

Tenth District Cities: Recent Growth and Prospects for the 1990s

By Glenn H. Miller, Jr.

Contrary to the Tenth District's rural image, almost two-thirds of its people live and work in metropolitan areas. Rural industry, such as farming and mining, is still a mainstay of the district economy, but the share of economic activity in the district's metropolitan areas is both larger and faster growing. It can be said, therefore, that the future performance of state economies in the district may well depend on how strongly their metropolitan areas grow.

Citizens and public officials often rank overall economic growth high among state goals. Yet knowing where economic activity is concentrated and growing rapidly may help policymakers tailor policies to foster that goal. In brief, spending to enhance a state's economic growth may be more wisely targeted toward geographic areas promising substantial returns.

This article examines the growth of population and economic activity in the Tenth District's metropolitan areas. The first section discusses the relatively strong performance of the district's metropolitan areas in the 1980s. The second section examines the prospects for district metropolitan areas in the 1990s. The article concludes that the district's metropolitan areas are likely to be the region's primary source of growth again in the 1990s.

A Decade of Strong Growth for the District's Cities

Population and economic growth in the Tenth District's metropolitan areas have been relatively strong over the past ten years. This section defines metropolitan areas and looks closely at

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three central questions: Have population and economic growth in the district been stronger in metropolitan or in nonmetropolitan areas? How does the recent growth in the district's metropolitan areas compare with metropolitan growth nationwide? And, where has the district's metropolitan growth been strongest?

Metropolitan areas defined

The metropolitan area concept has been used since the 1950 census to identify the concentration of population in cities and their suburbs. A metropolitan area typically comprises a central city with a population of 50,000 or more, the county containing that city, and surrounding counties tied economically and socially to the central city. Commuting-to-work patterns help establish a metropolitan area's extent. A typical metropolitan area unit is now called a metropolitan statistical area, or MSA.

In 1989, the Tenth District had 22 MSAs (Table 1).¹ Two MSAs, Denver and Kansas City, have populations of 1 million or more. Six MSAs have populations between 400,000 and 1 million. The remaining 14 MSAs have populations less than 250,000. In 1989, MSAs accounted for nearly two-thirds of the population of the seven district states and for more than two-thirds of the district's personal income and employment.

The metropolitan share of population varied substantially across district states, ranging from 29 percent in Wyoming to 82 percent in Colorado. In three states—Nebraska, New Mexico, and Wyoming—less than half the population resided in metropolitan areas. Metropolitan income and employment were more than half of total income and employment in every district state except Wyoming.

Table 1

Population of Tenth District MSAs, 1989

(in thousands)

Denver, Colo.	1,645
Kansas City, Mo. - Kans.	1,599
Oklahoma City, Okla.	962
Tulsa, Okla.	730
Omaha, Nebr.	629
Albuquerque, N. Mex.	502
Wichita, Kans.	489
Colorado Springs, Colo.	402
Boulder-Longmont, Colo.	219
Lincoln, Nebr.	215
Ft. Collins-Loveland, Colo.	186
Topeka, Kans.	167
Greeley, Colo.	137
Joplin, Mo.	137
Pueblo, Colo.	128
Lawton, Okla.	119
Santa Fe, N. Mex.	116
St. Joseph, Mo.	85
Lawrence, Kans.	78
Cheyenne, Wyo.	77
Casper, Wyo.	63
Enid, Okla.	57

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis.

Has growth been stronger in MSAs or nonmetro areas?

Growth in the district's MSAs far outstripped growth in its nonmetro areas in the 1980s, making MSAs the principal location of population and economic growth in the decade. MSA population and income grew three times faster than nonmetro population and income. MSA employment grew twice as

Table 2

**MSA and Nonmetro Annual Percent Growth in the 1970s and 1980s,
United States and Tenth District States**

	Population		Nonfarm Employment		Real Income	
	1970s	1980s	1970s	1980s	1970s	1980s
<i>Tenth District</i>						
Total	1.3	.9	3.1	1.7	4.3	1.7
MSA	1.4	1.2	3.1	2.0	4.1	2.2
Nonmetro	1.1	.4	3.0	1.1	4.6	.7
<i>United States</i>						
Total	1.1	1.0	2.3	2.1	3.3	2.6
MSA	1.0	1.1	2.3	2.3	3.2	2.9
Nonmetro	1.3	.6	2.6	1.5	4.2	1.6

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis.

fast as nonmetro employment. By the end of the decade, per capita income was 30 percent higher in the district's MSAs than in its nonmetro areas.²

MSAs were the district's population growth centers in the 1980s. MSA population increased 1.2 percent per year from 1979 to 1989, while nonmetro population grew only 0.4 percent per year (Table 2). MSA growth outpaced nonmetro growth in all district states but Wyoming (Table 3). New Mexico and Colorado posted the fastest growth in population among district states, both for MSAs and nonmetro regions. Otherwise, nonmetro growth was generally slow, with modest declines recorded in Kansas and Nebraska.

