural communities and regions experiencing depopulation, new resident attraction and development is a foundational development strategy. As noted in our section on entrepreneurial development opportunities, we believe, based on our fieldwork, that entrepreneur-led development can create the kind of economy that enhances rural communities' competitiveness for new resident attraction.

Crashes

We use the term **crashes** to describe what happens when massive economic restructuring adversely impacts a community's or region's economy and society. An economic and social crash can occur quickly when an entire industry, like auto manufacturing in the industrial Midwest, contracts rapidly, often followed by chronic and severe distress with associated effects. By effects, we mean when economic opportunity erodes significantly, people in a community and region are at-risk and marginalized. Later in

this paper, we outline how communities and regions manifest their immediate and chronic distress. Check out our paper, [Economic Crashes – Mini Case Studies](#), for more information.

Economic Restructuring and Crashes - *Outmigration and Depopulation*

The vast majority of Americans live in metropolitan areas today. Even those who live in many micropolitan areas do not consider themselves rural but urban. For our urban friends there are three likely images of rural America:

Fly-Over and Drive-Through Country. For most urbanites, rural America is this vast geography to travel through. In my home state of Nebraska, the predominant impression of those traveling Interstate 80 is, “We thought we would never get across your state.” From the skies, it is those 20,000 and 30,000-foot-high images from an airplane window connecting from one city to the next.

Vacation Land. On a positive note, rural America is home to some of our country’s most wonderful landscapes and playgrounds. From lakes to seashores to mountains and funky arts communities in west Texas – rural America is a vacation land for so many urbanites seeking time away from the city for recreation and the grand vistas of rural America.

Conservative and in Decline. The third image is of a very conservative, fundamentalist, insular and declining rural America where meth and opioids are destroying lives and entire communities. Images of Norman Rockwell-welcoming communities remain as urbanites visit rural communities with their many festivals or gateways to national parks. Every year major media, conservative to liberal, roll out their annual treatment of a rural America in crisis and decline. Once it was failing cities that caught our attention. Now rural America is viewed in many of the same ways.

Across the world, change is impacting the relevance and vitality of regions and communities. There is no question that rural America has been stressed and challenged with both structural change and economic crashes. Higher-impact economic crashes are often driven by global or national forces impacting entire industries and regions. But economic crashes can impact individual communities like the Watts Neighborhood in Los Angeles or in Sidney, Nebraska where the acquisition of Cabela’s Outdoor Outfitters by Bass Pro Shop created an economic crash in the small, rural areas of western Nebraska and northeastern Colorado.

Community-level crashes can devastate a local community. The hollowing out of Detroit has generated massive economic, social, and personal adverse effects to core city neighborhoods, while the larger Detroit Metroplex has thrived, by and large. But regional scale and sector crashes create deeper and wider-spread devastation. Some regions impacted by these transformative changes never really recover to previous levels of prosperity and vitality without massive external intervention.

For example, America’s Appalachian region has long been a hard-scrabble landscape. For generations, parts of this multi-state region were among the most distressed and challenged regions in America. But massive investment and intervention by the Appalachian Regional Commission (e.g., federal, state, and local collaboration) has actually moved many counties from distressed to faring comparably to the nation.

Waves of new residents from throughout the world have been America's "fountain of youth." These new residents have revitalized and enriched America with their values, culture, ambition, and commitment. America would not be America without new residents. The same is true for rural communities, where new residents are part of the formula for success in this part of the 21st Century.

Benefits of New Resident Attraction

In the previous section, we illustrated the imperative for improving rural demographic health through new resident attraction. In this section of our strategy guide, we focus on the benefits of new resident attraction. Our value case for new resident attraction as a primary rural community development strategy, with strong entrepreneurial development opportunities, is organized into the following parts:

- Importance of Human Talent in Today's World
- Welcoming – Embracing Diversity as an Asset
- Seven Reasons New Residents are Important

We explore each of these benefits of new resident attraction, beginning with some context focused on the importance of human talent in today's world economy and society.

Importance of Human Talent in Today's World

As humankind has progressed from hunter/gather societies and economies, we are now in what many call the **knowledge economy**. The COVID-19 pandemic recession illustrates just how important that knowledge-related work is, as major parts of the U.S. economy continue to thrive even with pandemic disruptions and lockdowns. Knowledge employees continue working from home and other remote locations. Even in traditional industries like production agriculture, manufacturing, hospitality, and forest products, the knowledge economy is at work.

Workers and entrepreneurs today employ smart technology to enhance what they do. Once unskilled or semi-skilled workers, common in rural America's core industries, now must have advanced education or training, so they can perform in our knowledge economy and society. Human talent is foundational today in America and increasingly important to the future prosperity of rural communities.

