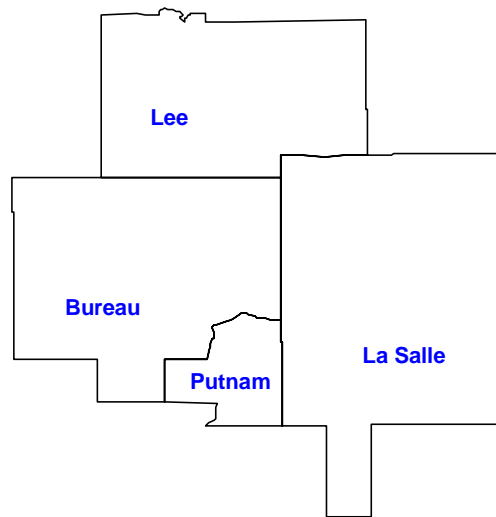


# North Central Illinois State of the Workforce Report

May, 2003



Produced by:  
Corporation for a Skilled Workforce

For:  
*North Central Illinois Works*

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## Executive Summary

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North Central Illinois has many assets. Assets are the leverage points that can be built upon to improve an area's relative and absolute position in the economy, leading to a better quality of living and working for all people and businesses. North Central's assets include an ideal location on major traffic routes close to Chicago, ready access to markets, abundant farmland and natural resources, and an excellent quality of life.

However, the North Central area also faces several challenges. Challenges are the conditions that, if changed, will have the greatest impact on improving the quality of living and working. The area's challenges include a dearth of mid-range housing, too many low paying jobs, an aging workforce, aging infrastructure, and skill shortages.

North Central's story is a combination of its assets and challenges.

### The North Central Story

#### *Location Attractive to Traditional Firms*

North Central is positioned well for attracting traditional firms that need to move goods, but is not positioned well for the New Economy. The area is served by major interstates and a river that enable businesses to quickly transport their products to surrounding markets. North Central has ready access to Chicago, one of the top metropolitan economies in the nation. The location allows workers to move easily among the North Central counties, as well as surrounding labor markets, and workers are willing to travel to get to good paying jobs. There is minimal traffic congestion and a tremendous amount of open land. Ease of mobility, however, may contribute to the area becoming yet another "bedroom community" to Chicago.

The area may not be appealing to "New Economy" firms that are not as dependent on natural resources and movement of products. The resident workforce is not highly educated compared to the metropolitan region, diversity is lacking, and broadband access is insufficient to support high technology requirements. Educational institutions are not readily accessible for working people to upgrade their skills. The workforce is more willing to travel for work than for education. North Central will need to determine how it wants to develop its future – whether it will play to its current advantages and maintain or grow current industry, or whether it will develop new advantages and seek a different direction.

#### *The Industry Mix is Changing*

High wage manufacturing jobs are declining as a percentage of total employment, while sectors that employ many lower wage retail trade and services workers are growing. The shift in industry mix mirrors national trends. The growth of retail trade and

services is also symptomatic of the area's move to a bedroom community. Manufacturing's contribution to total wages is greater than its share of total employment, but its relative employment share is falling and it has been susceptible to recessionary factors. Replacing those high wage jobs will require development of high wage skills and the attraction of firms that require them.

### *The Future May Hold Labor and Skill Shortages*

North Central has an available workforce that scores well for work ethic and productivity, but labor and/or skill shortages may be looming. Although unemployment is currently up due to the recession, the situation could easily turn to a labor shortage. Regardless of the availability of labor, skill shortages may exist within the workforce that would create a "shortage" even if there were many people looking for work. Employment grew at a faster rate in the last decade than did the population. The workforce is aging and young people are leaving for opportunities that may not exist in a more rural environment. There are shortages of people in critical health care services; general skill gaps in teamwork, customer service, and math; and specific skills gaps in skills such as GIS and CAD. Growth is projected in jobs that require two-year technical degrees, but the population has low educational attainment and does not have ready access to skill development opportunities. Increasing the skills of the current and potential workforce and creating opportunities for older workers to continue working or retirees to re-enter the workforce could alleviate some potential gaps.

### *Quality of Life is an Asset to Protect*

**The quality of life is an attraction that must be preserved and developed.** Low crime, good schools, affordable housing, cooperative community leadership, and little traffic are indicators of North Central's excellent quality of life. Gaps, however, are present in mid-range housing stock, police and health care systems, and education systems. Threats to the latter include teacher retirements, loss of tax revenue, dwindling opportunities for students, and highly mobile families.

# Introduction

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## Project Background

*North Central Illinois Works*, the Workforce Investment Board for Bureau, LaSalle, Lee, and Putnam Counties, determined a need to enable the community to better understand and address issues related to workforce development in North Central Illinois. The Board contracted with Corporation for a Skilled Workforce to produce a community audit that would support its mission to “work hand-in-hand with business, service, government, education, and non-profit organizations to enable workers to work and businesses to compete.”

The resulting “State of the Workforce Report” is part of a series of activities the Board is taking in fulfillment of its mission. The report follows two surveys the Board conducted in the spring of 2000 to identify employer training needs. The Board also supported a joint effort among several leadership entities to identify and describe under-employment in the region. The results of these initiatives led to a decision to develop a more broad-based strategic look at the four-county community.

The report is intended to:

- Provide a comprehensive overview of the region’s economy;
- Identify the region’s strengths and weaknesses;
- Identify economic and workforce issues that have to be addressed to assure the region’s continued growth into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century; and
- Create a credible foundation for convening public discussion around workforce issues.

## Defining North Central Illinois

North Central Illinois consists of Bureau, LaSalle, Lee, and Putnam Counties. Major communities include Amboy, Ashton, Dixon, Nelson, Paw Paw, Steward, Sublette, DePue, Ladd, Princeton, Spring Valley, Walnut, Hennepin, La Salle, Lostant, Marseilles, Mendota, Oglesby, Ottawa, Peru, Seneca, Streator, and Tonica.

The North Central labor market includes Sterling-Rock Falls to the northwest in Whiteside County, and to the east, the Morris area in Grundy County. Whiteside and Grundy are therefore included in some of the charts and tables.

## Use of Data

The report is built around major “storylines” for the region. Supporting data is provided for each storyline, followed by implications at the end of each section that

describe what the conditions and trends mean for North Central. This is not an exhaustive recitation of all data that exists, and more timely data is being printed every day. *North Central Illinois Works* will maintain an electronic copy of the full data compilation, including tables and charts that are not in the final report. Gathering workforce intelligence and creating action plans are on-going activities. The State of the Workforce report is a “freeze frame” along the data gathering/planning continuum that asks readers to pause and consider what needs to be changed to impact the trends and change the county’s story over time.

## Acknowledgements

*North Central Illinois Works* convened a Steering Committee of community leaders to participate in reviewing data and assisting in interpretation. The Board and Corporation for a Skilled Workforce would like to thank the following individuals for their active participation:

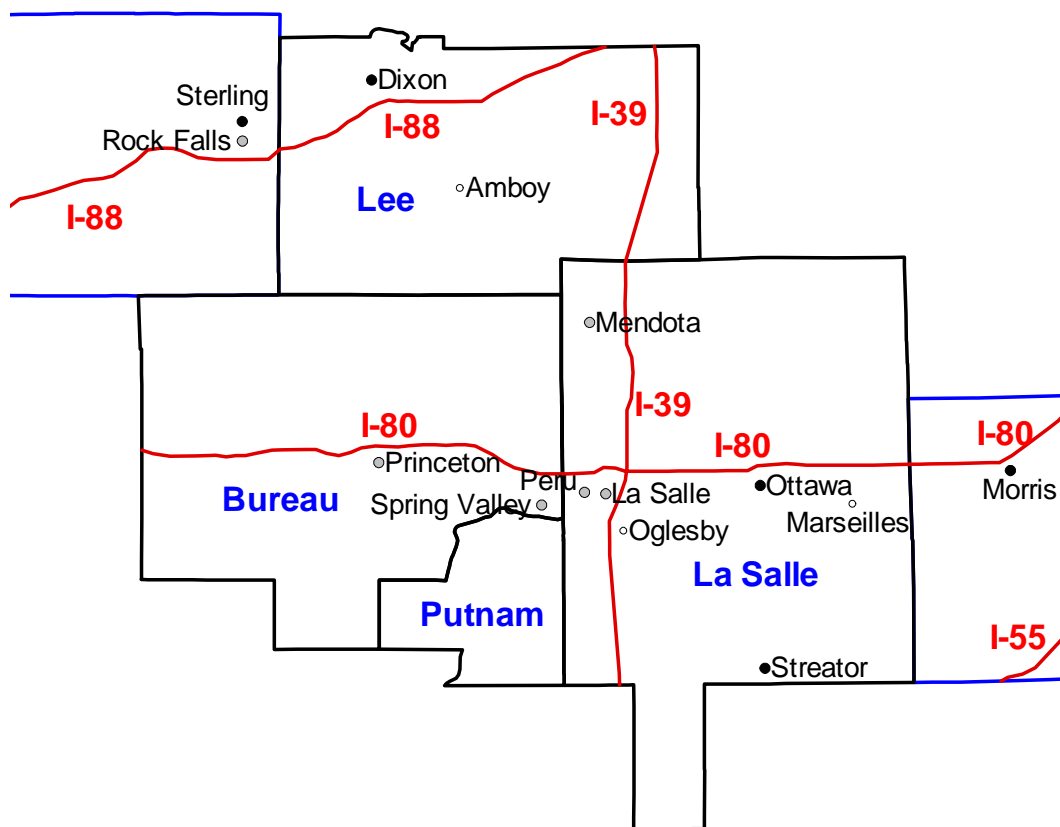
Don Evans, Princeton Chamber of Commerce and committee chair; Pam Furlan, BEST Inc.; Barb Koch, Illinois Valley Area Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development; Lonnie Doan, 1<sup>st</sup> Farm Credit Services; Lynn Wagner, International Steel Group; Gary Grabowski, Carpenter’s Local Union 195; Steve Hayes, IL Valley Community Hospital; Gary Pike, City of Ottawa; Everett Solon, Union Bank; Cindy Tilson, Perry Memorial Hospital; Mary Lou Meader, IL Valley Community College; Reed Wilson, Rep. Jerry Weller’s Office; Lance Laurence, Citizens First National Bank; Jim Andreoni, Perona Law Office; Doug Biederstedt, Beiderstedt Appraisal; Dr. Harriet Custer, IL Valley Community College; Mike Dudek, Letterkraft Creative Services; Jeff Fackler, Wal-Mart Stores, Inc.; Kevin Heitz, Chamlin & Associates; Al Humpage, Jr., LaSalle Elementary School; Terry Madsen; Il Coalition Com. Servc.; Joyce McCullough, News Tribune; Tom Gospodarczyk, Sauk Valley College; Neal Bantens, HCC; Jim Conness, IBEW Local #176; Dave Harvey, IL Dept. of Employment Security ; Kris Paul, United Steel Deck; Dean Devert, Representative Frank Mautino’s Office; Victoria Childs, Marseilles Jr. High School; Lori Scroggs, IL Valley Community College; James Whitmore, Princeton Elementary Schools.

## Section One: Location Attractive to Traditional Firms

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### Region has Easy Road, Air, and River Access

North Central Illinois is well situated to attract traditional employers, particularly those that reflect its current industry mix. Three interstates pass through the region: I-88, I-39, and I-80.



For shipping purposes, the region is within 2 days travel by truck from most major cities in the US, with the exception of Los Angeles and Seattle. Train transportation of goods is also available, arriving in most major cities within 2-3 days.

Most communities in North Central Illinois are at least 50 miles from their nearest airport, with the exception of Lee County communities, who are fairly close to the Greater Rockford and Whiteside County Airports. However, with minimal difficulty the area is accessible to major Chicago airports to the east and Moline to the west. River and rail are also readily available to transport raw materials and finished products.

## Distance and Travel Time for Goods in Transit to Selected Major Cities<sup>1</sup>

Major City	Distance to Major City in Miles	Days by Rail	Days by Truck
Atlanta	710	3	2
Chicago	81	1	1
Cleveland	420	3	1
Dallas	850	2	2
Denver	930	2	2
Detroit	356	3	1
Kansas City	414	1	1
Los Angeles	1948	3	4
Memphis	480	2	1
Minneapolis	382	2	1
New Orleans	820	2	2
New York	925	4	2
St. Louis	235	2	1
Seattle	2060	5	4

Source: Illinois Department of Commerce and Community Affairs

## Distance to Nearest Airport from Communities in North Central Illinois<sup>2</sup>

Community	County	Distance to Airport	Airport
Amboy	Lee	12	Not specified
Ashton	Lee	30	Greater Rockford Airport
Dixon	Lee	10	Whiteside County Airport - Joseph H Bittorf Field Airport
Nelson	Lee	10	Whiteside County Airport - Joseph H Bittorf Field Airport
Paw Paw	Lee	50	Not specified
Steward	Lee	4	Not specified
Sublette	Lee	20	Not specified
De Pue	Bureau	52	Greater Peoria Regional Airport
Ladd	Bureau	65	Greater Peoria Regional Airport
Princeton	Bureau	60	Quad City Intl Airport
Spring Valley	Bureau	60	Quad City Intl Airport
Walnut	Bureau	17	Not specified
Hennepin	Putnam	45	Greater Peoria Regional Airport
La Salle	La Salle	60	Central IL Regional Airport at Bloomington-Normal Airport
Lostant	La Salle	40	Greater Peoria Regional Airport
Marseilles	La Salle	60	Central IL Regional Airport at Bloomington-Normal Airport
Mendota	La Salle	55	Greater Rockford Airport
Oglesby	La Salle	57	Central IL Regional Airport at Bloomington-Normal Airport
Ottawa	La Salle	75	Chicago Midway Airport
Peru	La Salle	60	Central IL Regional Airport at Bloomington-Normal Airport
Seneca	La Salle	47	Chicago O'Hare Intl Airport
Streator	La Salle	54	Central IL Regional Airport at Bloomington-Normal Airport
Tonica	La Salle	48	Greater Peoria Regional Airport
Morris	Grundy	50	Chicago Midway Airport
Rock Falls	Whiteside	2	Whiteside County Airport - Joseph H Bittorf Field Airport
Sterling	Whiteside	3	Whiteside County Airport - Joseph H Bittorf Field Airport

Source: Illinois Department of Commerce and Community Affairs

<sup>1</sup> Using Mendota as the approximate center of North Central region.