Employment and real income in the district also grew faster in MSAs than in nonmetro areas in the 1980s. Employment and income grew about 2 percent per year in MSAs, compared with about 1 percent per year

in all nonmetro counties (Table 2). MSA employment and income grew faster than nonmetro employment and income in all district states but Missouri and Wyoming. MSA employment and income grew the fastest in New Mexico and Colorado.

Having grown considerably faster than nonmetro areas, district MSAs closed the 1980s with much higher per capita incomes (Table 4).³ For the district as a whole, per capita income was 30 percent higher in MSAs than in nonmetro counties. Across district states, per capita income in MSAs ranged from 10 percent higher than nonmetro regions in Wyoming, to 40 percent higher in Missouri.

The much stronger relative growth of MSAs in the 1980s contrasted sharply with the 1970s, when the rural areas in the district outgrew the metropolitan areas. The relative gains by MSAs in the 1980s were due mostly to a sharp slowdown in rural growth. Nonmetro population growth, for example, fell

Table 3

**MSA and Nonmetro Annual Percent Growth in the 1970s and 1980s,
Tenth District States**

	Population		Nonfarm Employment		Real Income	
	1970s	1980s	1970s	1980s	1970s	1980s
<i>Colorado</i>						
Total	2.8	1.5	5.1	2.5	5.9	2.6
MSA	2.9	1.7	5.0	2.6	5.9	2.8
Nonmetro	2.4	.9	5.8	2.0	6.3	1.7
<i>Kansas</i>						
Total	.5	.7	2.7	1.5	3.8	1.4
MSA	.6	1.5	3.2	2.2	3.9	2.3
Nonmetro	.4	-.2	2.2	.6	3.7	.3
<i>Missouri</i>						
Total	.5	.5	1.8	1.8	3.1	1.9
MSA	.3	.6	1.6	1.8	2.6	2.2
Nonmetro	.9	.4	2.3	2.0	4.3	1.3
<i>Nebraska</i>						
Total	.6	.3	2.5	1.3	3.4	.9
MSA	1.0	.9	2.7	2.0	3.4	1.7
Nonmetro	.3	-.2	2.4	.4	3.4	.2
<i>New Mexico</i>						
Total	2.4	1.8	4.4	2.3	5.6	2.4
MSA	2.8	2.3	5.1	3.3	5.7	3.4
Nonmetro	2.0	1.2	3.6	.9	5.4	1.3
<i>Oklahoma</i>						
Total	1.6	.9	3.2	1.1	5.0	1.0
MSA	1.9	1.2	3.5	1.4	5.0	1.3
Nonmetro	1.3	.3	2.7	.5	5.0	.5
<i>Wyoming</i>						
Total	3.2	.5	5.8	.0	7.6	-1.0
MSA	2.6	.1	5.0	-.7	6.8	-1.5
Nonmetro	3.5	.6	6.2	.4	8.1	-.8

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis.

Table 4

MSA and Nonmetro Per Capita Income, 1989, United States and Tenth District States

	<u>Total</u>	<u>MSA</u>	<u>Nonmetro</u>
United States	\$17,592	\$18,771	\$13,557
Tenth District	15,837	17,351	13,365
Colorado	17,504	18,075	14,923
Kansas	16,525	17,937	14,862
Missouri	16,447	18,357	12,714
Nebraska	15,697	16,755	14,721
New Mexico	13,221	15,028	11,456
Oklahoma	14,111	15,385	12,285
Wyoming	14,553	15,636	14,104

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis.

from 1.1 percent per year in the 1970s to just 0.4 percent per year in the 1980s (Table 2). Similarly, rural employment growth fell from 3.0 percent to 1.1 percent, while growth in real income fell from 4.6 percent to 0.7 percent.