Rebuilding our Risk-Taking, Abstract-Thinking Community

When my two sons were in primary and secondary schools, there was a raging debate between mastering the basics and testing versus the ability to work in teams and engage in innovative behavior. While both are important, there are implications in this debate for rural America. Early when the term "brain drain" became common in rural community economic development conversations, at e2, we challenged this label as fundamentally wrong. We do note that net outmigration of human talent from rural communities is a crisis and threat. But our fieldwork supports the conclusion those leaving are not necessarily the brightest, say, based on standardized testing. Rather, those leaving are risk-takers, with human talent more open to change and abstract thinking. The cost of losing **risk-takers** is an even greater threat and supports the case for new resident attraction.

Attracting new resident to rural communities, whether our own children, grandchildren, or totally new residents, is now foundational to renewing our human talent pool necessary for growing competitive and vibrant rural economies and communities. We have learned there are a growing number of rural communities from very small, isolated villages to small metros based in rural regions, who are successfully attracting diverse human talent with intentional and smart people attraction game plans.

Welcoming – Embracing Diversity as an Asset

Rural communities are often portrayed in popular media as insular, ultra-conservative, and parochial. Perceptions of rural America’s communities - where everyone goes to the same church, is the same color, and embraces the same values - are widespread both within and outside rural America. There is truth in these perceptions, but there are also rural communities that are demonstrating their ability to embrace diversity as an asset and become a sincere, welcoming community. With new resident attraction, the probabilities are high that those coming into our communities, including our own family and friends who left and are coming home, will look different, have different faiths, embrace their own politics, etc. when compared to our rural communities’ dominant current resident population.

More on Diversity

Within our e2 family, we have a number of resources that can help your community become a welcoming community to new resident diversity, including:

- [Is Your Community a JEDI Hometown?](#)
- [Building Entrepreneurship Ecosystems in Communities of Color](#)
- [Marginalized Rural Americans](#)

When our communities embrace diversity, that is part of new resident attraction. Diversity allows communities to empower forces that can support revitalization including new ideas, greater capacity to embrace change, and more interesting communities, positioned to be active players in our 21st Century national and international society and economy.

Seven Reasons New Residents are Important

There are, at minimum, seven very practical benefits with new resident attraction. The top four are more obvious in our communities, the last three, less so.

- Households
- Consumers
- Workforce
- Leaders and Community Builders
- More Disruptors
- Resource Connectors
- More Entrepreneurial Talent



Households. Most of rural America has declining markets with too few consumers. Households and their spending account for 60 to 70 percent of all consumer spending in our communities. When we have more households, a whole set of benefits accrue, including more peers, more children, more consumer spending, workforce, leaders and community builders, resource connectors and even more entrepreneurial talent.

Consumers. According to [Esri](#) data, we know that when a new resident moves into a rural community, they bring with them \$50,000 to \$70,000 in new consumer spending. This spending supports everything from housing to groceries to car repairs - the list goes on and on. With more household consumer spending, our rural communities can support a more vibrant venture community, meeting the needs and wants of these new consumers. More consumers equate to entrepreneurial development opportunities.



Workforce. Even in slowly eroding rural economies, there are workforce shortages, ranging from welders in local manufacturing firms to doctors, to a quality plumber. When we attract new residents who fill these critical workforce gaps in our rural communities and regions, we can grow more vibrant economies and create more entrepreneurial development opportunities. Workforce today represents specialized human talent capable of meeting essential (e.g., a local nurse practitioner to a schoolteacher) and desired (e.g., a craft beer master to a farm-to-table café chief).

Leaders and Community Builders. Not every new resident engages in community activities, but many do, bringing new ideas and energy. When we embrace these new ideas and energy, we can fuel our community's leadership and community builders pool. For rural communities to thrive, we must move beyond that small and same group of community activists and expand community agency where more of our residents are likely to engage in community economic development. When truly welcomed, new residents are more likely than current residents to engage in community building. Think about it. They have made a pretty important change choice of moving to your community. They want this community to succeed.



Now we explore three very important benefits of people attraction that are less obvious.

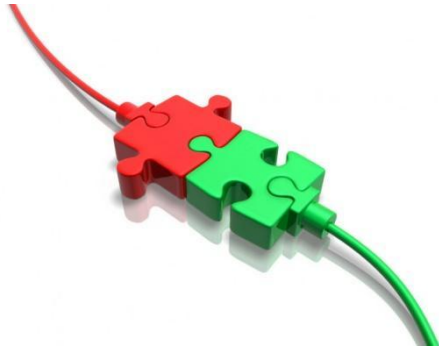
Disruptors. In our work with community-centered team building, we employ Gallup's [BP10 Assessment](#). In this assessment, there are 10 team member talents. One of those talents is **Disruptor**. Gallup describes disruptors as having the following traits:

- Think of novel ways to move things forward
- Are brimming with new ideas
- Image possible futures

New residents tend to be disruptors. We need disruptors in rural communities that are stuck in status quo realities and resistant to change. New residents are often the spark, asking critically important questions like:

- Why can't we do this?
- Isn't that really a great idea?
- Surely this gay person can be our mayor?

Disruptors are critically important to breaking rural communities out of status quo realities that are not working and embrace innovation and change that can transform the community to better places.