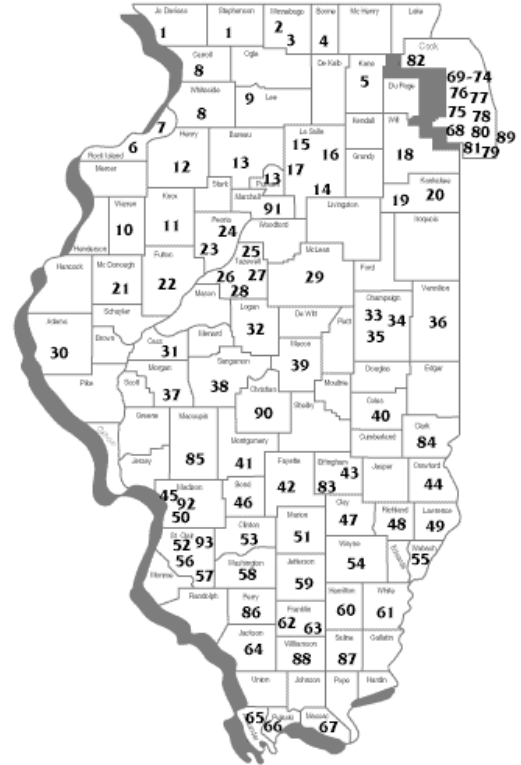
<sup>2</sup> The Illinois Department of Commerce and Community Affairs indicates that the local communities themselves reported airport data to them.

## Enterprise Zone Designation Offers Advantages

North Central Illinois is covered by six different enterprise zones of the 93 designated in the state (source of map: Illinois Enterprise Zone Association).

Advantages to zone designation include:

- A 6.25 percent state sales tax exemption on building materials used in the zone;
- A 6.25 percent state sales tax exemption on purchases of tangible personal property to be used in a manufacturing or assembly process or in the operation of a pollution control facility within the zone;
- A state utility tax exemption on gas, electricity and the Illinois Commerce Commission's administrative charge and telecommunication excise tax;
- A state investment tax credit of 0.5 percent is allowed to taxpayers who invest in qualified properties in a zone;
- Individuals, corporations, trusts and estates are not taxed on dividend income from corporations doing substantially all their business in an Enterprise Zone;
- The Enterprise Zone Jobs Tax Credit allows a business a \$500 credit on Illinois income taxes for each job created in the Zone for which a certified eligible worker is hired;
- Financial institutions are not taxed on the interest received on loans for development within an Enterprise Zone; and
- Businesses may deduct double the value of a cash or in-kind contribution to an approved project of a designated Zone organization from taxable income.



## TIF District Designations Help Economic Development

North Central also has 32 TIF districts according to the Illinois Department of Commerce and Community Affairs. Tax Increment Financing, or TIF, helps local governments restore run-down areas or jumpstart economically sluggish parts of town. With this tool, financially strapped local governments can make the improvements they need, like new roads or new sewers, and provide incentives to attract businesses or help existing businesses expand, without tapping into general funds or raising taxes.

TIFs help local governments attract private development and new businesses and helps retain existing businesses that might otherwise find more attractive options elsewhere. TIF also helps to overcome the extraordinary costs that often prevent development and private investment from occurring on environmentally contaminated and other properties. As a result, the TIF area itself improves and property values go up (source: Illinois Tax Increment Association).

LaSalle County has by far the greatest number of TIF districts with 29. Bureau/LaSalle has one, Lee has two, but Putnam has none. Just outside the region, Grundy and Whiteside Counties each have two TIF districts. North Central communities with TIF districts include: Dixon, Paw Paw, Princeton, Spring Valley, La Salle, Marseilles, Mendota, Oglesby, Ottawa, Peru, Streator, and Tonica.

TIF is a double-edged sword. While popular with city government and developers, TIFs may not always be popular with other taxing bodies, such as school districts. Since the primary source of funding for schools comes from the local tax base, school administrators point out that establishment of a TIF district causes property wealth to be frozen for up to 23 years, distorts the distribution of state aid, and may increase the local tax burden to provide needed services within the school district.

## New Economy Employment is Minimal

While location amenities might be attractive to traditional types of firms, they may not be sufficient to attract “New Economy” firms that rely more on brains than on hands, and where innovation is more important than mass production. The Center for Governmental Studies at Northern Illinois University defines new economy industries as knowledge or technology-based employment sectors that include information technology, internet businesses and services, wireless or wireline telecommunications, electronics, life sciences, advanced materials, and diversified services. The Center identified the following number of firms and jobs in three North Central Counties (the Center did not include LaSalle in their analysis of Northwest Illinois):

### New Economy Industries, 1999

	Lee		Putnam		Bureau	
	Firms	Employment	Firms	Employment	Firms	Employment
<b>Diversified Services</b>	5	14	0	0	5	8
<b>Biochemical</b>	1	3	0	0	2	5
<b>Digital Industries</b>	8	63	2	8	9	415
<b>Total New Economy</b>	14	80	2	8	16	428

Source: Northern Illinois Center for Governmental Studies, February 2002

Technological capacity is an issue in attracting new economy employment. While several of the largest communities have access to cable, digital switching, and fiber optics, the fact remains that the vast majority of North Central Illinois lies outside these communities and is unable to take advantage of the benefits of high-speed internet access.

### **Technological Capacity Details by Community**

<b>Community</b>	<b>County</b>	<b>Cable</b>	<b>Digital Switching</b>	<b>Fiber Optics</b>
Amboy	Lee	Y	N	Y
Ashton	Lee	Y	Y	Y
Dixon	Lee	Y	Y	Y
Nelson	Lee	N	N	N
Paw Paw	Lee	Y	N	Y
Steward	Lee	Y	Y	Y
Sublette	Lee	Y	Y	N
De Pue	Bureau	Y	N	N
Ladd	Bureau	Y	N	N
Princeton	Bureau	Y	Y	Y
Spring Valley	Bureau	Y	Y	N
Walnut	Bureau	Y	N	Y
Hennepin	Putnam	Y	N	Y
La Salle	La Salle	Y	Y	Y
Lostant	La Salle	Y	N	Y
Marseilles	La Salle	Y	Y	Y
Mendota	La Salle	Y	Y	Y
Oglesby	La Salle	Y	Y	Y
Ottawa	La Salle	Y	Y	Y
Peru	La Salle	Y	Y	Y
Seneca	La Salle	Y	Y	N
Streator	La Salle	Y	Y	Y
Tonica	La Salle	Y	Y	Y
Morris	Grundy	Y	Y	Y
Rock Falls	Whiteside	Y	N	Y
Sterling	Whiteside	Y	Y	N

Source: Illinois Department of Commerce and Community Affairs

### **Broad Band Access is Limited**

Internet access constitutes a kind of divide that is contributing to the growing dichotomy between the “haves” and “have nots.” MSNBC reported<sup>3</sup> that as many as 50 million adults are in danger of becoming functionally illiterate because of lack of access to the Internet. Gartner Group, Inc., a technology consulting firm, predicted that 75% of U.S. households would be linked to the Internet by 2005, and that the system would be so pervasive that not having access or knowledge of how to use it would be the equivalent of not knowing how to read or write today. The study found that only 35% of low-income adults had access compared to 53% in the middle income group, 79% in

<sup>3</sup> [www.msnbc.com/news](http://www.msnbc.com/news), October 2, 2002.

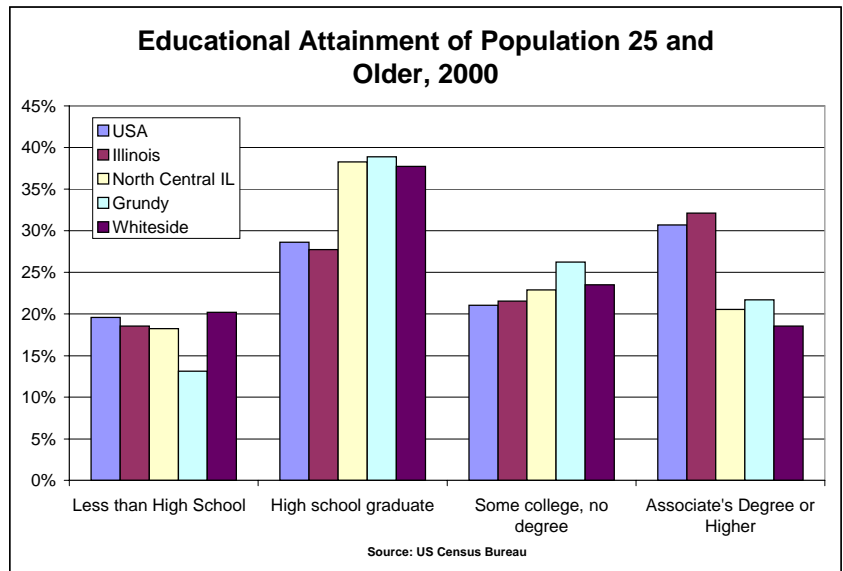
the upper-middle bracket, and 83% in the top bracket. The researchers pointed to not one, but three digital divides:

- ◆ Access to the Internet;
- ◆ Knowledge of how to use it well enough to take advantage of its benefits; and
- ◆ Access through high-speed cable, DSL, or other broadband delivery systems.

The chief executive of the consulting firm that performed the study remarked that in the future, lack of broadband access would be “the equivalent of having the moderate and upper classes in IMAX theatres while the underprivileged are still watching silent movies.”

### Educational Attainment Limits New Economy Potential

Computer knowledge in particular is becoming a “basic skill” as much as reading, writing, and arithmetic. At present, over half (57%) of all Americans over the age of 25 who are employed use a computer at work, and by the year 2010, jobs in the computer and mathematical fields are expected to increase by 67%. Illinois Valley Community College conducted a survey of business and industry in 1997 to identify training needs in the surrounding area. While training in computer skills was indicated by a large number of firms, skills in lowest demand in terms of the number of employees needing training included writing computer programs, making hardware and software work, and using algebra and trigonometry.



The current workforce may not possess adequate education and skills to function well in the new economy. Educational attainment in North Central Illinois is significantly lower than in the state or nation, with just over 20% of residents having an associate’s degree or higher, compared to over 30% for the state and nation. By county, there is not a tremendous amount of variation. Putnam and Bureau counties have slightly higher educational attainment than Lee and La Salle, with Bureau County having the highest percentage of residents with at least an associate’s degree. Compared to its neighbors, North Central is better educated than Whiteside County, and less educated than Grundy County.

Raising the education level and skills of the population may be challenging. While there are a large number of postsecondary institutions in and near the region, they are not readily accessible for people who currently work full-time.

## Most Firms are Small

Nearly 83% of private sector firms in North Central Illinois are small, employing 1-49 people. If the usual definition of “small business” is used, (less than 500), all but 11 firms in the region would be considered small.

The small private sector businesses employing 1-49 workers may represent 83% of firms, but they employ only 46% of all private sector workers. The 219 firms that have 50 workers or more employ 54% (31,761). The 11 businesses that employ 500 or more (only .26% of all private sector firms) workers represent over 7,000 people (12% of all workers).

Smaller businesses are less likely to have their own internal training resources and may need assistance in upgrading the skills of their workforce. Nationally, most new job growth occurs in small firms so they are important to the industry base. Meeting their needs should be balanced against assisting the large firms, who will have the biggest impact on the economy should they cease to be competitive.

### Private and Public Sector Employment by Size, March 2001

Size Category	Private Sector		Public Sector		Total	
	# Firms	Emp.	# Firms	Emp.	# Firms	Emp.
No Employment	510	0	40	0	550	0
1 to 4	1,785	3,916	112	247	1,897	4,163
5 to 9	828	5,483	41	284	869	5,767
10 to 19	561	7,567	30	391	591	7,958
20 to 49	331	9,985	39	1,261	370	11,246
50 to 99	115	7,794	27	1,861	142	9,655
100 to 249	75	10,766	23	3,281	98	14,047
250 to 499	18	6,080	8	2,984	26	9,064
500 or more	11	7,121	2	1,052	13	8,173
Total	4,234	58,712	322	11,361	4,556	70,073

Source: Illinois Department of Employment Security (Workforce Info Center)

## Implications

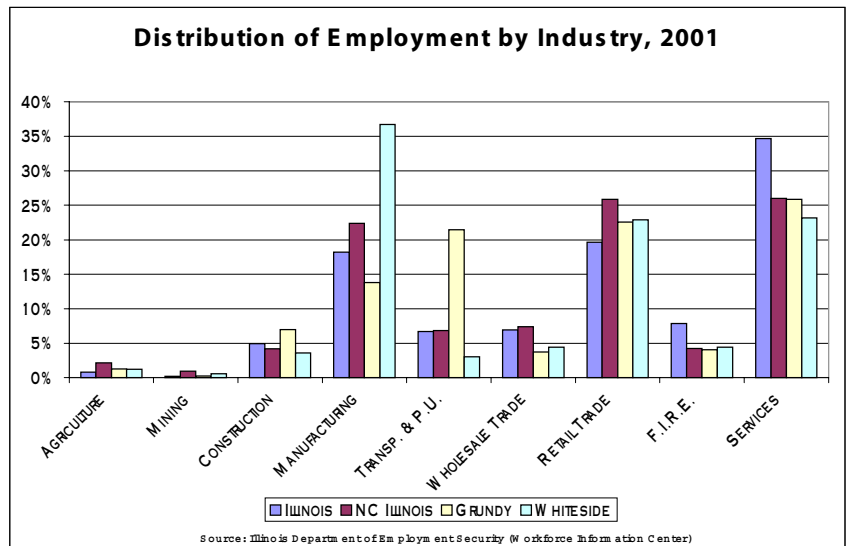
- North Central can capitalize on its location, Enterprise Zones, and TIF districts to attract traditional business.
- The region currently has few “new economy” jobs. The infrastructure and workforce are not present to attract them.
- The region needs to maintain a “balanced portfolio” in helping small and large businesses in growth and worker skill development.