Booms in the farm and energy sectors fueled rapid growth in the rural economy during the 1970s, while corresponding farm and energy busts led to a sharp slowdown in the rural economy through most of the 1980s. Even though both industries were in recovery when the 1980s ended, they still accounted for most of the swing in the district's rural economy between the two decades. The boom and bust cycle in agriculture and energy also affected several district MSAs, especially their real estate and financial sectors. But the slowing of MSA growth was more attenuated than the slowdown in the rural economy.

How does MSA growth in the district and the nation compare?

Overall, growth in the district's MSAs

trailed growth in the nation's MSAs during the 1980s. District MSAs fared well in population growth but trailed the nation's growth in employment and income. By the end of the decade, per capita income was about 8 percent lower in district MSAs than in MSAs nationwide.

Population growth in the district's MSAs was slightly faster than in the nation in the 1980s. Population of MSAs in the district grew 1.2 percent per year from 1979 to 1989, while MSAs across the nation averaged 1.1 percent per year. The district's edge in population growth was due mainly to rapid growth in the MSAs of Colorado, Kansas, New Mexico, and Oklahoma.

Economic growth, on the other hand, was slower in district MSAs than across the nation in the 1980s. In the district, employment in MSAs increased 2.0 percent per year, compared with 2.3 percent per year in metropolitan areas nationwide. Real income growth in district MSAs averaged 2.2 percent per year, compared with 2.9 percent nationally. Employment in the MSAs of Colorado and

Table 5

District MSA Annual Percent Growth in the 1980s

	<u>Population</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Employment</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Income</u>	<u>Rank</u>
Colorado Springs, Colo.	2.7	1	4.0	1	4.5	1
Ft. Collins-Loveland, Colo.	2.5	2	3.7	2	3.9	3
Santa Fe, N. Mex.	2.2	3	3.4	4	4.0	2
Albuquerque, N. Mex.	2.0	4	3.2	5	3.2	5
Lawrence, Kans.	1.6	5	2.5	6	2.6	6
Boulder-Longmont, Colo.	1.6	6	3.7	3	3.6	4
Denver, Colo.	1.5	7	2.2	8	2.6	7
Tulsa, Okla.	1.4	8	1.4	15	1.3	17
Oklahoma City, Okla.	1.3	9	1.5	14	1.4	16
Lincoln, Nebr.	1.3	10	1.7	12	1.7	12
Greeley, Colo.	1.3	11	2.0	9	1.8	11
Kansas City, Mo.-Kans.	1.1	12	1.9	11	2.1	9
Wichita, Kans.	1.1	13	1.3	16	1.5	14
Cheyenne, Wyo.	1.0	14	.9	18	.7	19
Topeka, Kans.	.8	15	1.5	13	1.8	10
Joplin, Mo.	.8	16	2.5	7	2.2	8
Omaha, Nebr.	.7	17	2.0	10	1.6	13
Lawton, Okla.	.4	18	.9	19	1.3	15
Pueblo, Colo.	.2	19	-.3	20	.0	20
St. Joseph, Mo.	-.4	20	1.1	17	1.1	18
Casper, Wyo.	-.9	21	-2.3	22	-3.4	22
Enid, Okla.	-1.0	22	-.8	21	-.6	21

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis

New Mexico grew faster than employment in MSAs across the nation (Table 3). Income grew faster in New Mexico's MSAs than in MSAs nationwide.

Per capita income in MSAs was smaller in the district than across the nation in 1989. In the district, MSA per capita income was about 8 percent lower than the national average. Per capita income ranged widely across the district, from about 2 percent less than the

national average in Missouri's MSAs to nearly 25 percent less in New Mexico's MSAs.⁴

Population growth and economic growth in MSAs were slower in the 1980s than in the 1970s in the district, but growth was better maintained in MSAs nationwide. MSA growth slipped more in the district than across the nation, causing the district to trail the nation in both income and employment growth for MSAs.⁵

Where has MSA growth in the district been strongest?

The district's 22 MSAs have very different economic attributes. Thus, it is not surprising that population and economic growth in MSAs varied widely across the district in the 1980s (Table 5). Population, employment, and income grew most rapidly in Colorado Springs, Colorado. At the other extreme, employment and income declined most in Casper, Wyoming, and population fell most in Enid, Oklahoma.