Resource Connectors. New residents often have relationships elsewhere who can bring value to our development efforts. New residents have knowledge, experience, and networks to everything from potential resources to capital. These connections can expand our community's access to external resources and knowledge, enhancing our capacity for development.

More Entrepreneurial Talent. In our stories from Ord, NE¹, we find new residents (both Boomerangs and new residents who have never lived in our community) represent a significant component of new entrepreneurial energy starting, buying, and expanding area ventures. Many of these new residents are choosing the Ord Region because of its growing reputation as a great, thriving, high-quality-of-life-place-to-operate-a-venture kind of community. Increasing a community's entrepreneurial talent through new resident attraction can not only fill critical gaps (e.g., doctors to electricians), but increase growth ventures connecting consumers and markets throughout the region, nation, and even internationally.

Next in our journey into New Resident Attraction, we focus on **Entrepreneurial Development Opportunities.**

¹ Please visit our website's [resource library](#) for a complete case study on Ord, Nebraska.

Urban America is Filling Up

e2's thought paper, [Urban America is Filling Up](#), addresses four primary socioeconomic drivers why urbanites are relocating to more rural communities from small metros in rural landscapes to even small rural villages located in frontier regions:

- Escape urban congestion
- Desire for larger homes and acreages
- Perceptions about personal safety
- Cost or affordability – the most important

Whether a young couple with two kids working in California's Silicon Valley, or an older couple from Boston entering retirement, moving from America's cities is a major life experience. With sky-high costs (particularly housing), congestion, small spaces, and concerns about safety (e.g., from crime to health with the Covid-19 pandemic) moving to more rural locations offers more space, lower housing and business costs, far less congestion, and potentially safer communities. There are tradeoffs for sure and this kind of relocation is not for most people.

While potentially daunting, ponder this cost differential illustration.

Consider a couple who has lived their adult lives in Los Angeles (2019 population of four million). They are turning 65 and approaching retirement. They bought their home in L.A. in their mid-20s, in 1981, or 40 years ago. Their modest house in Venice Beach or West L.A. now is worth \$2 million. Given the high cost of living in L.A., they have not been able to adequately save for retirement. Plus, they are tired of the pollution and congestion on the freeways. They have made the decision to move to Bisbee (2019 population of 5,203), located in the mountains southeast of Tucson.

Bisbee is an old mining town with historic buildings and a strong arts and culture scene. The median house price in Bisbee is \$180,000. Chances are good that such a house in Bisbee needs some work and let's assume this former L.A. couple does \$70,000 in remodeling, so their total cost is \$250,000. The net cash gain for this couple is an amazing \$1.75 million. This amount of money can go a long way to catch up on retirement funding. At a conservative four percent per year payout, that \$1.75 million will generate \$70,000 annually forever in income.

For the vast majority of American households, housing costs are one of the largest budget items. This is particularly true in growing urban areas, where housing costs have skyrocketed. For example, in Wichita, Kansas, housing costs (e.g., shelter and utilities, but nothing else) consume more than 30 percent of household budgets (Esri, 2020 data).

When someone makes the choice to leave a high-cost housing market to a lower-cost housing market, the cost savings can be very significant. Housing costs are a primary economic driver for urban Americans moving to more rural communities.

I have an entire bookcase and computer file of resources focusing on attracting new residents to rural America. If I was inclined, I could easily double my library with additional resources. We will hit the high points in this strategy guide and encourage your community to form a group, dig deeper, visit rural communities that are succeeding with new resident attraction and shape your own game plan.

Entrepreneurial Development Opportunities

Rural communities' primary rationale for existence is to provide a place where people live, work, and play. When our communities include new resident attraction as part of their community economic development game plan, a whole set of entrepreneurial development opportunities emerge. In this section where we explore **Entrepreneurial Development Opportunities** focusing on new resident attraction, development, and retention, we address these topics:

- Three Strategy Elements – Attraction, Development, and Retention
- Primary New Resident Attraction Opportunities
- Core Realities in a Post-Pandemic America

Energizing your community's entrepreneurs – for-profit, nonprofit, and governmental – is foundational to growing a magnetic community and your community's competitiveness in attracting new residents. Remember, our community's entrepreneurs are the one who build housing, create parks and recreational opportunities, provide great schools and health care, and provide for our consumer needs and wants.

Incentives Versus Becoming a Magnetic Community

Incentives. In 1862 while the Civil War raged, President Lincoln and the U.S. Congress enacted the **Homestead Act**. The Homestead Act was followed by the Kincaid Act (1904), offering more land to prospective farmers and ranchers settling lands largely west of the Mississippi and in the frontiers of Alaska. New residents by the millions took advantages of these incentives to relocate into America's frontiers (It must be noted that these "free lands" required the displacement of Native Americans, often employing genocide.) Today, mini versions of the Homestead and Kincaid Acts are at play where rural communities provide free lots, subsidized utilities, use of tax increment financing (TIF), or student loan forgiveness to attract new residents. When the incentives are strong enough, they will attract new residents, but many will not stay beyond the incentive period.

