



METROPOLITAN POLICY PROGRAM
THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

**Committing to Prosperity:
Moving Forward on the Agenda to Renew Pennsylvania**

**Metro Profile: Erie
March 2007**

This profile provides key economic and demographic trend information about the Erie metropolitan area relating to “Committing to Prosperity,” an update of the 2003 Brookings Institution report, “Back to Prosperity.” To read the entire report, other regional summaries, and a rural policy brief, see www.brookings.edu/metro/pubs/committingtoprosperity.htm. For any questions or comments, please contact Rebecca Sohmer at the Brookings Institution Metropolitan Policy Program (rsohmer@brookings.edu / 202-797-6085).

The Trend: The Erie metropolitan area continues to lose population

Metropolitan Erie experienced a small drop in population between 2000 and 2005

In 2005, the Erie metropolitan area (consisting of Erie County) had a population of 280,500—400 people fewer than in 2000, representing a 0.1 percent decrease. Although small, this loss represents a change from Erie’s growth trends in the 1990s. Between 1990 and 2000, metropolitan Erie grew 0.19 percent a year. Between 2000 and 2005, metropolitan Erie lost 0.03 percent of its population per year.

The Erie region’s population is becoming more diverse due to minority gains

Metropolitan Erie, like the rest of the state, saw its population become more diverse. Even though Erie lost population, it experienced a 7.7 percent increase (2,200) in its minority population. More than one-third of the increase in Erie’s minority population was due to gains in the Latino population. However, the 13 percent increase was the smallest among the state’s metropolitan areas.

Metro Area	Annualized population growth rate, 2000–2005
York	1.38%
Reading	1.33%
Allentown	1.29%
Lancaster	0.83%
State College	0.70%
Harrisburg	0.57%
Philadelphia	0.21%
Erie	-0.03%
Sharon	-0.12%
Williamsport	-0.28%
Scrán./W.B./Haz.	-0.30%
Altoona	-0.37%
Pittsburgh	-0.37%
Johnstown	-0.49%
Pennsylvania	0.24%
United States	1.05%

Erie’s migration patterns show continued net out-migration

According to IRS county-to-county migration data, each year between 1994 and 2005, more people moved out of metropolitan Erie and moved in. Metropolitan Erie consistently had a net out-migration of between 1,200 and 2,000 each year, for a total net out-migration of 16,600 between 1994 and 2005.

The Trend: Erie is still spreading out—and hollowing out

Erie's older communities are still hollowing out

Between 1990 and 2000, metropolitan Erie's cities, boroughs, and its first-class township lost population. The trend continued between 2000 and 2005, but the rate of decline actually slowed for cities and the first-class township. Between 1990 and 2000, the cities lost 0.47 percent per year, the first-class township lost 0.63 percent, and boroughs lost 0.16 percent. Between 2000 and 2005, the cities lost 0.25 per year, the first-class township increased its loss to 1.04 percent per year, and the rate of loss for boroughs quickened to 0.61 percent per year. Meanwhile, the second-class townships continued to grow but at a slower rate: the 0.88 percent annually in the 1990s slowed to .31 percent per year between 2000 and 2005.

The vast majority of housing permits are still issued in second-class townships

Housing data shows that residential building activity continues to occur mainly in second-class townships. Between 1995 and 1999, 526 permits were issued in the metro's cities, boroughs, and first-class township and 3,461 were issued in second-class townships. This pattern stayed basically the same in the post-2000 period. Between 2000 and 2004, 565 permits were issued in cities, boroughs, and first-class township—which represents an increase in permits issued in older Erie—while 3,165 were issued in second-class townships.

Despite small population increases in the 1990s, a large share of rural land was lost

Metro Erie's population grew by little more than 5,000 people between 1990 and 2000, yet nearly 54,000 acres of rural land was developed in that same time period. And between 1980 and 2000, the loss was much greater: Metropolitan Erie lost 95,500 rural acres, a 34 percent loss. In 1980, 58 percent of metro Erie's land was rural. By 2000, only 39 percent of metro Erie's land was rural.

The Trend: Erie lost jobs since 2000 but has recently reversed the downturn

Erie's metropolitan area surpassed the state's employment growth in the 1990s but is now trailing the state

Metro Erie actually grew had a higher annual job growth rate than the state in the 1990s. Between 1990 and 2000, the number of Pennsylvania jobs grew 0.96 percent per year, while Erie added 1.22 percent annually. But between 2000 and 2006, Pennsylvania added 0.18 percent per year while Erie lost 0.35 percent per year. The metro area fared better in the three most recent years, however, adding 3,700 jobs between 2003 and 2006—a 0.76 percent gain per year versus 0.96 percent for the state.

The Erie metro continues to lose manufacturing jobs and gain service sector jobs

Like the rest of the state, metropolitan Erie continues to lose manufacturing jobs, and its 26 percent decline in this sector between 2000 and 2006 was greater than the state's 22 percent drop. The Erie metropolitan area experienced its largest percentage gains in educational and health services, professional and business services, and wholesale trade with 21, 10, and 5 percent gains, respectively—matching or exceeding state performance in these sectors.