Population and employment grew faster in the district's larger MSAs than in its smaller ones in the 1980s. For the eight MSAs with populations of 400,000 or more, the median rate of population growth was 1.4 percent per year in the decade. For the 14 MSAs with populations under 250,000, the median annual rate of growth was 0.9 percent. Median employment growth in the decade was 2.0 percent in the larger MSAs and 1.6 percent in the smaller ones.

Prospects for District MSAs in the 1990s

MSAs in the Tenth District are expected to continue to grow in the 1990s, outpacing growth in the district's nonmetro areas and making up ground on the nation's MSAs. But growth will not be uniform across the district's diverse mix of MSAs.

Will district MSAs continue to grow strongly in the 1990s?

Population growth and economic growth in the district are likely to be stronger in MSAs than in nonmetro areas in the 1990s. And after trailing national MSA growth in the 1980s, MSA growth in the district may catch MSA

growth across the nation in the 1990s.

Projections prepared by the Bureau of Economic Analysis appear to support this view. The BEA projections show significantly faster population and employment growth in the 1990s for district MSAs than for district nonmetro areas (Table 6).⁶ Real income growth is projected to be moderately faster in the district's MSAs than in its nonmetro counties. MSA growth is expected to be more rapid than nonmetro growth in every district state.

While the district's MSAs will outpace nonmetro areas in the 1990s, MSA growth is still projected to slow from the 1980s. Population, employment, and income are projected to grow more slowly in district MSAs in the 1990s than in the 1980s, both in the aggregate and for most MSAs individually. Still, as national MSA growth is expected to slow even more in the 1990s, the projected growth of district MSAs differs little from MSA growth nationwide.

The district's economic growth will be concentrated in its MSAs mainly because economic growth in nonmetro areas probably will remain weak in the 1990s. The district's rural economy depends heavily on agriculture and energy, and both industries appear likely to grow slowly in the 1990s. Both sectors are subject to volatile swings in international markets, but farm and energy businesses alike have become more restrained in their responses to such swings. The energy industry, for example, responded cautiously to the runup in oil prices associated with the Gulf War. Consequently, no boom developed.

The district's energy industry has a moderate outlook, with little prospect for boosting rural economic activity. A bright outlook for the district's plentiful natural gas and coal deposits will be at least partly offset by weakness in the region's oil industry (Smith and Sheesley).

Table 6

MSA & Nonmetro Annual Percent Growth in the 1990s, United States and Tenth District States

	<u>Population</u>	<u>Employment</u>	<u>Real Income</u>
<i>Tenth District</i>			
Total	.6	1.0	2.0
MSA	.7	1.2	2.1
Nonmetro	.3	.7	1.8
<i>United States</i>			
Total	.7	1.1	2.0
MSA	.8	1.2	2.0
Nonmetro	.5	.8	1.8

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis.

In the case of agriculture, uncertainties abound. The industry faces the challenges of competing in world markets that are potentially more open, responding to environmental concerns, and adopting bold new technologies. Even if such challenges can be overcome, sweeping changes in the industry's structure may diminish agriculture's influence on non-metro economic growth (Drabenstott and Barkema).

In short, the 1990s should resemble the 1980s, when economic growth migrated to the district's MSAs. Farm and energy booms, which led district growth away from the cities in the 1970s, are not likely to be repeated soon. Even if world markets for food and oil do turn up, industry responses may be restrained after the painful lessons of the 1980s.⁷

Meanwhile, MSA growth in the district is expected to compare favorably with MSA growth nationwide. The district's relative improvement is due mainly to a big slowdown

in MSA growth nationwide.

Growth in the district's MSAs might benefit in the 1990s from further expansion of MSAs elsewhere, especially in coastal areas. In some large coastal MSAs, potential new businesses and existing firms may face higher costs due to the negative side effects of growth. Increased congestion, more pollution, higher labor costs, and higher housing costs may push people and jobs inland from some large coastal MSAs.

District MSAs thus may become more attractive as business locations in the 1990s. MSAs in the district may offer important business advantages to new or expanding firms, including qualified labor, proximity to raw materials and markets, and cheap power. Growth in district MSAs might also be expected to occur while generating few additional costs from materials bottlenecks, traffic congestion, and air pollution that might offset the benefits of new growth (Fox and Smith).

Where is district MSA growth likely to occur?