Versus...

Becoming a Magnetic Community. The Nebraska Community Foundation employs the language of "magnetic" community or a community where people want to live, including both current and new residents. Magnetic communities embrace the four **Community Prosperity Essentials**: quality-of-life placemaking, people attraction, development and retention, and entrepreneur-led economic development. Magnetic communities have an entrepreneurial culture where diversity is viewed as an asset and not a threat, providing a genuine welcoming community. Becoming a magnetic community is strategic with respect to new resident attraction, while providing incentives, at best, is tactical.

Three Strategy Elements – Attraction, Development, and Retention

New resident-related development includes three foundational strategy elements:

1. Attraction
2. Development
3. Retention

Attraction. With chronic (e.g., long-term) and severe losses (e.g., high percentage losses, particularly of younger adults), too many rural communities now lack the population base to reverse population decline through natural change (e.g., more births than deaths). To rebuild demographic health, these communities must improve their competitiveness for attracting new residents. Becoming a magnetic community where people want to live, work, and play is foundational.



Development. Another new resident development strategy focuses on developing both current and new residents. When residents have the opportunity to grow, both economically and personally, their satisfaction in where they call home grows deeper. Resident development is the foundation for all development, empowering community, economic, and entrepreneurial development. Our stories from Ord, NE, speak to the power of **agency** when a rural community invests in its residents.

Retention. Finally, communities can be successful in attracting new residents and even supporting the development of current residents but retaining residents who put down deep roots and make your community their **hometown** is another matter. Our third strategy focuses on retaining both current and new residents. When strong and positive, where people *want to stay versus unable to leave*, retention is a play. There is a “stickiness” that helps a community retain residents and human talent during more challenging times for the long term.



These elements are intuitive, but from a practical strategy standpoint, a bit abstract. We hope our illustrations and stories can help you and your community translate attraction, development, and retention strategies into impactful community economic development. Rebuilding your community’s demographic health (e.g., renewing age cohorts and not necessarily absolute growth) is a must. Without demographic health, the quality of our communities erodes and our capacity for necessary and desired community economic development is limited.

Primary New Resident Attraction Opportunities

Every person who decides to move into your community and/or stay is a win. This is particularly true for rural communities and regions experiencing chronic and severe net outmigration and depopulation. Based on our fieldwork, there are at least five important targets for new resident attraction, development, and retention.

1. Younger Adults
2. Families
3. Retirees
4. Trades and Professionals
5. Entrepreneurs

HomeTown Competitiveness and Kellogg Foundation People Attraction Guides. More than 20 years ago, we produced a series of **People Attraction Guides** as part of our HomeTown Competitiveness (HTC) work funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. There are six guides: [Overview Guide](#), [Younger Adults](#), [Families](#), [Retirees](#), [Trades and Professionals](#), and [Entrepreneurs](#). While these people attraction guides are dated with outdated statistics, the strategy content is very relevant and can be a resource for your community as you develop your new resident attraction strategy.

Younger Adults. For many rural communities, once our children graduate from high school, they leave for higher education or work and never return. For decades, one of rural America's greatest exports has been younger adults and the human talent they represent. In my Ogallala High School class, roughly 80 percent left and have not returned to Ogallala, including me. Young adults bring energy, generational perspectives, workforce talent, entrepreneurial energy and, if and when they form a family, become major consumers (e.g., housing, furniture, etc.) and provide children for our schools.

Families. For rural communities that have deteriorating demographic health with a lack of younger families, the quickest way to rebuild workforce, entrepreneurial talent and youth for our schools is the attraction of families. Focusing on families with children is a powerful strategy focus. Providing economic opportunities, the right housing, great schools, and desired family-oriented amenities can position your community for families with children, attractions capable of more quickly rebuilding your community's demographic health.

Retirees. Rural communities have been attracting retirees for decades, as rural residents, like farmers, move to town in retirement. This opportunity is limited to the existing retiring residents in your region. But today there is a larger opportunity with urban Americans moving to more rural communities in retirement. With the massive Baby Boomer retirement trend, there are powerful forces that can position many rural communities to attract these new residents from outside their region. Retirees are important because they bring spending power, workforce, entrepreneurial energy, networks, and access to capital for investment. See the Resource section of this paper for more on this topic.

Trades and Professionals. Essential for thriving rural communities, we need trades (e.g., plumbers, builders, electricians, HVAC, landscaping, maintenance, etc.) and professionals (e.g., doctors and other medical practitioners, accountants, lawyers, etc.). As rural communities have experienced chronic and severe decline, they have lost both trades and professionals. Rebuilding these human talent areas, through attraction, development, and retention, brings renewal.

Entrepreneurs. Our final new resident attraction target are entrepreneurs. Central to economic development is venture attraction, often focusing on manufacturing plants, call centers, distribution centers, and other similar externally owned branch facilities. Attracting entrepreneurs and their ventures is an increasingly important new resident attraction opportunity. When an entrepreneur and their family moves into a rural community, we not only get more residents, but we get an entrepreneur and the venture they bring with them. When they grow, they can bring more human talent and their families while providing expanded career and job offerings to area residents.