- North Central has choices to make about its future. With its easy access to the Chicago metropolitan area, it could choose to lure higher-wage, higher-skill jobs from the city by promoting its quality of life, although doing so will require upgrades to housing and technology infrastructure as well as the skills of the workforce. Or, the region could build upon its attraction to traditional firms. Doing so will require attention to the aging physical infrastructure, helping manufacturing become “advanced manufacturing,” and finding opportunities to keep young people in the area.

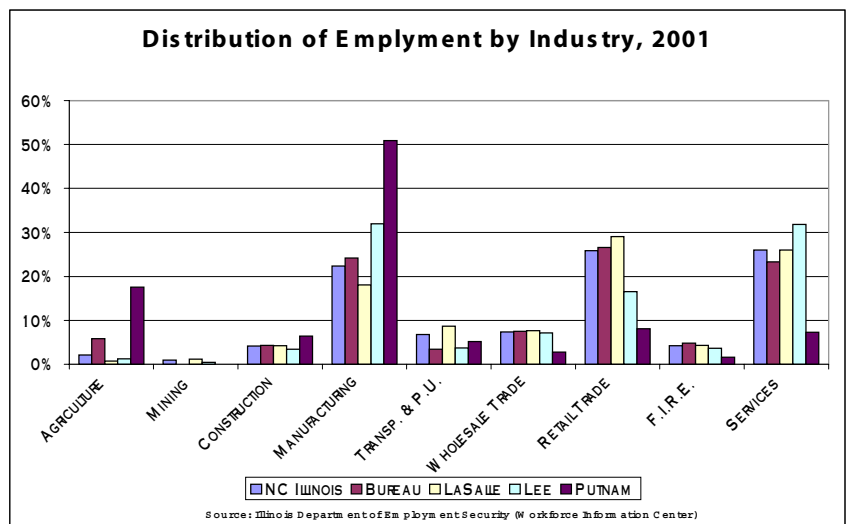
## Section Two: The Industry Mix is Changing

### Retail Trade, Services, and Manufacturing Dominate Employment

Retail trade, services, and manufacturing employ the largest percentage of workers in the region. Retail trade holds 25.9% and the services industry holds 26% of the region total share of employment. Whiteside is considerably more dependent on manufacturing than North Central. Grundy reflects its closer link to the Chicago metropolitan area with its high percentage of TCPU employment.

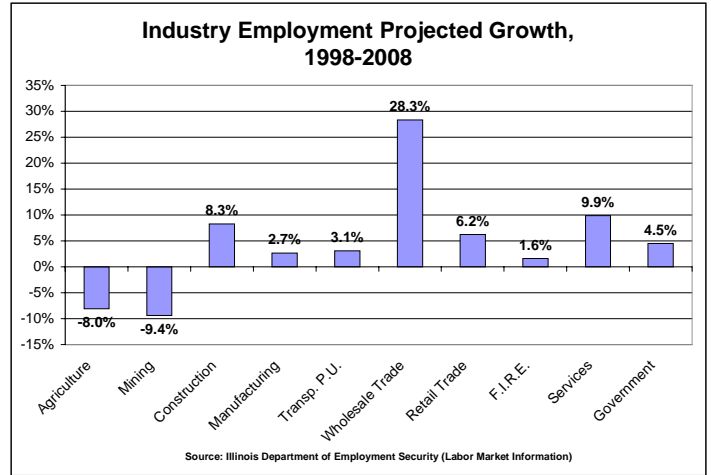
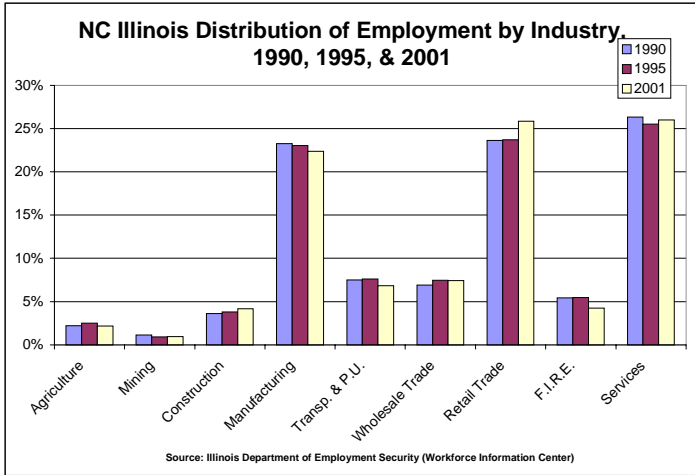


Within the region itself, Putnam is the most dependent on manufacturing. Interestingly, it also has the highest percentage of agricultural employment.

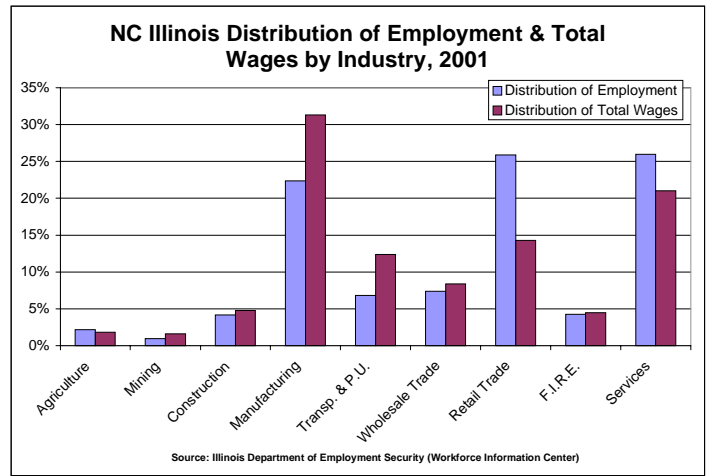


The industry mix is slowly but surely changing in a way that is consistent with national trends. Manufacturing's relative share of total employment and total wages has been declining, while retail trade has been increasing.

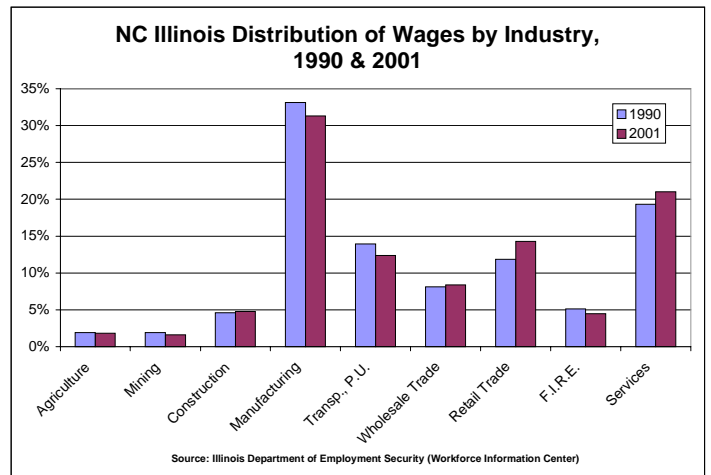
The largest numeric increase is projected to be in the services industry, with projections of 2,300 more jobs by 2008. Wholesale trade is projected to have tremendous growth, due almost entirely to Bureau County. However, the figures may be misleading. Wholesale trade is a rather small sector to begin with, so increases will look very large when expressed as percentages. Additionally, wholesale trade decreased between 1991 and 2001, so merely regaining jobs that had been lost make it look as if it is growing at an astonishing clip.



Manufacturing has been important to the region because of the wages it pays. Manufacturing represents only 22.4% of all employment, but it pays over 30% of the total wages in region. Manufacturing is particularly important due to its multiplier effect on the economy. According to national data developed by Virginia's A.L. Philpott Manufacturing Extension Partnership (VPMEP), "Every \$1 million in final sales of manufactured products supports 10 jobs in the manufacturing sector and six jobs in other sectors such as services, construction, and agriculture. Because the service sector is more labor intensive than the manufacturing sector, \$1 million in final sales of services supports 17 jobs. However, since the service sector has a smaller multiplier effect on the rest of the economy, \$1 million in its final sales supports only two jobs in the sectors outside of services."



Manufacturing, however, is particularly susceptible to general economic conditions. The U.S. Conference of Mayors' report notes that the Chicago metropolitan region's "manufacturing array is susceptible to cyclical weakness and various durable goods producers face significant structural challenges." And, in fact, Whiteside County, which is the most heavily dependent on

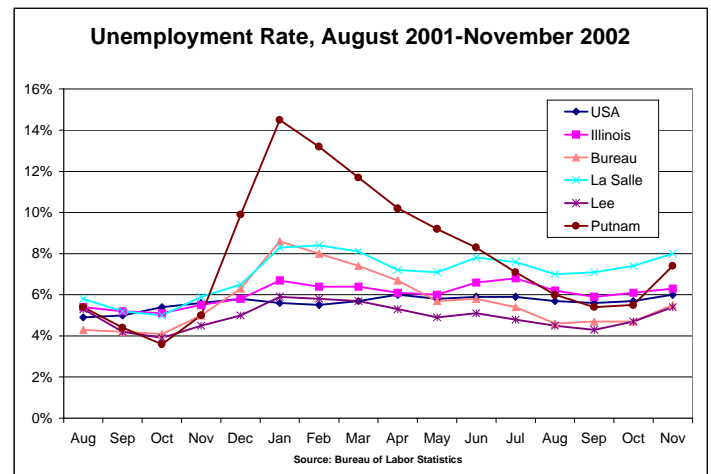
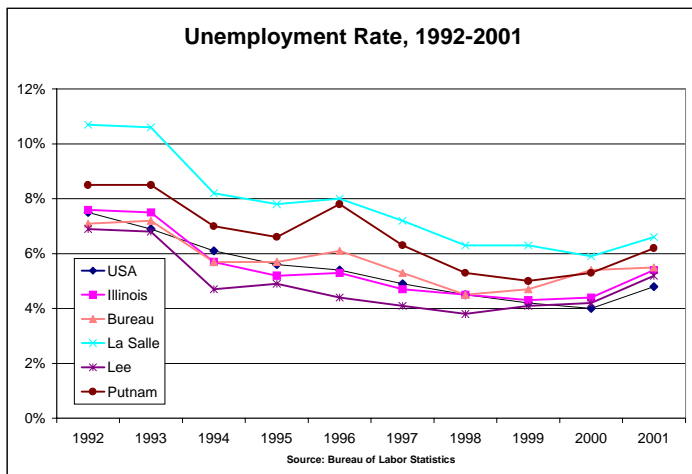
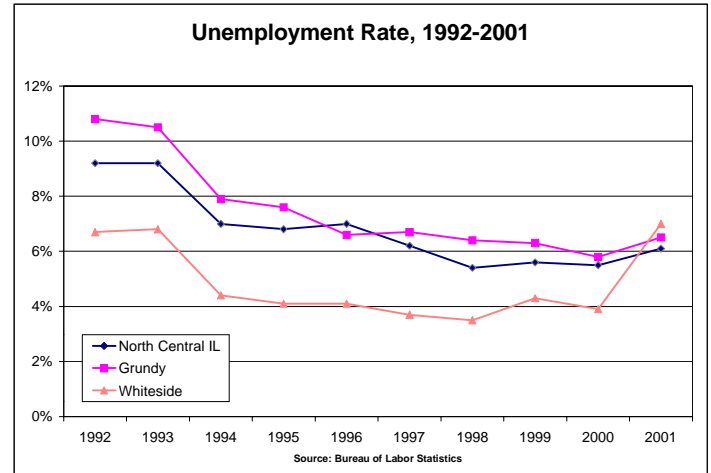


manufacturing, has experienced a sharper increase in unemployment since 2000 than North Central.

## Unemployment Higher than State or Nation

Overall unemployment among the counties of North Central Illinois is higher than in the state or nation.

A closer look at month-by-month unemployment figures shows North Central has had greater ups and downs in its rate than the state or nation. This may be because with much smaller numbers of workers to begin with, singular events (such as the one in Putnam County between December 2001 and January 2002) can cause large percentage changes.



## Leading Industries Include Declining Sectors

Within the leading industries of services, retail trade, and manufacturing, some sectors declined over the last decade while others increased. Declining sectors include four in manufacturing: primary metals; transportation equipment; stone, clay, and glass products; and miscellaneous manufacturing.

### Industry Sectors with Employment Declines Since 1990

SIC	Industry Sectors	1990 Employment	2001 Employment	1990-2001 Change
5600	Apparel And Accessory Stores	1,296	222	-1,074
2400	Lumber And Wood Products	763	198	-565
3300	Primary Metal Industries	1,238	808	-430

<b>SIC</b>	<b>Industry Sectors</b>	<b>1990 Employment</b>	<b>2001 Employment</b>	<b>1990-2001 Change</b>
3700	Transportation Equipment	977	590	-387
6300	Insurance Carriers	475	126	-349
3200	Stone, Clay, And Glass Products	1,657	1,410	-247
1600	Heavy Construction, Ex. Building	380	174	-206
4200	Motor Freight Transportation And Warehouse	1,960	1,761	-199
3900	Miscellaneous Manufacturing Industries	472	293	-179
8000	Health Services	6,856	6,733	-123

Source: Illinois Department of Employment Security, Workforce Information Center

Total employment decreases from the ten industries listed above represent over 3,700 jobs since 1990. Unfortunately, three of the declining sectors are also represented in the list of the 20 largest sectors by employment.