Overall, while district MSAs may grow no faster than the nation's MSAs in the 1990s, growth prospects range widely across the district's diverse collection of cities. Based on economic characteristics and other features, most district MSAs generally fall into one of four categories.⁸

Nodal centers are regional centers for health care, transportation, communications, wholesale trade, and related financial and business services (Frey and Speare, p. 90). These centers have a strong, diverse base for economic growth in the 1990s.

Magnet cities are MSAs that attract certain segments of the population. Metropolitan areas that can successfully attract members of large and mobile groups, such as retirees, find that those groups can become sources of rapid growth.

Specialized cities rely heavily on one or two major sectors for their economic health. Such MSAs tend to experience volatile economic growth, prospering when their major sectors boom and risking sharp downturns when those major sectors go bust.

Small cities, MSAs with populations under 250,000, may grow slowly in the 1990s. In the 1980s, small MSAs generally grew slowly because many of them lack the characteristics to be strong growth centers.⁹

Nodal centers. The potential for MSAs to grow as nodal centers depends on their current level of development and whether they have the right ingredients for further development. Growth prospects in nodal centers are enhanced by a solid general infrastructure to support economic activity—adequate roads, water and sewerage systems, electricity, communications, railroads, and airports. Amenities such as attractive natural surroundings and lack of

congestion also enhance growth in these cities.

Growth in nodal centers is likely to be a primary support for overall MSA growth in the district in the 1990s. Omaha has strong communications and information processing sectors, due partly to a sophisticated telecommunications infrastructure and a work force well suited to the industry. Telecommunications services are also making Kansas City a major center of telecommunications expertise and growth. The share of the local work force employed in the industry in Kansas City is twice the national average. Denver is also developing as a nodal center, due to its size, location, and the breadth of its advanced services sector.

Magnet cities. Not all MSAs attract the same segments of the population. The attractions that served as magnets for strong growth in the 1980s are also likely to increase MSA growth in the 1990s. Some MSAs appear to be especially attractive to baby boomers, serving as magnets for a generation reaching its most productive and affluent years. In the 1980s, baby boomers were attracted to large, diversified MSAs with a high quality of life and high-level employment opportunities. Other MSAs attracted the increasingly mobile and affluent elderly. In the 1980s, migrants to retirement destinations caused several sunbelt cities to be among the fastest growing in the nation. Finally, some MSAs on the east and west coasts, and in states that border Mexico, served as magnets for flows of immigrants.

Only a few district MSAs appear likely to be growth magnets in the 1990s. Attractiveness to baby boomers appears to be the only magnet favorable for MSA growth in the district. Denver and Colorado Springs ranked among the nation's strongest baby boomer magnets in the 1980s and may appeal to boomers again in the 1990s, as may a few other MSAs in the district. Few if any district MSAs

are likely to be attractive enough to retirees to make their immigration a source of substantial growth. And drastic changes in patterns of population inflows from outside the United States would be required to make immigration a major source of growth for district MSAs.

Specialized cities. Specialized cities lack a diversity of industries to sustain economic health. To escape recurring downturns, specialized cities often try to diversify their industrial bases.

A number of specialized cities in the Tenth District have significantly influenced MSA growth in the region. The boom and bust of the energy sector in the 1970s and 1980s affected the economies of Oklahoma City and Tulsa. Perhaps the best example, however, is Casper, Wyoming. Driven by the energy boom, Casper's population grew 3 percent per year in the 1970s, while its employment increased 6 percent per year. But as boom turned to bust, Casper's population declined 1 percent per year in the 1980s, while employment dropped 2 percent per year.

Several district cities, including some specialized energy centers, now appear to be on the road toward diversification. That path may be easier for larger MSAs like Oklahoma City and Tulsa than for smaller ones like Casper. In any case, stronger MSA growth in the district in the 1990s will likely require diversification in specialized cities.

Small cities. Many small MSAs appear to lack the ingredients necessary for rapid growth. Some may not be large enough to offer "urbanization economies," the cost savings that arise when economic activities are concentrated in urban areas. Across the nation, many small MSAs went from rapid growth in the 1970s to much slower growth or decline in the 1980s. This performance was not confined to any one region, for "the slowdown of growth in smaller metropolitan areas has become

pervasive" (Frey, p. 12).

Nearly all of the district's 14 MSAs with populations under 250,000 grew slower in the 1980s than in the 1970s in population and employment. Four of these showed declines in at least one measure. If the pervasive slowdown in the growth of smaller MSAs persists, district MSA growth will be limited because nearly two-thirds of the MSAs in the district are small cities.