A Quick Story from My Childhood Hometown of Mullen, NE

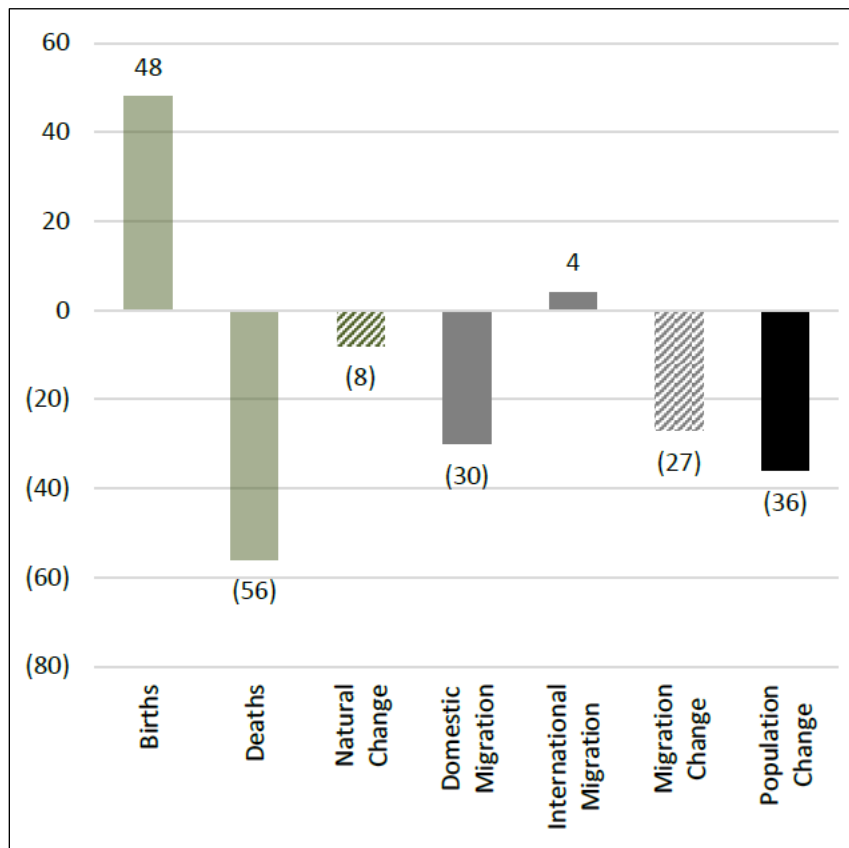
I spent part of my childhood in my dad's hometown of Mullen (2019 population 351) located in the heart of Nebraska's Sandhills ranching region. I moved away in the 5th grade, and I returned years later to work with this region on its development. Mullen was hosting an event where local businesspeople (e.g., lifestyle entrepreneurs) shared their stories with young people from the Mullen Public Schools. It was like pulling teeth to get some of these business owners to share their stories. One was the only plumber in Mullen. Once he started talking, his love for his work and the satisfaction of meeting the needs of area residents came through, despite his shy nature. In the room were three young high school students. After the session, they approached this local plumber and shared their desire to follow in his footsteps. Later, one of the young men came home and took over this business, ensuring this essential service was locally available.

Additional opportunity exists in rural America as our economy is both centralizing and decentralizing. International corporations like Amazon, IBM, Unilever, Google, Royal Dutch Shell, British Petroleum, Goldman Sachs Group, Honda, and China Mobile Communications Corporation, represent economic centralization into these massive multinational corporations. At the same time, our economy is decentralizing, rooted in buy-local movements and smart information technology. Today, because of the Internet and remote working arrangements, someone can live in my high school hometown of Ogallala (2019 population of 4,536), be employed as an independent consultant, and have clients throughout the world, providing knowledge economy services.

Lessons from Ord and Its Thriving Region. Our five-decade long (e.g., 1970s to 2020) study of Ord, Nebraska illustrates how a magnetic community, embracing all the dimensions of our Rural Community Prosperity Development Framework, can attract new residents. Founded in the late 1880s, Ord peaked in population with the 1980 Census with 2,658 residents. During the following three decades (e.g., 1980 to 2010) Ord experienced a net population loss of 21 percent of its residents. Population loss in the rural region it served was even higher. Between 2010 and 2019, according to the U.S. Census, Ord experienced a 9.4 percent net population growth with an estimated 2,310 residents. Both Valley County, where Ord is the lead community, and its larger rural region experienced population stabilization.

Figure 4 provides the components of population change for Valley County and Ord. On average between 2000 and 2016 this community experienced natural population change - more deaths than births, but this alone cannot turn around this community’s demographics. Only net in-migration of new residents can stabilize and support population growth.