### **North Central Illinois Top Twenty Industry Sectors by Employment**

<b>SIC</b>	<b>Industry Sector</b>	<b>Firms</b>	<b>Employment</b>	<b>Percent of Total Employment</b>
8000	Health Services	283	6,733	11.6%
5800	Eating And Drinking Places	416	4,859	8.4%
5500	Automotive Dealers And Gasoline Service	179	2,413	4.2%
5300	General Merchandise Stores	29	2,385	4.1%
3500	Industrial Machinery And Equipment	53	2,287	3.9%
5900	Miscellaneous Retail	181	2,286	3.9%
5100	Wholesale Trade-nondurable Goods	173	2,233	3.8%
3400	Fabricated Metal Products	30	2,119	3.6%
5000	Wholesale Trade-durable Goods	127	2,113	3.6%
5400	Food Stores	84	1,916	3.3%
4200	Motor Freight Transportation And Warehousing	211	1,761	3.0%
1700	Special Trade Contractors	306	1,646	2.8%
6000	Depository Institutions	85	1,590	2.7%
7300	Business Services	124	1,565	2.7%
8300	Social Services	81	1,539	2.6%
2000	Food And Kindred Products	21	1,419	2.4%
3200	Stone, Clay, And Glass Products	24	1,410	2.4%
3000	Rubber And Misc. Plastics Products	11	1,274	2.2%
4900	Electric, Gas, And Sanitary Services	24	1,206	2.1%
2700	Printing And Publishing	32	1,015	1.7%

Source: Illinois Department of Employment Security, Workforce Information Center

The twenty sectors above represent a very significant 75% of all employment in the four counties. Health services is by far the largest sector in the region by size. Surprisingly, it declined in numbers over the last decade despite an increase in regional population that would require such services. The health care industry, however, is anticipated to grow by over 14% by 2008 (over 1998 numbers). Stone, clay, and glass products and motor freight transportation and warehousing join health services in the short list of large sectors that declined in absolute numbers as well as in percentage of total employment in the last decade.

The list of the top 50 private sector employers in the region reflects the top industry sectors (Appendix B).

## Government is a Major Employer

The industry data presented above reflects private sector employment and distribution. However, the public sector is a significant source of employment for many workers in North Central Illinois. While health services employs about 6,700 workers in the region, government employs over 11,000.

### Government Employment by Type, March 2001

Region	Federal	State	Local	Total
NC Illinois	634	1,157	9,570	11,361
Bureau	155	0	2,280	2,435
La Salle	352	449	5,366	6,167
Lee	102	708	1,648	2,458
Putnam	25	0	276	301

Source: Illinois Department of Employment Security (Workforce Info Center)

“Government” includes local school systems. As the chart in the next section shows, elementary school teachers are the tenth largest occupation.

## Top Occupations Include Many Low-Paying Jobs

High wage jobs are not readily available in the region for workers that may be displaced from declining sectors. The list of the top twenty occupations by size in the region reveals that twelve of them average less than \$25,000 per year.

### Top 20 Occupations by Demand in North Central Illinois

Occupational Title <sup>4</sup>	1998 Empl	2008 Empl.	Median Annual Wage	Part-Time Quartile	Unempl. Quartile	Education or Training Requirements
1. Farmers*	4,173	3,840	\$37,504	NA	NA	NA
2. Retail Salespersons	2,658	2,863	\$16,742	Very High	Very High	Short-term on-the-job training
3. General Managers & Top Execs	2,407	2,651	\$94,050	Low	Very Low	Degree plus work experience
4. Cashiers	2,343	2,605	\$13,146	Very High	Very High	Short-term on-the-job training
5. Farm Workers, Exc. Agric. Services*	2,181	1,935	\$17,448	NA	NA	NA
6. Truck Drivers, Heavy and Tractor-Trailer	2,084	2,359	\$29,625	Low	High	Moderate-term on-the-job training
7. Secretaries, Except Legal, Medical, and Executive	1,663	1,549	\$20,247	High	Low	Moderate-term on-the-job training
8. Office Clerks, General	1,515	1,686	\$21,687	High	High	Short-term on-the-job training
9. Marketing Managers	1,384	1,600	\$66,422	Very Low	Low	Degree plus work experience
10. Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education	1,351	1,356	\$29,053	Low	Very Low	Bachelor's degree
11. Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	1,285	1,261	\$15,270	High	Very High	Short-term on-the-job training
12. Registered Nurses	1,261	1,414	\$37,361	High	Very Low	Associate's degree

<sup>4</sup> “\*” Next to occupation title indicates that WIA 12 Wages were not provided, so state wages were used instead.

Occupational Title <sup>4</sup>	1998 Empl	2008 Empl.	Median Annual Wage	Part-Time Quartile	Unempl. Quartile	Education or Training Requirements
13. Managers, All Other	1,224	1,234	\$50,586	Very Low	Very Low	Work experience in a related occupation
14. Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks	1,219	1,132	\$20,678	Very High	Low	Moderate-term on-the-job training
15. Nursing Aides, Orderlies, and Attendants	1,187	1,346	\$18,087	High	High	Short-term on-the-job training
16. Waiters and Waitresses	1,122	1,193	\$12,826	Very High	Very High	Short-term on-the-job training
17. Stock Clerks	1,066	1,047	\$16,820	Very High	Very High	Short-term on-the-job training
18. Helpers--All Other	991	1,041	\$16,666	Low	Very High	Short-term on-the-job training
19. Food Preparation Workers	876	898	\$14,359	Very High	Very High	Short-term on-the-job training
20. Administrative Services Managers	858	971	\$30,370	Very Low	Very Low	Degree plus work experience

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Illinois Department of Employment Security - Labor Market Information

## Implications

- Manufacturing continues to be a strong part of the North Central economy. The wages it pays make it critical. However, the region's industry mix is undergoing a slow shift toward more services and retail trade employment. Average wages in these industries are lower than in manufacturing, and many of the top occupations in the region offer relatively low wages.
- Maintaining the quality of life in North Central will require development of higher wage jobs, which in today's world translates into higher skill jobs. The region can choose to address its unemployment through development of many lower skill, lower wage jobs that fit the current labor force needs, or choose to accept slightly higher unemployment while pursuing the creation of a smaller number of higher skill, higher wage jobs.

## Section Three: The Future May Hold Labor and Skill Shortages

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### Population Expected to Decline by 2020

The population of the region has grown by only 3.5% since 1990, compared to 8.6% for the state and 13.2% for the nation. Bureau County actually declined in population since 1990. Compared to its neighbors, North Central Illinois is growing faster than Whiteside County, but slower than fast-growing Grundy County.

#### Population Change, 1990-2000

	1990	2000	Change	% Growth
USA	248,709,873	281,421,906	32,712,033	13.2%
Illinois	11,430,602	12,419,293	988,691	8.6%
North Central IL	182,723	189,160	6,437	3.5%
Bureau	35,688	35,503	-185	-0.5%
La Salle	106,913	111,509	4,596	4.3%
Lee	34,392	36,062	1,670	4.9%
Putnam	5,730	6,086	356	6.2%
Grundy	32,337	37,535	5,198	16.1%
Whiteside	60,186	60,653	467	0.8%

Source: US Census Bureau

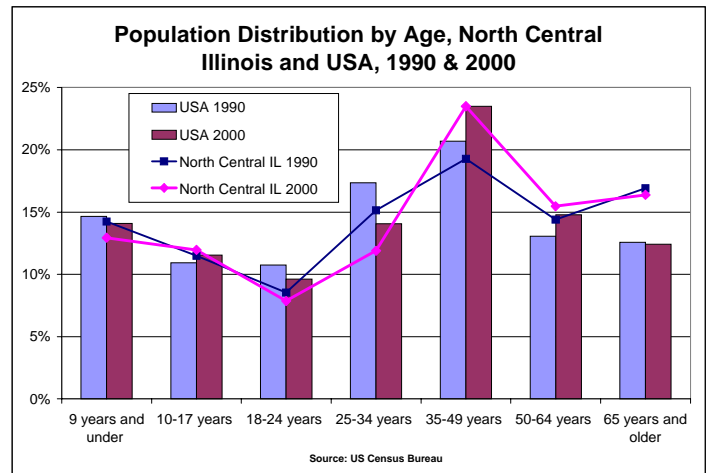
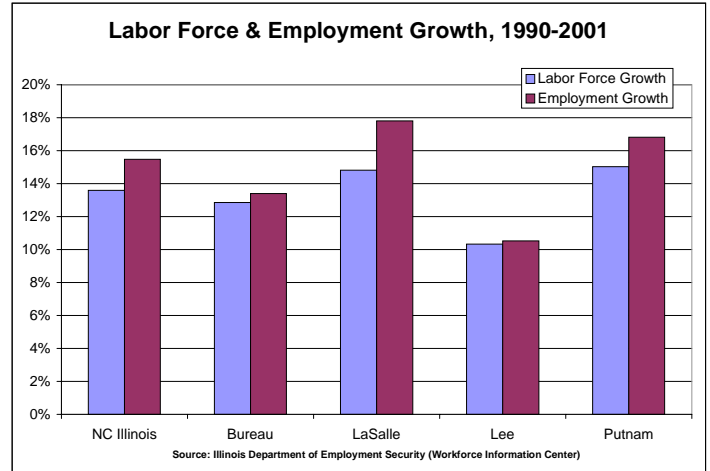
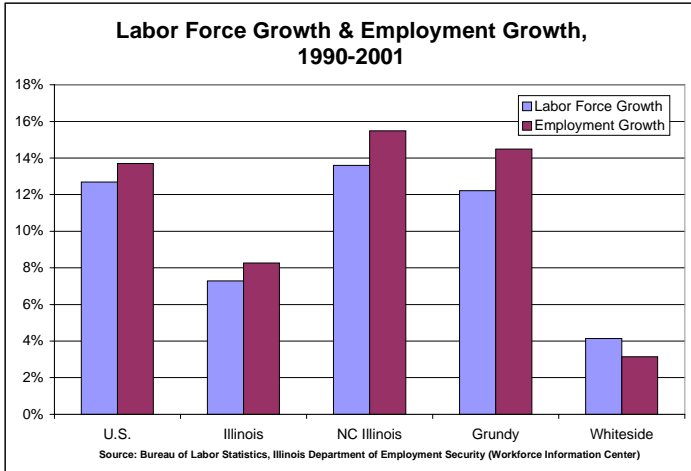
The moderate growth seen over the last ten years is not expected to continue, with the region's population projected to decrease by 1.2% between 2001 and 2020.

#### Population Change, 2001-2020 Projections

	2001	2020	% Growth	County Rank in State (out of 102)
Illinois	287,781	288,052	0.1%	
North Central	188,955	186,753	-1.2%	
Bureau	35,280	34,297	-2.8%	71
La Salle	111,580	110,472	-1.0%	64
Lee	35,971	36,110	0.4%	57
Putnam	6,124	5,874	-4.1%	73
Grundy	38,331	43,484	13.4%	21
Whiteside	60,495	57,815	-4.4%	75

Source: Illinois State University

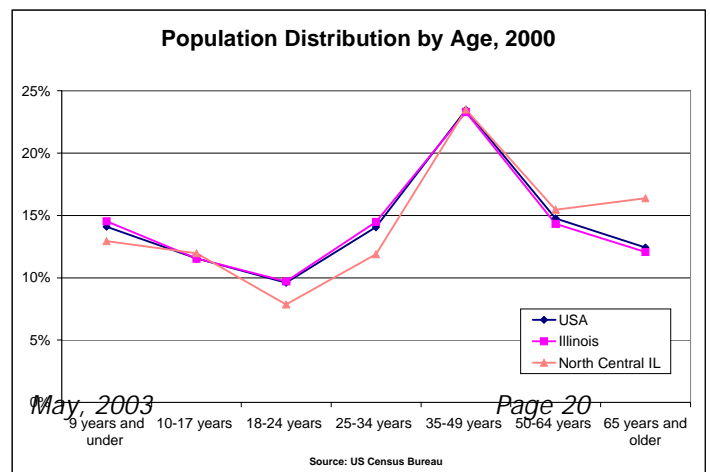
This is bad news for the labor supply since employment grew faster than the labor force in every county. North Central's trend again mirrors the state and nation, which saw similar discrepancies in labor force and employment growth rates. Only Whiteside County experienced the opposite situation, with labor force growth between 1990 and 2001 surpassing the growth of employment.



Labor shortages may be expected if these trends continue, particularly in view of the population projections for 2020. And while North Central prides itself as being a place where people come to retire because of the quality of life, individuals who come to retire make the numbers worse: they may offset some of the population loss, but they do not add to the labor force.

### The Population is Aging

To confound the situation, North Central's population is aging fast, with decreases in the 25-34 year age cohort, and increases in the 35-49 and 50-64 year age cohorts. Compared to the state and nation, the region has a higher percentage of its population in the 65 year and older age



cohort, and lower percentages in the 18-24 and 25-34 year age cohorts.

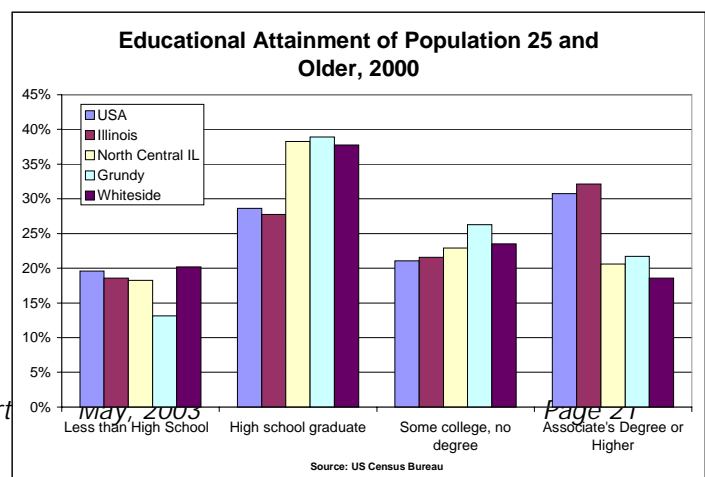
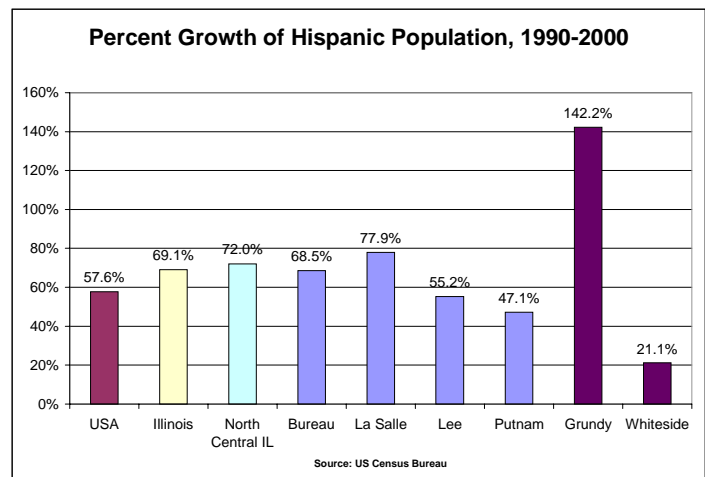
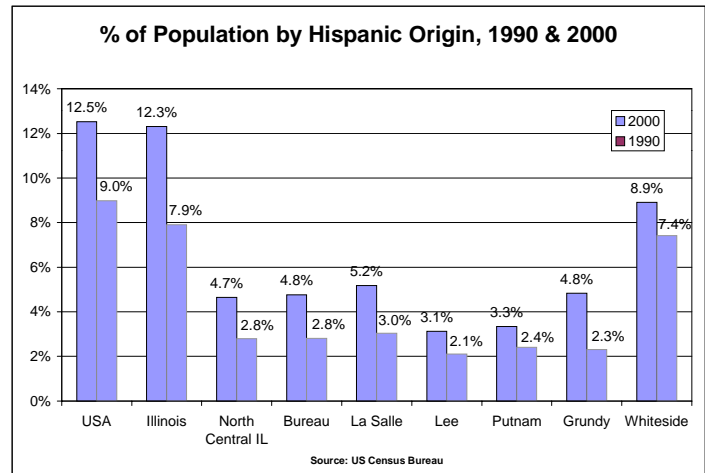
As the large “baby boomer” cohort reaches retirement age, there could be significant implications for the labor force. The retirees will not only reduce the numbers of workers available, but will take their skills and years of experience with them. The likely increase in the need for health care services for this aging population will also exacerbate the problems associated with a shortage of skilled workers in that industry.