Conclusion

The Tenth District's MSAs are likely to grow faster than its nonmetro areas again in the 1990s, making MSAs the most probable source of population and economic growth for the region as a whole. Yet MSA growth in the district may be held to a pace like that of MSAs nationally. A number of factors suggest only moderate MSA growth for the district: the presence of a number of specialized cities just now on the road toward diversification, a majority of MSAs in the smaller size group, and only limited attraction from growth magnets. Still, the possibility of benefiting from an inland movement of jobs and people, and the potential for further growth of nodal areas, suggest at least moderate growth for district MSAs.

In states where overall economic growth is a goal, citizens and public officials might value the information that faster growth is likely to occur in metropolitan areas, where population and economic activity are already concentrated. State governments with limited resources must adapt their policies to get the most "bang for the buck" from attempts to stimulate economic growth. Targeting their economic development efforts by geographic areas might be one way to adapt. Such targeting now appears to be limited, however. A

recent study shows that only 11 of 50 states—only two in the Tenth District—target specific geographic areas in their economic development strategy (Clarke). Public officials may want to consider what is known about where economic activity is concentrated and growing fastest, as they seek to improve a state economy's overall performance.

One of the most significant changes in state development policy over the past ten years may work toward this end. That change is the growing emphasis on strengthening a state's existing economic base. With a large share of district economic activity already located in MSAs, directing further resources toward those areas might well be the best way

to improve the performance of a state's overall economy.

Policies directing more economic development resources toward MSAs would not necessarily abandon the rest of a state. Such policies are intended to improve the economic welfare of the people of a state, not to shore up particular places. The purpose of tilting economic development efforts toward MSAs would be to boost economic growth where it is more likely to occur and to produce higher per capita incomes. Policies for non-metro regions might best be targeted at preparing their citizens to be successful wherever economic opportunities are to be found, often in MSAs.

Endnotes

¹ This number does not include MSAs in Tenth District states but not in the Tenth District proper, such as Las Cruces, New Mexico, and St. Louis, Missouri. Aggregate MSA and nonmetro data by state used in this article include full state data, however.

² The metropolitan population of a state or a region is the total of all residents of the metropolitan counties in that state or region; the nonmetropolitan population consists of all residents of the remaining parts of the state or region. Aggregations of metropolitan and non-metropolitan economic data are similar. This article's analysis of metropolitan area growth uses a "constant boundary" measure of metropolitan change. When a "constant boundary" measure is used, the geographic definition of each metropolitan area is held constant for the period under analysis. For example, in comparing growth from 1979 to 1989, the counties in an MSA in 1989 are included in that area for 1979, even though they might not have been officially part of the MSA in the earlier year. When a "variable boundary" measure of metropolitan change is used, the geographic definition of each MSA is allowed to change just as it actually did during the period being studied. Thus, in a "variable boundary" analysis of growth from 1979 to 1989, an MSA's population including residents within its boundaries as defined in 1979 would be compared with that MSA's population within its boundaries as defined in 1989.

³ The per capita income comparisons do not allow for differences in the cost of living between MSAs and

nonmetro counties, as local area price measures are not available.

⁴ In contrast, nonmetropolitan per capita income in the district was only slightly smaller (1.4 percent) than non-metropolitan per capita income nationally in 1989, and has been slightly larger in some years.

⁵ Contrasting performances in the 1970s and 1980s were a national phenomenon. Long-run trends toward concentration of U.S. population and economic activity in metropolitan areas were interrupted in the 1970s. According to one expert on American demography, "No deviation from the trend toward population concentration has been greater than in the 1970s, when nonmetropolitan and metropolitan growth patterns changed direction completely (Frey, p.7)." In contrast with earlier periods, smaller metropolitan areas grew faster than the large areas and nonmetropolitan areas grew faster than metropolitan areas as a whole. The patterns that emerged in the 1970s evoked labels such as "rural renaissance" and "metropolitan turnaround." Speculation that these developments might be longer run phenomena was at least temporarily ended when the 1980s brought an apparent return to earlier trends of metropolitan growth. The national "rural renaissance/metropolitan turnaround" thus appears to have been short lived, as the 1980s apparently brought a return to trends in the relative growth of MSA and nonmetro population and economic activity. MSAs again grew faster than nonmetro counties, and large MSAs again grew faster than smaller MSAs.