Figure 4. Average Annual Components of Population Change, 2000-2020

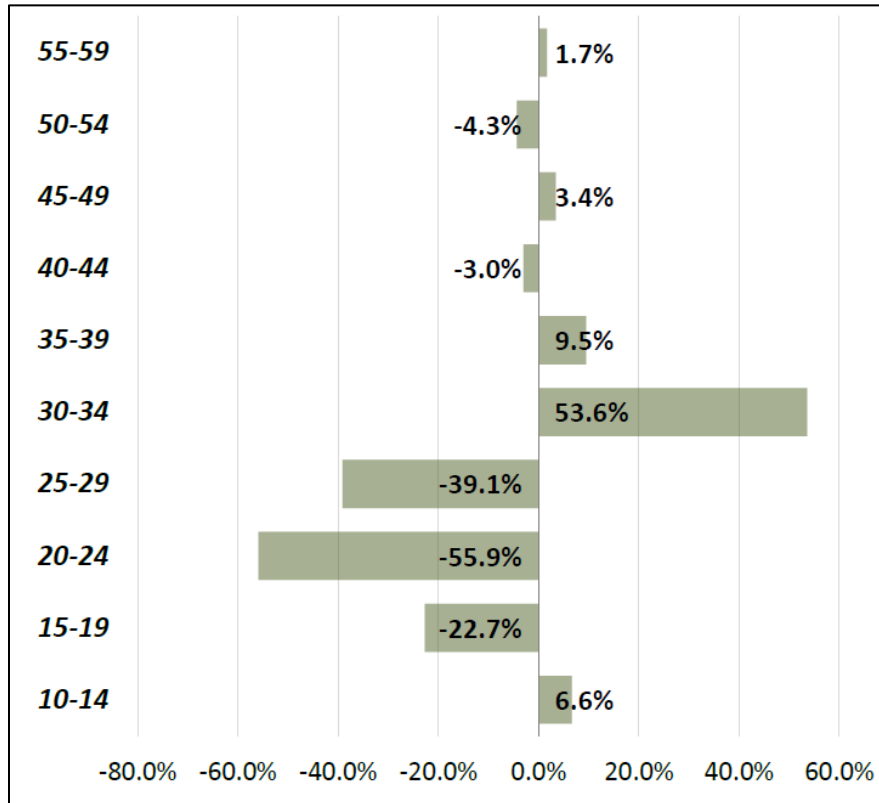


Source: Development Opportunity Profile for Valley County, Nebraska, 9/10/21



Figure 5 statistically explains in large part, that Valley County’s turnaround is rooted in age cohort changes in the 2000 to 2010 decade. There has been a 53.6 percent increase in 30-34-year-olds and a 9.5 percent increase in 34 -39-year-olds.

Figure 5. Percent Age Cohort Change, 2000-2010



Source: Development Opportunity Profile for Valley County, Nebraska, 9/10/21

With more family age, residents notice two things also happening that we believe are more than coincidence.

- First, a 6.6 percent net gain in 10-to-14-year-olds, but also a 1.7 percent net gain in 55-59- year-olds. With younger adults and more families with children, the demographic base of the community is being renewed and rebuilt.
- As younger families with children stay in Ord and its region, one of the major reasons why retiring residents are leaving is removed. Having family in the community reduces the desire for and need to relocate to where children and grandchildren live.

Increasing net in-migration through new resident attraction can more quickly lead to stronger demographic health growing assets like entrepreneurs, workforce, and volunteers essential for rural community economic development.

As noted earlier, for a community like Ord to be so successful (e.g., a near 54 percent net increase in 30–34-year-olds is relatively unprecedented among peer rural communities in the central Great Plains



Region) *it has taken a 20-year commitment* to growing a more diverse economy, quality-of-life placemaking and becoming a welcoming community.

This story illustrates two important sets of learning your community can employ.

First, the Ord Story demonstrates that demographic renewal through new resident attraction is possible and can turn around a community from depopulation to modest population growth.

Second, embedded in the Ord Stories are insights on what rural communities must do to become magnetic, positioning them for new resident attraction.

Core Realities in a Post-Pandemic America

Next, we study what the COVID-19 Pandemic crisis might mean for future new resident attraction. The worldwide crisis and associated economic downturn is one of those scaled events that is likely to create permanent change in our lives, communities, and economies. Consider, in this emerging post-pandemic environment, the **necessities** and **opportunities** for new resident attraction.

Fear and Threat of Newcomers

In 2021, the U.S. is a divided nation with a huge and widening urban/rural divide. Ross Benes, in his new book, [Rural Rebellion](#), shares his journey into this space given his hometowns of Brainard, Nebraska (2019 population of 420) and New York City (2019 population of 20.3 million, or more than 10 times larger than the population of the entire state of Nebraska). **Throughout our 40-plus years working with rural communities, particularly more isolated and smaller communities, there are two important desires: don't die but also don't change.** There is more and more evidence that one reason rural areas have radicalized is fear that they are becoming marginalized, and their ways of life are threatened. If rural America is to thrive, its communities must embrace increasing diversity as an asset and not a threat. It will be hard, but foundational.