## Cultural Diversity is Increasing

Some areas of the country are starting to see growth in the population age 9 and under as a result of increased immigration. Birthrates among immigrants, particularly Hispanics, are more than a third higher than native-born white populations. While North Central is remarkably lacking in racial diversity, it has experienced an increase in the Hispanic population, particularly in LaSalle County (Hispanics may be of any race). In 1990, only 2.8% of the population was Hispanic compared to 4.7% in 2000. The percent growth of the Hispanic population is actually higher than in both the state and nation, thanks to La Salle County’s 77.9% growth (the other 3 counties are lower than the state level, and Lee and Putnam counties are lower than the national level).

The dramatic growth in the Hispanic population in Grundy County is a consequence of overall population growth in the county, not a significant increase just in the Hispanic population, but it probably contributed to Grundy’s somewhat younger population. Actual numbers of the Hispanic population may be somewhat higher than statistics show, since they are often under-reported in census counts.

While an increase in immigrants may help offset the anticipated population



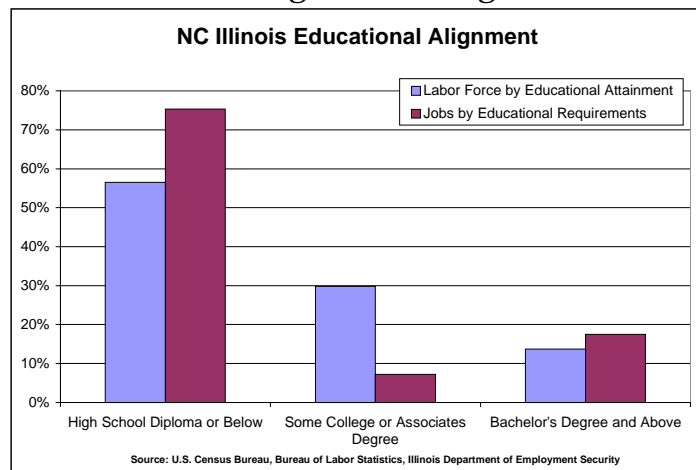
declines and looming retirements, immigrants may not help address education and skill shortages.

## Educational Attainment Not Aligned with Demand

Educational attainment in North Central Illinois is significantly lower than in the state or nation, with just over 20% of residents having an associate's degree or higher, compared to over 30% for the state and nation. Compared to its neighbors, North Central is better educated than Whiteside County, and less educated than Grundy County. As a bedroom community to Chicago, Grundy is an attractive place to live for people who work in the higher skill and wage jobs available in the city proper.

Educational levels are already out of alignment with educational requirements in the region. There are more jobs that require a four-year degree than there are workers to fill them, which is vastly different from what is seen in the greater Chicago area, where the number of workers with bachelor and advanced degrees far exceeds the demand.

Individuals with only a high school diploma should have little trouble finding jobs, although employers looking for entry-level workers may have a harder time finding them. The high percentage of jobs that require no more than a high school diploma implies considerable low-wage employment.



The labor and/or skills shortage is particularly apparent in the health care industry. *North Central Illinois Works'* Health Care Industry Survey reported that 52% of health care employers are having difficulty finding entry-level employees and that employee turnover is a problem. The nature of the industry itself contributes to the shortage because of shift work, administrative duties that detract from patient care, stress, and competition between hospitals and doctors' offices. Registered nurses are a particular concern because the nursing workforce is aging. The average RN is in the 40-45 year age bracket. North Central's generally aging population will further increase the need for health care professionals. However, home care and elder services are traditionally provided by women under the age of 55. But in the next two decades, the number of elderly persons will rise nationally by 66% while the number of prime working age females will only rise by 3%.<sup>5</sup> An increase in home and elder care services is necessary

<sup>5</sup> Aspen Institute, "Grow Faster Together or Grow Slowly Apart"

to allow adult children to be able to work, but on the negative side, adding low-wage home and elder care provider jobs to the economy has an adverse affect.

## Available Labor Supply Mostly White, Male, High School Graduates

The available “labor supply” registered through the one-stop workforce development system reflects the general population statistics. Job registration candidates are primarily white males in prime working years with a high school diploma.

### Demographics of JS Applicants

#### Age

15 and Under	0
16-19	0
20-21	183
22-44	3,105
45-54	1,121
55-64	0
65-Over	0
INA	0
Total	4,409

#### Sex

Male	3,207
Female	1,879
INA	56
Total	5,142

#### Race/Ethnicity

White	4,571
Black	82
Hispanic	249
Amr. Indian-Alaskan Native	40
Asian-Pacific Islanders	14
INA	184
Total	5,140

#### Highest School Grade

Less than 12 <sup>th</sup>	350
12 <sup>th</sup>	2,948
Over 12 <sup>th</sup>	1,836

The Illinois Valley Region Workforce Report and Training Observations identified 14,800 underemployed workers in the Illinois Valley labor shed. The study also found 8,950 unemployed workers and 3,100 who were not working but contemplating re-entering the workforce. Ten percent (10%) of underemployed workers said they would change jobs for wages starting at \$7.47 per hour, 33% would change for \$10.59 per hour, and 50% would change for \$13.00 per hour. Thus, there may be more workers

available if employers are willing to pay the right wages, and if the workers have the right skills.

## Workers Have Training Needs

While employers rank their employees highly in terms of productivity, timeliness, and job retention, they are very concerned about educational competencies and skill gaps according to the Illinois Valley report. Illinois Valley Community College's 1997 survey of businesses reported that 59% of firms indicated their employees would require some training over the coming year. Corporation for a Skilled Workforce analyzed the top skills in demand by examining the top 25 occupations in the region in terms of employment numbers, and weighing and ranking by level each of 46 specific skills that are required for those occupations.

The resulting skills list reveals skills that may not always be taught or assessed in educational institutions, yet they are critical to success in the top occupations in North Central Illinois.

### Skills in Demand

Rank	Skill	Level
1	Reading Comprehension	47
2	Active Listening	47
3	Speaking	44
4	Problem Identification	43
5	Writing	43
6	Information Gathering	39
7	Mathematics	38
8	Social Perceptiveness	38
9	Coordination	38
10	Service Orientation	38
11	Monitoring	37
12	Information Organization	36
13	Critical Thinking	36
14	Solution Appraisal	35
15	Identification of Key Causes	34
16	Judgment and Decision Making	34
17	Learning Strategies	32
18	Idea Generation	31
19	Time Management	31
20	Active Learning	31
21	Idea Evaluation	31
22	Product Inspection	30
23	Implementation Planning	29
24	Instructing	29
25	Systems Perception	29

Source: O\*Net Occupational Viewer

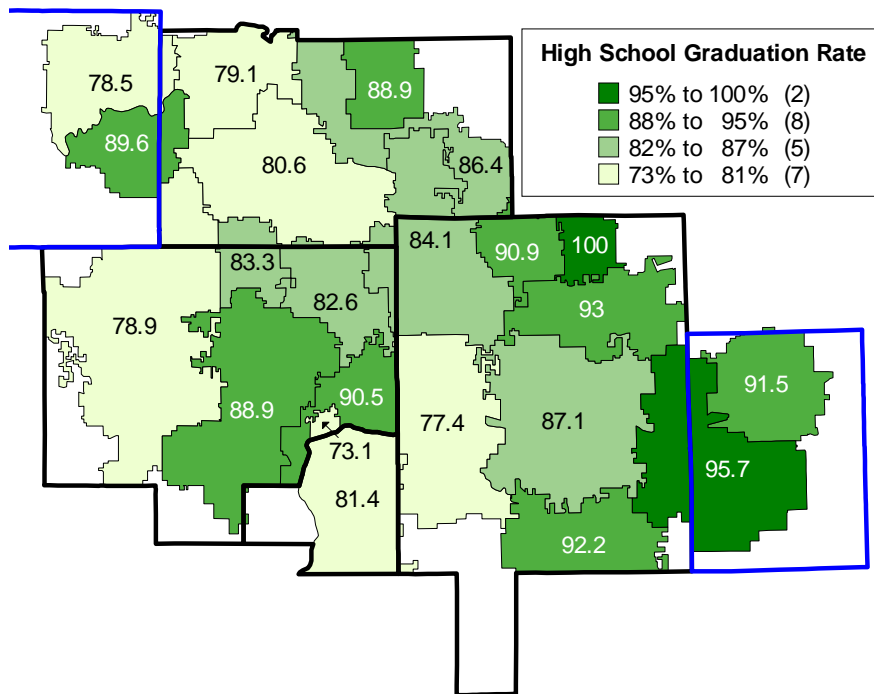
To handle its employment growth, North Central will need to fully develop the capacity of the current labor force. There are many educational institutions in the region and surrounding area, but they are not readily accessible for people who work full time (see Appendix A for a complete list).

## Youth Needed to Fill Future Labor Shortages

The region will also need to nurture – and retain – its future workforce supply. North Central’s school systems are not large, but they perform relatively well. The maps on the following pages display data by school district. This is more effective than attempting to aggregate to the county level, since school districts often cross county lines. The only school districts included in the maps below are those that have a high school located in one of the four North Central Illinois counties, plus districts surrounding the communities of Morris, Rock Falls and Sterling in neighboring counties. Blank spaces represent portions of the county that are in a school district where the actual high school is located outside of the four-county region.

The graduation rate<sup>6</sup> for the state as a whole was 85.2% in 2001-02. Ten out of 22 (45%) school districts in North Central had a rate lower than the state.

### High School Graduation Rates by School District, 2001-2002

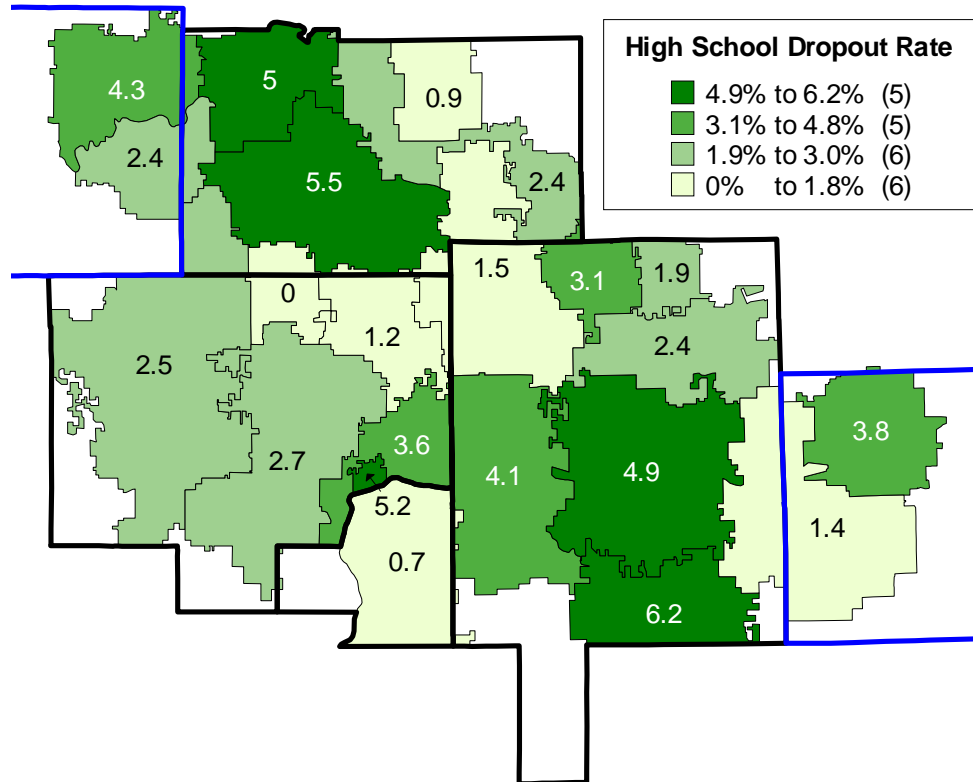


The dropout rate<sup>7</sup> for the state as a whole is 5.1%. Only 3 (14%) of school districts in North Central exceeded the state rate. Generally speaking, dropout rates were higher in Lee and La Salle counties than in Bureau and Putnam.

<sup>6</sup> The high school graduation rate is defined as the number of 2001-02 high school graduates divided by the first-time ninth grade 1998 fall enrollment less students transferred out plus students transferred in multiplied by 100. [Numerator = number of graduates; denominator = (9th grade enrollment-transfers out) + transfers in]. Transfers refer to this specific graduation class and are accumulated over a four-year period.

Note that due to the small enrollment of each school district, dropout rates will be dramatically affected by only one or two individuals, and will likely vary significantly from year to year.

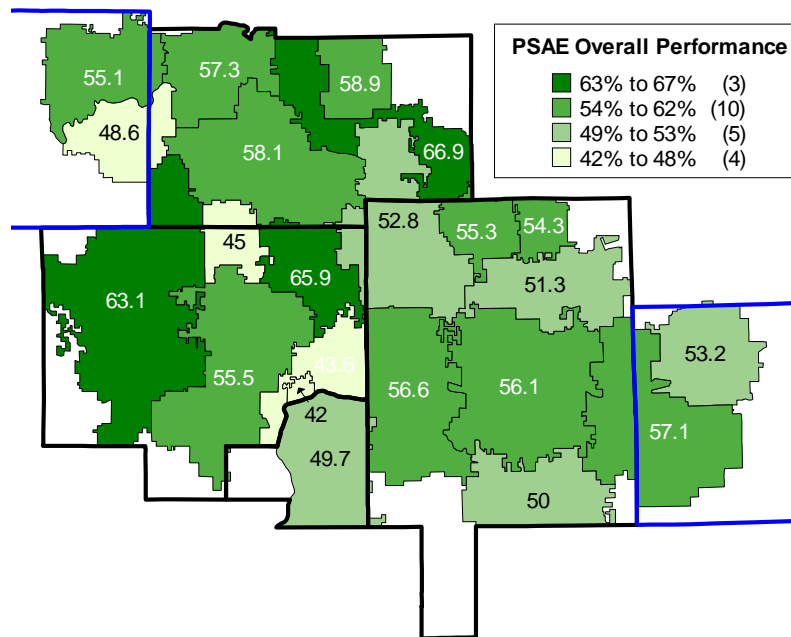
### High School Dropout Rate by School District, 2001-2002



At the state level, 56.1% of students met or exceeded state standards on the PSAE exam. Ten of the North Central region school districts equaled or exceeded this rate, while the other 12 fell below it. Lee County had the highest rates overall, while Bureau County showed significant variation from district to district. Once again, due to the small enrollment numbers (and even smaller numbers of students taking the PSAE test that year) the data is subject to dramatic shifts.

<sup>7</sup> The high school dropout rate is defined as the number of dropouts divided by the fall enrollment less post-graduates multiplied by 100. Dropouts include students in grades 9-12 whose names have been removed from the district-housed roster for any reason other than death, extended illness, graduation/completion of a program of studies, transfer to another public/private school, or expulsion.

## Percent of Students Meeting or Exceeding State Standards – PSAE Composite Scores by School District, 2001-2002



### Implications

- The North Central region is facing general labor shortages as result of low population growth, an aging workforce, and employment growth that is faster than population growth.
- The region has options for meeting labor shortages:
  - ◆ Promote flexible personnel policies that enable older workers to remain in the workforce rather than retire, or to return to the workforce if they have already retired.
  - ◆ Encourage immigration to increase both numbers and diversity.
  - ◆ Develop the underemployed and those with barriers to employment to maximize the population the region does have.
  - ◆ Create challenging opportunities that will encourage young people to remain in the area.
- Regardless of labor supply, the area also faces current and future skill shortages. Options may include:
  - ◆ Enhancing incumbent worker skill development through regional skill alliances.

- ◆ Promoting distance learning offerings that enable more people to access training through their homes or in their communities.
- ◆ Ensuring youth stay in school, take challenging coursework, develop critical skills, and pursue postsecondary options for in-demand occupations.
- ◆ Attracting the “surplus” of degreed workers from nearby areas, such as Chicago, where supply exceeds demand.

## Section Four: Quality of Life is an Asset to Protect

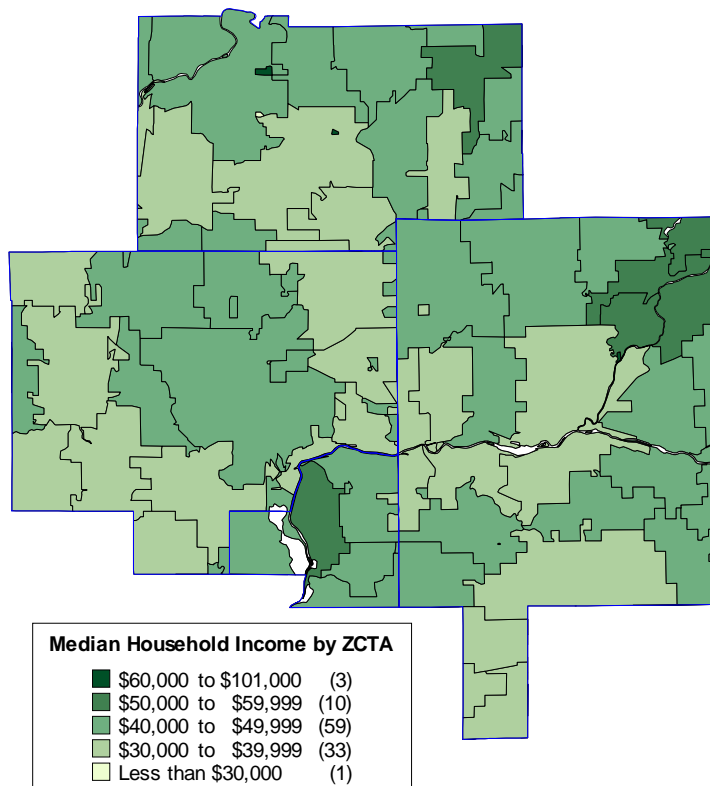
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In meeting with key community stakeholders to discuss the strengths and opportunities within the North Central Illinois region, a dominant and recurring theme presented itself. The “quality of life” in the region is exceptional. The people and communities are safe and friendly, schools are good, housing is affordable and traffic congestion is minimal. The business base also benefits from a strong work ethic, the region is ideally located within the geography and business culture of the state and natural resources are rich and abundant. There are also areas of concern. There is a dearth of mid-range housing, education funding is declining, and there is a shortage of experienced teachers and skilled health care workers.

### Median Income Lower Than State

Common indicators of the quality of life within a region include median income levels, housing availability and affordability, and education systems. Median incomes for counties in the region are lower than for the state by about \$5,000-\$6,000, with the exception of Putnam County, which is virtually equal to the state.

### Median Household Income by Zip Code Tabulation Area (ZCTA)

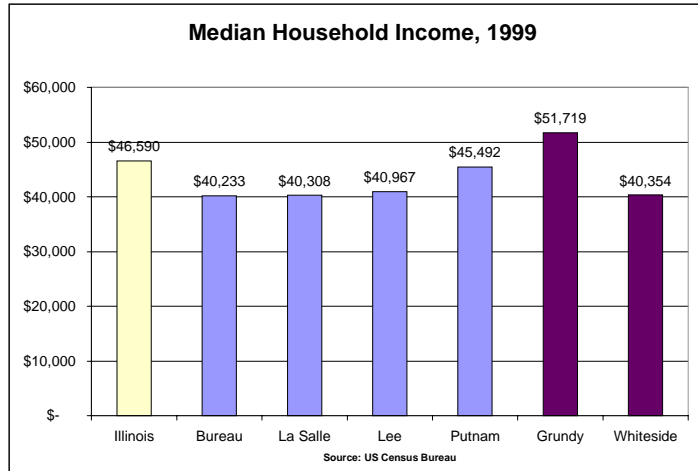


The median income in neighboring Whiteside County is about equal to that of the North Central Illinois counties while the median income in Grundy County is quite a bit higher.

Median incomes are remarkably consistent throughout the region, with nearly all Census Zip Code Tabulation Areas (ZCTAs) having median incomes between \$40,000 and \$60,000.

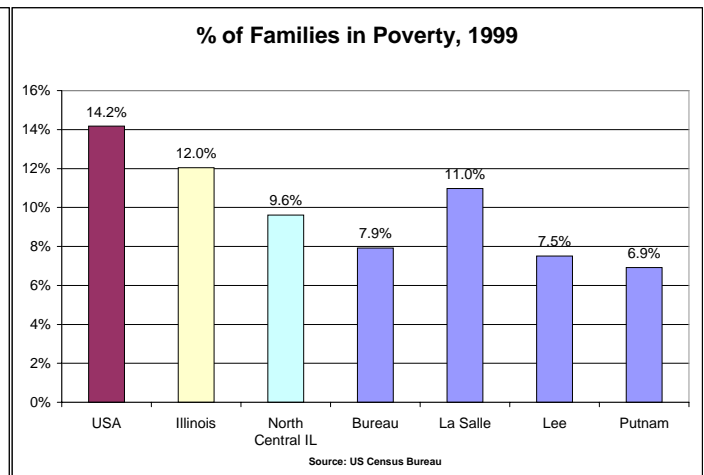
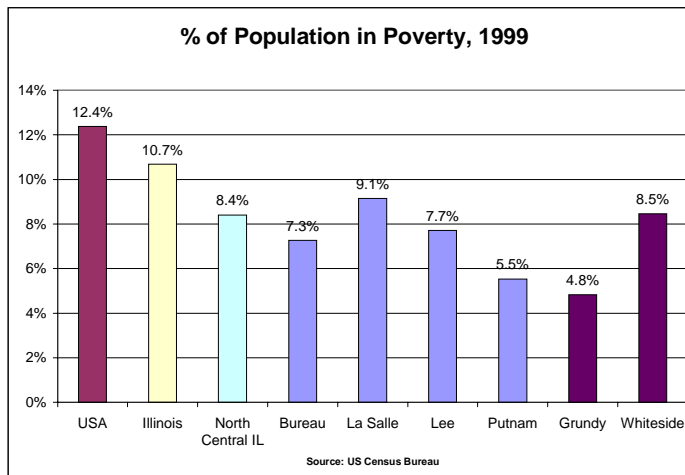
There are not large pockets of people with lower median incomes. In fact,

there is only one tiny area in Lee County where the average median income is under \$30,000. So, while there are fewer households with the highest income levels, there are also fewer households at the lowest income extremes. This fact is also reflected in the poverty data.



## Poverty Lower Than State and Nation

Poverty rates for both individuals and families are lower in North Central Illinois than for the state or nation. Within the region, La Salle County has the highest poverty, and Putnam County has the lowest. As is expected from the income data, Whiteside County has about the same amount of poverty as the North Central region, while Grundy County has much less, lower even than in Putnam County.



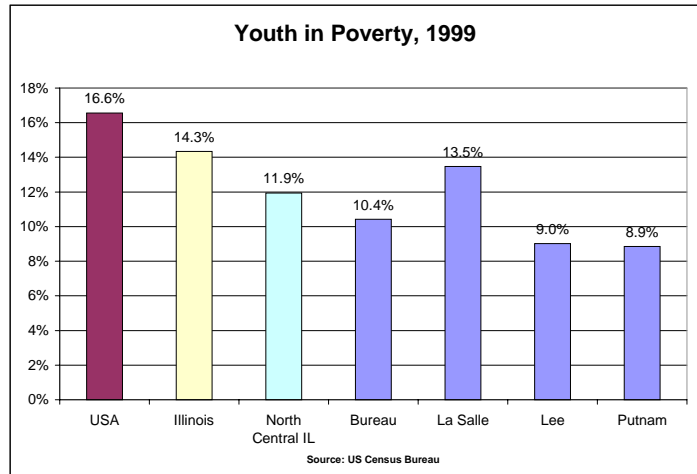
More variance is seen when looking at the effect of family type on poverty. While the percentage of single female-headed households in poverty in the region is very similar to the state and nation, this average figure hides the differences among the four counties in the region. In La Salle County, nearly 50% of single female-headed households are in



## Youth Poverty Lower than State or Nation

Like adult poverty mentioned previously, youth poverty rates in the region are lower than the state or nation. La Salle County, however, has much higher rates than the other counties, while still not reaching state and national rates.

It should also be noted that the numbers of low-income youth might be under counted. People in this largely rural region are less likely to apply for free and reduced school lunches even though they may be eligible. The citizens of these small communities know each other and pride prevents many from taking advantage of welfare support services available to them.



The National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP)

analyzed student achievement in 2000 relative to the poverty level of public schools, as measured by the percent of students eligible for free or reduced price lunch<sup>8</sup>. They found that not only did schools with high percentages of youth in poverty score less well, but that students who are not personally eligible for the free lunch but who attend schools with high rates of poverty scored lower than those in schools with lower rates of poverty. In addition to lower scores, schools with higher poverty rates were found to have:

- ◆ Higher rates of absenteeism.
- ◆ A lower percentage of students with a “very positive” attitude toward academic achievement.
- ◆ Less parental involvement.

## Child Welfare Points to Youth At-Risk

The welfare of the children within the four county region is further reflected in the health and welfare indicators teen pregnancy statistics detailed in the following tables.

### Child Health and Welfare Indicators

Indicator	Illinois	Bureau	LaSalle	Lee	Putnam
Number of Children, 2000		8,769	28,100	8,727	1,528
Child Abuse and Neglect (rate per 1000 children), 2001	7.5	9.8	15.5	14.8	7.9

<sup>8</sup> National Center for Education Statistics, [www.nces.ed.gov](http://www.nces.ed.gov), 1/20/03

Indicator	Illinois	Bureau	LaSalle	Lee	Putnam
% Change in Child Abuse and Neglect, 1997-2001	-26.5%	-14.0%	-19.3%	-14.0%	-24.8%
Children in Foster Care (rate per 1000 children), 2001	7.4	1.3	5.3	7.6	2.6
% Change in Children in Foster Care, 1997-2001	-48.6%	-62.9%	-1.9%	46.2%	0.0%
% of Children Receiving Food Stamps, 2001	12.6%	7.6%	10.2%	6.2%	8.7%
Infant Mortality (deaths per 1,000 children), 1997-2001	8.1	5.8	5.88	7.3	*
Low Birth Weight Babies (as % of all births), 1996-2000	8.0%	5.4%	6.0%	6.0%	5.3%
% Change in Low Birth Weight Babies, 1986-2000	6.7%	10.2%	5.3%	27.7%	-3.6%

Source: Illinois Kids County 2003

Child abuse and neglect rates in North Central Illinois are higher than in the state as a whole; this is true in all four of the counties in the region, including Putnam County. And although rates have declined in all four counties, they have done so to a lesser extent than in the state. The rate of children in foster care in the region is generally below state rates, with the exception of Lee County where it is not only higher, but has risen by over 46% since 1997 while all other areas have experienced either no increase or declines.