Necessities. On pages 14-16, we address the case for new resident attraction in rural America. So, we will not go deeper into this topic, other than to say every rural community much consider new resident attraction as part of their game plan.

Opportunities. While the rural to urban trend continues, there are countertrends today, resulting in greater opportunities for new resident attraction. Work by [Dr. Ben Winchester](#) at the University of Minnesota addresses these trends and strategies, supported by strong migration data analysis. Page 21, we reference our paper – **Urban America is Filling Up.** with our LA retiree story. It illustrates the powerful socioeconomic drivers causing urban residents to move into more rural communities. These are trends that rural regions and communities can employ to attract a few or many new residents, creating development opportunities and impacts.

Pandemic Factor?

As the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdowns deepened from a few months to more than a year, a growing number of urban Americans living in small apartments began to escape to areas for more space, perhaps from feeling “trapped.” Some assume there will be a major urban to rural exodus because of the pandemic shutdown experience. There is no question that some have moved, and others will. But

whether this will become a major trend is still debatable until harder evidence emerges and is sustained. Strong feelings during an event like the lockdown, living in a 1,000 square-foot condo in an eight-story urban building, may well dissipate once the lockdown eases and freedom to return to life pre-COVID emerges. Factors like costs, congestion, and crime are more durable drivers and will continue to be the primary rationales for making major changes as to where people live, work and play.

Our non-scientific research into relocation decisions are rooted in our fieldwork and grounded in what newcomers are telling their communities and us. Figure 6 summarizes these findings.

Figure 6. Likely Drivers of Urban to Rural Relocation

For Non-Rural Newcomers		
For newcomers with little or no rural hometown experience, the following are the most powerful drivers causing these urbanites to uproot and make the change to a more rural community.		
Cost	Congestion	Safety
Cost of living, particularly housing costs, is a powerful economic force. This is particularly true with increased outsourced and remote work opportunities.	Whether commuting to work, taking kids to schools, or going out to a favorite café, urban congestion takes its toll on time and energy. Escaping congestion is a growing relocation driver.	More rural communities have the reputation of having less crime and being safer when compared to cities. Some crime data supports this perception. Regardless, this is a relocation driver.
For Rural Returnees		
For those who have deeper rural experiences, whether growing up rural or spending time with family and friends in rural places, cost, congestion, and safety are important relocation drivers. But we know from survey work that these “Boomeranging” [*] new residents have additional factors driving their decision to relocate.		
Family & Friends	Lifestyle	Space & Freedom
Family and friends are powerful pulls drawing former residents back to their hometowns. Whether it is the need to take care of an aging parent or just the desire to be near family, this is an important driver for former residents.	Lifestyle is key. If you are a couple with kids in a 1,000 square-foot apartment, moving to a house with a yard and other families with children is an important lifestyle consideration. Playing to your community’s genuine lifestyle assets is important.	For urban dwellers, one important lifestyle attribute is more space and greater freedom to move. Many retirees tell us the value of deciding to golf and on the same day getting a tee time with a short commute across town. In communities like Denver, this simply pleasure requires much more.

^{*}“Boomerangs” are people who lived in a community, moved away, and returned.



Resources

Growing a welcoming community that is attractive to new residents, including retiring Boomers, entrepreneurs, and other groups, is foundational. At e2, we have curated or procured a collection of legacy resources that can help your rural community and/or region craft a smart and impactful new resident attraction game plan.

Our HTC and Kellogg Foundation People Attraction Guides

Beginning in the late 1990s, four organizations came together: the [W.K. Kellogg Foundation](#), the [Nebraska Community Foundation](#), the [Heartland Center for Leadership Development](#) and the Center for Rural Entrepreneurship (now [e2 Entrepreneurial Ecosystems](#), hosted by [NetWork Kansas](#)) to create HomeTown Competitiveness (HTC).

This work was recognized and supported by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and celebrated for its impact as part of the Foundation's 75th Anniversary celebration. Within HTC (now part of our Rural Community Prosperity Framework) were the four pillars of entrepreneurship, philanthropy, youth engagement, and leadership. Embedded in this work was a recognition of the importance of people attraction, development, retention, and improving demographic health. As part of this work, we curated the following **People Attraction Guides**:

- [People Attraction Guide – An Overview](#)
- [Young Adult Attraction](#)
- [Attraction of Families](#)
- [Retiree Attraction](#)
- [Entrepreneur Attraction](#)
- [Attraction of Skilled Trade and Professions](#)

While these resources are clearly dated and the statistics within them outdated, the content continues to be foundational, and these earlier guides may prove helpful to your community's new resident attraction game plan development.

Ord, Nebraska Story

Ord was our first entrepreneurial community during the HomeTown Competitiveness days. For the past three years we have been capturing Ord's remarkable transformation from decline, conflict, and hopelessness, to prosperity and hope. With a 2019 population of 2,310, Ord anchors a region of about 10,000 residents in very rural north central Nebraska. A central thematic in the Ord stories and its transformative success is its increasing ability to attract, develop, and retain residents. During the decade of 2000 to 2010 (pivotal turnaround years), Valley County, where Ord is the lead community, experienced a net gain of 50 percent more 30-year-olds. Today, Ord's lower grades have two to three times more students when compared to higher grades, illustrating its success with this strategy. For more information on the entire Ord story, including videos, visit our website's [resource library section](#) on Ord.