On the other hand, a smaller percentage of children in North Central Illinois receive food stamps, and infant mortality rates and the percent of low birth weight babies are both lower in North Central Illinois than in the state. Again, the data showing lower food stamp recipients may not be indicative of the true level of need in the region due to the low-income community's reduced inclination to take advantage of available services.

The Illinois Department of Health does not report teen pregnancy as a rate, so comparison from year to year is difficult. The chart below tracks teen pregnancies as a percent of all pregnancies. Therefore, increases in the percentage do not necessarily reflect more teens – or a higher percentage of teens – having babies. Increases could be the result of a decrease in the number of non-teen pregnancies and/or an increase in the number of pregnant teens.

#### Teen Pregnancies as Percent of All Pregnancies, 1995-2001

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Illinois	12.9%	12.7%	12.5%	12.4%	12.0%	11.4%	10.9%
North Central IL	11.7%	12.5%	12.6%	12.2%	12.8%	11.8%	11.7%
Bureau	12.9%	12.9%	13.9%	11.8%	12.1%	12.0%	13.1%
La Salle	12.0%	12.8%	12.3%	12.6%	13.4%	11.6%	11.6%
Lee	10.0%	11.8%	13.0%	12.2%	12.2%	12.5%	10.1%
Putnam	9.6%	7.4%	5.5%	6.3%	8.2%	10.0%	11.3%

Source: Illinois Department of Health

That being said, the percentage of teen pregnancies in the region has varied slightly over the period from 1995 to 2001, but is ultimately the same at the beginning and end of that period. During the same period, the percentage has steadily declined across the

state to the point where it is now below the regional percentage. The percentages within each individual county have varied quite a bit and are generally higher in 2001 than they were in 1995, particularly in Putnam County.

Child welfare issues have not been ignored by North Central communities. In *Community F.O.C.U.S. 2001*, LaSalle County identified the need for better parenting skills, efforts to combat domestic violence and child abuse, and the need for more child care services of all kinds including new facilities, referral networks, and education and business training for child care workers. Additionally, the community recognizes the need for collaborative efforts to develop and expand after school and summer programs for school-aged children. To their credit, they not only recognize the issues, they are identifying action plans and responsibilities for addressing them.

Anecdotal data regarding the quality of life for youth in North Central points to increasing risk factors. These include:

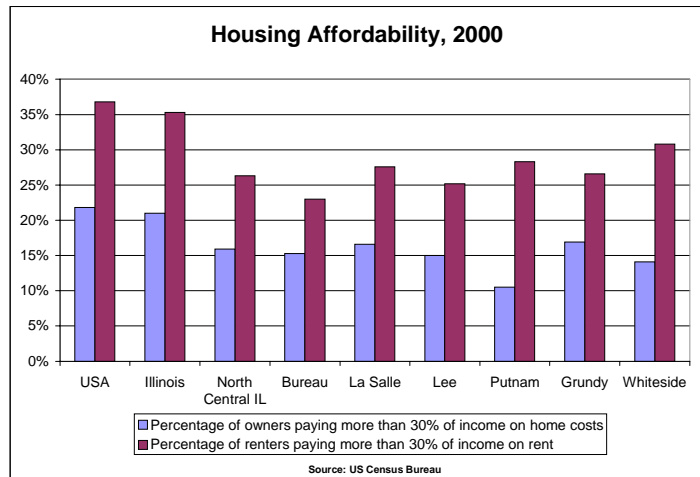
- The high mobility rate of lower income youth, who lose continuity of educational interventions with each move;
- Looming teacher retirements as the current teaching workforce ages. There may not be sufficient new teachers to replace those that leave. According to *Educator Supply and Demand in Illinois, 2001 Annual Report* (covering the 2000-2001 school year), the projected demand statewide for the 2005 school year is between 46,000 and 60,000, plus additional classroom instructors (over the 127,323 currently employed). Statewide undergraduate enrollments in professional education programs used to be fairly consistent over time, but they experienced a significant drop of 10% from 2000 to 2001. Statewide teaching vacancies account for 84% of all education vacancies. Special Education (30%) and Elementary Education (20%) account for 1 out of every 2 vacancies across the state. Other shortage areas include math teachers, guidance counselors, and physical education teachers (5% each).
- Reduced tax revenues as a result of the current recession have severely affected local school budgets.
- Opportunities for students in the area dwindled as federal School-to-Work program dollars came to an end. Additionally, federal Perkins technical education funding is up for reauthorization, and technical training dollars at the secondary level are in danger of disappearing.

## Housing Affordable, but Inadequate

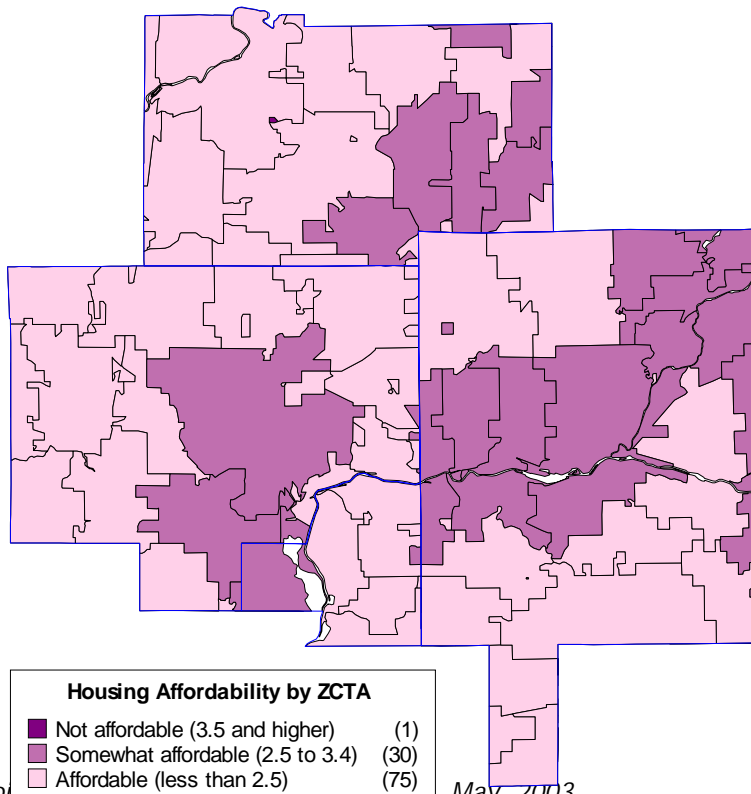
Availability and affordability of housing is another key factor in the quality of life equation. Data indicates that both are strengths for the North Central Illinois region. For instance, home ownership rates are higher than both the state and nation, and renting rates are lower. Vacancy rates are generally equivalent or lower than the state and nation, with the exception of Putnam County, where 16% of all houses are vacant.

Housing appears to be largely affordable across North Central Illinois. While incomes are lower, so are housing costs. Just over 15% of North Central homeowners pay more than 30% of their income on home costs, compared to over 20% for the state and nation. The comparison is even better for the small number of renters in the region. Just over 25% of renters in North Central pay more than 30% of their income on rent, compared to over 35% in the state and nation.

Housing affordability in the region is on par with neighbor Grundy County, and slightly better than Whiteside County. The median value of owned homes in Grundy County is significantly higher, but since Grundy County also has a higher median income, affordability is not affected. Only one (small) ZCTA in the region is “not affordable” according to the ratio of median home value to median household income by ZCTA, shown in the map below. The majority of ZCTAs have housing that is *affordable* to people who live in that ZCTA, with about a third being slightly more expensive and only *somewhat affordable*.



### Housing Affordability by Zip Code Tabulation Area



[www.homefair.com](http://www.homefair.com) estimates what your salary must be to own a home in another city compared to your own. The only North Central town available for comparison is Dixon. The website provided the following equivalents as a way to estimate what you would need in other Illinois cities to own a home.

<b>If your income in Dixon is \$50,000, then you would need the following income to own an equivalent home in the other cities listed:</b>	
Chicago	\$92,651
Peoria	\$51,675
Arlington Heights	\$62,680
Champaign	\$52,698
Danville	\$50,473
Decatur	\$46,606
Effingham	\$49,374
Galesburg	\$44,011
Joliet	\$54,221
Rock Island	\$46,220
<b>Source: <a href="http://www.homefair.com">www.homefair.com</a></b>	

Anecdotal data does indicate that the age of housing in the region is an issue affecting the true affordability of housing. There is a perceived shortage of mid-range housing stock. Housing that is considered “middle class” is aging and in need of upgrades and repairs which would raise the actual cost of such housing beyond what is considered affordable. The Ottawa Competitive Communities Initiative’s 2001 *Blueprint for Progress* identified the need for more affordable single family, multiple tenant and retirement housing in Ottawa and established a task force to study the details of these needs.

Low cost housing can have a negative impact on local taxing bodies and taxpayers. For example, school districts rely on property wealth as their primary source of funding. Too much low cost housing within a school district’s tax base will not provide sufficient revenue but may provide demands on the district with an increase of disadvantaged children, higher mobility rates, and a financial burden on the district. The most desirable situation is a balance among low cost, mid-range, and upper cost housing.

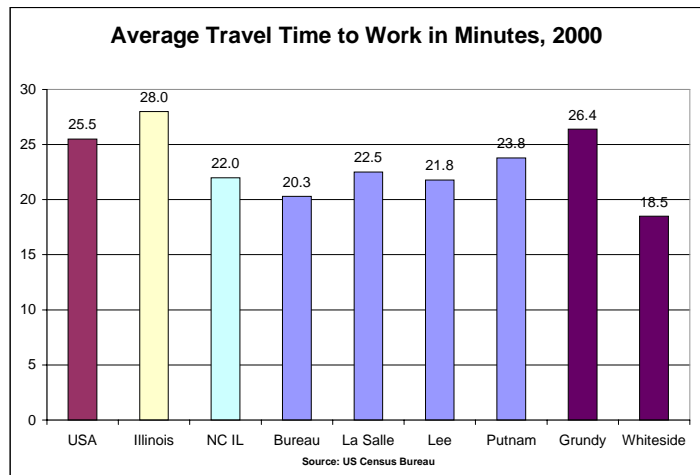
Policy makers must bear in mind that “affordable” and “low cost” are not synonymous. “Affordable” is a relative term that is related to the income of people in the area. A very expensive home is “affordable” if incomes in the area are very high. Similarly, an inexpensive home is “not affordable” if residents’ incomes are too low.

## Commute Times are Short

One of the benefits of living in the North Central Illinois region is the short commute times to and from work.

Commute times for North Central Illinois workers are less than those for the state and nation. The highest average travel time is in Putnam County, at 23.8 minutes.

Commute times in North Central Illinois are lower than in Grundy County by an average of over four minutes, while those in Whiteside County are, on average, 3.5 minutes shorter.



The Illinois Valley Area Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development data shows that 85.6% of workers in the area say they travel 15 or fewer miles to work, while 14.4% indicate they travel more than 15 miles. Census data reports commuting *time* rather than distance, so the two sets of data cannot be directly compared. Census data comes from self-reports, and it is not known how individuals compute their commute *time* (for example, if they include the time they spend in parking and getting from the parking lot to the work site or just time on the road, or if their perceptions of time are markedly different from reality). However, since the census is performed in the same way all over the country, *relative* commute times to compare one county, state, or region to another are still useful.

Since North Central Illinois lacks public transit among centers of living and working, owning a car is critical to enable one to work. In *Community F.O.C.U.S. 2001*, LaSalle County acknowledges the falsity that everyone has access to a car and identifies the need for affordable transportation for rural residents, young people, the elderly, low income families, people with disabilities and for those who have had their license suspended or revoked. The resources of current providers are strained.

## Crime Rates Are Low

Safety is a major concern and quality of life issue that often drives families from urban to more rural areas. Criminal offense data is available for Lee, Putnam, and Bureau Counties<sup>9</sup> (La Salle County is not included in Northwest Illinois). The data shows considerably less crime overall in the North Central Illinois Counties compared to Northwest Illinois as a whole.

<sup>9</sup> 2002 Northwest Illinois Market Facts, Center for Governmental Studies, Northern Illinois University.

### Criminal Offenses Reported per 10,000 Persons, 2000

Offense	Lee	Putnam	Bureau	Northwest Illinois
Arson	2	10	.6	2
Assault	29	0	11	24
Burglaries	64	16	24	76
Car Thefts	9	2	5	21
Larceny/Thefts	188	66	137	286
Robberies	1	0	1	10
Murders	.3	0	0	.2

Although La Salle County is not included in the available crime data, evidence of concern for public safety is evident in the priorities developed as part of the blueprint for action developed by the community of Ottawa through the competitive communities initiative. Priorities for developing the social infrastructure necessary for a high quality of life include many related to:

- Community policing initiatives;
- CAD in the 911 Center;
- Computerized police records management system;
- Mobile data terminations in police cars;
- Digitalized prisoner photo and crime scene system; and
- LiveScan fingerprinting capability.

Many other communities in North Central Illinois are also part of this initiative.

### Community Part of Competitive Communities Initiatives

County	No	Yes	Total
Bureau	5		5
La Salle	7	3	10
Lee	5	2	7
Putnam	1		1
Grundy	1		1
Whiteside	1	1	2
Total	20	6	26

Source: Illinois Department of Commerce and Community Affairs

Sixteen (16) out of 23 communities (70%) have an Emergency 911 system in place. La Salle is much better covered than Putnam, which appears to have no large communities with such service.

### **Community Has Emergency 911 System**

<b>County</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Total</b>
Bureau	2	3	5
La Salle	2	8	10
Lee	2	5	7
Putnam	1		1
Grundy		1	1
Whiteside		2	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>26</b>

Source: Illinois Department of Commerce and Community Affairs

### **Implications**

- North Central Illinois offers a quality of life not found in large urban areas. This asset is a selling point that can be used to attract new and returning residents and keep existing ones. Care must be exercised to manage any resulting growth so that the region does not lose the very qualities that attract people to live there. Initiatives such as Competitive Communities should be supported to help plan for and manage the desired quality of life.
- Youth are a critical asset to any labor market, but there are many factors at work that may place them at risk and contribute to their exodus to other locations. Low-income youth will need particular attention to help keep them in school, raise their success rates, and protect their physical well being, yet resources available to do so are becoming more limited.