Other Resources

The following resources have all been curated within the last three years and can be found in our website's [resource library](#):

- [Rural Community Prosperity Development Framework](#)
- [Community Quality of Life Placemaking](#)
- [Is Your Community a JEDI Hometown? \(e.g., diversity\)](#)
- [Urban America is Filling Up](#)
- [Likely Entrepreneurial Development Opportunities](#) e2 website landing page

One of the specific new resident attraction opportunities are **retiring Boomers** (e.g., Americans born between 1946 and 1964). Every day in America, an estimated 10,000 Boomers are retiring. In retirement, many are relocating to communities with the right amenities, lower costs, less congestion, and places perceived to be safer. Some are moving to more rural communities to be closer to family, friends, communities like they grew up in, and places where an acreage for a horse is feasible. The **Retiree-Led Development** strategy guide should be used in conjunction with this **New Resident Attraction** strategy guide. Our Retiree-Led strategy guide provides granular community strategy advice that can be employed by your community to focus on other attraction opportunities like younger adults and families. Click on the link above to find this guide along with other guides within the Likely Entrepreneurial Development Opportunities series.

Role of Analytics - Informed Strategies by Market Research

Analytics or the use of smart data can help your community grow more impactful new resident attraction strategies and programs. Taking time to learn from new residents who have moved into your community - even if that was 5 – 25 years ago -can be very enlightening. Whether the new resident is a returning child, a totally new family, or a new/relocated business, we encourage reaching out to Kim and Frank Spillers and their approaches in this space for more help:

Frank or Kimberlee Spillers
 Rural Community **unity** Solutions - Atlantic, Iowa 50022
frank@ghorizons.com – kim@ghorizons.com - www.ruralcommunitysolutions.com
 712-254-1645 712-250-0275



Growing a Genuine Welcoming Community

Within every community there are such good people. These people vision and build wonderful hometowns. Within them is the capacity to help others in their community to become a more **welcoming community**. But like everything else we do in community economic development, it takes some research, exploration of the possibilities, tons of hard work and doggedness to turn vision into reality that makes a difference in our lives and community. Your community has the right stuff to be a welcoming community to new residents if you make the commitment that this development strategy is something important your community must do.

Consistent with other natural laws, every community must find economic relevance and achieve sustainable demographic health. With demographic health, this does not require a community to grow rapidly, or even grow in total population. But every community must renew itself as older residents die and others move away with new births and the attraction of new residents. For those rural communities stressed by chronic and severe depopulation, a foundational development focus must be improving demographic health through smart people attraction. There is opportunity and powerful trends working in our favor. But people attraction simply does not happen in most cases. It requires...

Recognition of the Opportunity
Honest Community Assessment
Opportunity Research
Development of Smart Strategies
Committed Action Over Time

It is our hope this strategy guide focusing on New Resident Attraction, Development, and Retention can help your community envision and stand up a more impactful entrepreneur-led development game plan. We want to hear from you. Send us your questions, comments, and insights by sharing with Don Macke at don@e2mail.org.

How e2 Can Help



e2 Entrepreneurial Ecosystems helps communities increase prosperity through entrepreneur-focused economic development and ecosystem building. Led by [Don Macke](#), e2 has a national team of practitioners who bring research, coaching, incubation, market intelligence and other expertise to this work.

What We Do

- **Mentoring.** We mentor and coach new practitioners seeking to pursue entrepreneur-led development. We provide advice and support for building eEcosystem strategies that work.
- **Analytics Support.** e2 helps communities and regions understand their entrepreneurial potential through research and data. Explore some of our research tools and reports [here](#).
- **e2 University (e2U)** is our platform for sharing more than 1,000 guides, papers, stories, tools, and resources with communities wanting a deep dive into eEcosystem building. Don Macke leads the e2U team with analytics support from **Cathy Kottwitz** and report preparation from **Ann Chaffin**. Special recognition for their e2U legacy contributions goes to **Dana Williams** and **Deb Markley**, LOCUS Impacting Investing.
- **Fostering the eMovement.** We support the national entrepreneurship movement along with our partners including the **Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City**, **SourceLink**, **Edward Lowe Foundation**, **Kauffman Foundation**, and **NetWork Kansas**. We are a founding member of [Start Us Up: America's New Business Plan](#), a coalition dedicated to strengthening entrepreneurship across America. Together, we continue to advance the foundational ideas of building entrepreneurial ecosystems and entrepreneurship-led economic development.

Contact Us

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[NetWork Kansas](#), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to developing an entrepreneurial ecosystem in Kansas, is the home for e2 Entrepreneurial Ecosystems. NetWork Kansas connects aspiring entrepreneurs, emerging and established businesses, to a deep network of business building resource organizations across the state.

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