## Priorities and Next Step

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The Steering Committee (see page 4 for membership) met on April 29 to prioritize conditions for change. Each small group that worked on a priority issue also brainstormed strategies and potential roles that various stakeholders may play in bringing about the desired state. The priorities, strategies, and roles will be further developed through a community engagement process that will be the next step of *North Central Illinois Works*.

The Steering Committee's priorities and desired states included:

### *Low Potential for New Economy Jobs*

#### Desired State:

Post-secondary curriculum supports the development and sustainability of new economy jobs with adequate infrastructure dispersed throughout the North Central Illinois four county region and workforce development agencies.

### *Lower Performance in Some School Districts*

#### Desired State:

Each child performs at his/her maximum capabilities.

### *Higher Average Unemployment*

#### Desired State:

Approach state average.

### *Reduced Total Wages From Higher Paying Jobs; High Number of Low-Paying Jobs*

#### Desired State:

Expand the pie by producing an environment that will position communities and will attract and retain new types and sizes of businesses and young employees to match them.

## Appendix A: Certified Training Programs and Providers

Programs and provider names provided by Illinois Department of Employment Security.

Provider Name	Program name
Illinois Valley Community College	Accounting
Illinois Valley Community College	Accounting Certificate
Black Hawk College	Accounting Clerk (BHC Code 5631)
Black Hawk College	Accounting Specialist (BHC Code 5165)
Sauk Valley Community College	Accounting Technician
Sauk Valley Community College	Administrative Assistant/secretarial-word Processing
Sauk Valley Community College	Administrative Assistant/secretarial
Kishwaukee College	Adult Beginning Level
Sauk Valley Community College	Adult Education-adult Beginning
Sauk Valley Community College	Adult Education-adult Intermediate
Sauk Valley Community College	Adult Education-adult Secondary
Kishwaukee College	Adult Intermediate Level
Illinois Valley Community College	Adult Secondary Education - Ase 1830
Kishwaukee College	Adult Secondary Level
Illinois Valley Community College	Advanced Accounting Certificate
Illinois Valley Community College	Advanced Automotive Technology
Illinois Valley Community College	Advanced Early Childhood Educational Certificate
Kishwaukee College	Advanced Power Equipment Repair
Sauk Valley Community College	AES 0320 Engineering Science
Illinois Valley Community College	Agriculture
Black Hawk College	Air Conditioning Specialist (BHC Code 5513)
Northern Illinois University	Alternative Teacher Certification
Sauk Valley Community College	Associate Degree Nursing
Black Hawk College	Associate Degree Nursing (BHC AAS code 5155)
Black Hawk College	Associate in Arts - Accounting
Black Hawk College	Associate In Science - Agriculture
Black Hawk College	Associates in Arts Degree - Education (Pre Teaching)
Illinois Valley Community College	Auto Brakes, Suspension Alignment
Black Hawk College	Automotive Repair (BHC Certificate Code 5610)
Black Hawk College	Automotive Repair Technology (AAS Code 9298)
Illinois Valley Community College	Automotive Technology
Northern Illinois University	Bachelors of Science in Accountancy
Illinois Valley Community College	Basic Automotive Technology
Illinois Valley Community College	Basic Early Childhood Educational Certificate
Sauk Valley Community College	Basic Nurse Assistant
Black Hawk College	Basic Nurse Assistant Training Program (BHC Cert. Code 5536)
Kishwaukee College	Basic Nurse Assisting
Black Hawk College	Brake Specialist (BHC Certificate Code 5512)
Illinois Valley Community College	Business Administration
Sauk Valley Community College	Business Administration Management
Sauk Valley Community College	Business Administration Management
Sauk Valley Community College	Business Computer Facilities Operator-computer Ntw Specialist
Black Hawk College	Business Information Technology (AAS Code 9265)
Black Hawk College	Business Management/Marketing (AAS 5035)
Black Hawk College	Business Transfer

<b>Provider Name</b>	<b>Program name</b>
Illinois Valley Community College	Certified Nursing Assistant
Black Hawk College	Child Development Teachers Aide Certificate (BHC code 5547)
Sauk Valley Community College	CIS 0025 Computer Information Systems
Sauk Valley Community College	CIS 0B30 Computer Programmer
Illinois Valley Community College	Clerical Certificate
Sauk Valley Community College	Communications Electronics H63
Sauk Valley Community College	Computer Aided Drafting Operations H66
Illinois Valley Community College	Computer Aided Engineering And Design
Black Hawk College	Computer Information Programmer (BHC Code 5244)
Kishwaukee College	Computer Information Systems
Illinois Valley Community College	Computer Information Systems
Illinois Valley Community College	Computer Networking Administration
Illinois Valley Community College	Computer Networking Certificate
Illinois Valley Community College	Computer Numerical Control (CNC) Operator
Kishwaukee College	Computer Programming
Kishwaukee College	Computer-aided Architectural Drafting
Illinois Valley Community College	Computer-aided Drafting Certificate
Kishwaukee College	Computer-aided Drafting/computer-aided Mtg
Illinois Valley Community College	Criminal Justice
Illinois Valley Community College	Criminal Justice Certificate
Sauk Valley Community College	Criminal Justice Corrections
Sauk Valley Community College	Criminal Justice-Law Enforcement CJS 0081
Kishwaukee College	Data Communications And Networks
Illinois Valley Community College	Dental Assisting
Illinois Valley Community College	Diesel Technology
Dreyfus Medical Services	DREYFUS MEDICAL SERVICES/CNA Training
Illinois Valley Community College	Drivability
Kishwaukee College	Early Childhood Education
Illinois Valley Community College	Early Childhood Education
Sauk Valley Community College	Early Childhood Education-human Services Hsv 0086
Sauk Valley Community College	EET 0063 Electronic Technology
Sauk Valley Community College	Electronic Service Repair H69
Illinois Valley Community College	Electronics Technology
Black Hawk College	Emergency Medical Services
Illinois Valley Community College	Engine Performance
Sauk Valley Community College	Esl 1940 English As A Second Language Beginning
Kishwaukee College	Esl Beginning Level
Kishwaukee College	Esl Intermediate Level
Kishwaukee College	Esl Secondary/advanced Level
Kishwaukee College	Floral Horticulture
Kishwaukee College	Food Sanitation
Kishwaukee College	Garden Center Operations
Sauk Valley Community College	General Office/clerical-administrative Assistant
Sauk Valley Community College	General Office/clerical-office Clerk
Black Hawk College	General Social Services Program (Associate of Arts Degree)
Kishwaukee College	Golf Course And Turf Management
Illinois Valley Community College	Graphic Communications Promotions
Illinois Valley Community College	Graphic Design Technology Certificate
Illinois Valley Community College	Graphic Design Technology Degree
Kishwaukee College	Greenhouse Production
Sauk Valley Community College	H95 Heating Certificate
Sauk Valley Community College	H96 Machine Tool Operator
Illinois Valley Community College	Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning Certificate
Illinois Valley Community College	Horticulture
Black Hawk College	Horticulture Science (BHC Certificate Code 9546)

<b>Provider Name</b>	<b>Program name</b>
Sauk Valley Community College	HRS 0067 Heating, Refrigeration and Air Conditioning
Sauk Valley Community College	HSV-089 Social Services: Human Services
Illinois Valley Community College	Industrial Electricians Certificate
Sauk Valley Community College	Industrial Electronics Installer Repairer
Sauk Valley Community College	Industrial Electronics Installers Repairer
Illinois Valley Community College	Industrial Maintenance Certificate
Kishwaukee College	Information Processing
Sauk Valley Community College	Information Processing/Data Entry Technician
Black Hawk College	Information Technology Specialist Certificate
Sauk Valley Community College	Legal Office B82
Illinois Valley Community College	Machinist Tool Die Certificate
Illinois Valley Community College	Manufacturing Technology
Illinois Valley Community College	Marketing
Sauk Valley Community College	Marketing-general Selling Skills Sales Operation
Sauk Valley Community College	Marketing-general Selling Skills Sales Operations
Sauk Valley Community College	Mechanical Drafting
Black Hawk College	Medical Billing Specialist
Black Hawk College	Medical Coding Specialist
Sauk Valley Community College	Medical Office B83
Kishwaukee College	Medical Transcription
Sauk Valley Community College	MET 0060 Mechanical Engineering Technology
Illinois Valley Community College	Metal Fabrication Apprenticeship
Sauk Valley Community College	MFT 0069 Manufacturing Technology
Illinois Valley Community College	Microcomputer And Office Technology
Kishwaukee College	Microcomputer Applications
Illinois Valley Community College	Microcomputer Software Applications Specialist
Sauk Valley Community College	Microprocessor Maintenance H64
Black Hawk College	Network Technician (BHC Certificate Code 5578)
Kishwaukee College	Nursery Management And Landscape Design
Illinois Valley Community College	Nursing
Kishwaukee College	Nursing - Rn Training
Kishwaukee College	Office Assisting
Kishwaukee College	Office Systems
Illinois Valley Community College	Office Systems Management
Northern Illinois University	Operations Management and Information Systems (OMIS)
Sauk Valley Community College	Paramedic Program
Black Hawk College	Physical Therapy Assistant (BHC AAS code 5079)
Kishwaukee College	Power Equipment Repair
Black Hawk College	Practical Nurse (LPN - BHC certificate code 5666)
Kishwaukee College	Practical Nursing
Sauk Valley Community College	Practical Nursing
Illinois Valley Community College	Practical Nursing
Illinois Valley Community College	Process Operation Technology
Sauk Valley Community College	Property Maintenance Specialist H79
Sauk Valley Community College	Quality Control Technology/statistical Quality Assurance
Sauk Valley Community College	Quality Control Technology/Technician
Kishwaukee College	Radiologic Technology
Sauk Valley Community College	Radiologic Technology
Sauk Valley Community College	Refrigeration H81
Illinois Valley Community College	Retailing/Merchandising
Northern Illinois University	Sociology (SOCl)
Northern Illinois University	Special Education
Northern Illinois University	Teacher Certification
Sauk Valley Community College	Teachers Aide-Human Services HSV OF90
Northern Illinois University	The National Safety Education Center

<b>Provider Name</b>	<b>Program name</b>
Illinois Valley Community College	Therapeutic Massage
Illinois Valley Community College	Truck Driver Training
Sauk Valley Community College	Truck Driving Program Ot10
Kishwaukee College	Webmaster
Kishwaukee College	Welder/welding Technologist
Black Hawk College	Wheel Alignment And Suspension (Cert 5514)

## Appendix B: Top 50 Private Sector Employers

<b>Largest Private Employers</b>	<b>Products/ Services</b>
1. Advantage Logistics-Midwest, Inc.	Groceries, General Line
2. Air/Fluid Systems Corp.	Motor Vehicle Parts And Accessories
3. Allied-Locke Industries Inc	Power Transmission Equipment, NEC
4. Boise Cascade Office Products Inc	Catalog And Mail-order Houses
5. Carus Corp	Industrial Inorganic Chemicals, NEC
6. Caseys General Store	Gasoline Service Stations
7. Colonial Hall Health Resources	Intermediate Care Facilities
8. Community Hospital-Ottawa	General Medical And Surgical Hospitals
9. Consolidated Freightways	Trucking, Except Local
10. Crest Foods Co., Inc.	Food Preparations, NEC
11. Eagle Food Centers	Grocery Stores
12. Eakas Corporation	Plastics Products, NEC
13. Edelmann Division	Motor Vehicle Parts And Accessories
14. Exelon Generation Company	Electric Services
15. Flying J Inc.	Gasoline Service Stations
16. Fox River Resort	Business Services, Not Elsewhere Class
17. General Electric Company	Plastics Products, NEC
18. Harper-Wyman Co	Automatic Controls For Regulating Resi
19. Hcc,Inc.	Mining Machinery And Equipment
20. Heritage Manor Nursing Home	Skilled Nursing Care Facilities
21. Horizon Hse-Illinois Valley Inc	Residential Care
22. Hy-Vee, Inc.	Grocery Stores
23. Ill Valley Comm Hosp Attn: Personnel	General Medical And Surgical Hospitals
24. J.C. Whitney & Co.	Motor Vehicle Supplies And New Parts
25. Jcj Trucking, Inc.	Truck Rental And Leasing, Without Driv
26. Jostens Inc	Jewelry, Precious Metal
27. Katherine Shaw Bethea Hospital	General Medical And Surgical Hospitals
28. K-Mart	Department Stores
29. Kreider Services, Inc.	Job Training And Vocational Rehabilita
30. Kroger Co	Grocery Stores
31. Libbey-Owens-Ford Co.	Flat Glass
32. Ltv Steel Company	Blast Furnaces & Steel Mills
33. Manpower Of Indiana	Help Supply Services
34. Martin Engineering Co	Conveyors And Conveying Equipment
35. Mbl -Usa- Corporation	Rubber And Plastics Hose And Belting
36. Mendota Community Hospital	General Medical And Surgical Hospitals
37. Mid-American Growers Inc	Ornamental Nursery Products
38. Monterey Mushrooms Inc	Food Crops Grown Under Cover
39. Owens-Brockway Glass Container	Glass Containers
40. Pleasant View Luther Home Inc	Skilled Nursing Care Facilities
41. R.R.Donnelly Mendota, Inc.	Bookbinding And Related Work
42. Raynor Manufacturing Co.	Metal Doors, Sash And Trim
43. Sauer-Sundstrand Company	Fluid Power Pumps And Motors
44. Schlage Lock Co Lcn Closers Div	Hardware, NEC
45. Spring Valley Clinic	General Medical And Surgical Hospitals
46. St Marys Hospital	General Medical And Surgical Hospitals
47. The Red Wing Co Inc	Food Preparations, NEC
48. The Reliable Corporation	Catalog And Mail-order Houses
49. Us Foodservice	Fresh Fruits And Vegetables
50. Wal-Mart Stores Inc	Department Stores

Source: Illinois Department of Employment Security (Workforce Information Center)