

March 2008

Defining Rural

Differentiating rural from urban populations depends on how agencies define the terms. For example, the Census Bureau and the Office of Management and Budget utilize demographic statistics differently to classify urban and rural areas. According to the 2000 Census, all four Kronkosky Charitable Foundation giving counties maintained some rural population, while all of the counties, except for Bandera County, also sustained urban populations.

2000 Census Data – Kronkosky Charitable Counties				
	Bandera	Bexar	Comal	Kendall
Total Population	17,645	1,392,931	78,021	23,743
Urban	0	1,309,415	44,644	8,964
Inside urbanized areas	0	1,305,612	1,459	0
Inside urban clusters	0	3,803	43,185	8,964
Rural	17,645	83,516	33,377	14,779

(United States Census Bureau, 2000)

On the other hand, the White House Office of Management and Budget classifies populations using three types of statistical regions.

Metropolitan (urban) core statistical regions

1. Metropolitan Core Area = 50,000 or more people
2. Outlying or adjacent regions with a minimum of 25% of residents employed in the central metropolitan core area

Micropolitan core statistical regions

1. Micropolitan Core Area = 10,000-49,999 people
2. Outlying or adjacent regions with a minimum of 25% of residents employed in the central micropolitan core area

Rural statistical region

1. Any regions not included in a core based statistical areas

(Federal Register, 2000)

Unlike the Census Bureau, this organization's current estimations classify Bandera, Bexar, Comal, and Kendall counties as solely urban because they are all located within the Bexar County metropolitan statistical region. As a result, the distribution of funds and grants to support smaller communities, such as in the construction and improvement of multi-purpose centers, likely depends on how the funder defines "rural."

Benefits of Multi-purpose Centers

In 2004, the Texas Office of Rural Community Affairs, along with graduate students from Texas A&M University, created a rural viability index. They defined a viable rural community as one that uses "available physical and human resources to provide for the economic, social, and physical needs of community members" (George Bush School of Government and Public Service, 2004).

One way many rural areas seek to develop a viable community is by building a multi-purpose center. Multi-purpose centers are buildings designed to meet multiple needs within a community; potentially improving community economy, education, health, society and culture, and technology. Based on the unique needs of the community, these centers can represent anything from a community, convention, or civic center to an arena, pavilion, or fair grounds. In rural areas, multi-purpose centers promote a variety of events, such as business, sporting, educational, religious, and special events. A successful multi-purpose center can serve its community by reducing the

risk factors of poverty and unemployment common to people living in rural areas.

Poverty

In 2003, 14.2% of rural Americans lived below poverty level compared to 12.1% of urban Americans (Economic Research Service, 2004). Bandera County reported the highest poverty rates of San Antonio’s outlying counties, particularly for children.

	Total Population	Children (0-17 years)
Texas	16.2	22.7
Bandera County	12.3	19.1
Bexar County	17.3	24.7
Comal County	9.3	14.3
Kendall County	8.8	12.8

(Economic Research Service, 2006)

Unemployment

During 2004-2005, 34% of American rural counties experienced higher unemployment than the previous year. In 2005, 46% of rural counties reported employment rates below their year 2000 employment levels (Economic Research Service, 2006b). Bandera and Kendall Counties experienced higher unemployment rates during 2006 than in 2001.

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Texas	5.0	6.4	6.7	6.0	5.4	4.9
Bandera County	4.0	4.9	5.2	4.8	4.5	4.2
Bexar County	4.7	5.8	6.2	5.7	5.1	4.7
Comal County	4.2	5.5	5.5	4.9	4.5	4.1
Kendall County	3.8	4.8	5.0	4.4	4.1	3.9

(Economic Research Service, 2007)

Examples of Multi-purpose Centers

National

Forrest County Multipurpose Center

Built in 1999, the Forrest County Multipurpose Center in Hattiesburg, Mississippi represents an example of a successful multipurpose center situated in a rural community. The center is a

160-acre complex which includes 9 buildings, a lake, and a 147-site RV park. The Main Arena contains 34,480 square feet of floor space and can service 500 horses for a horse show or seat a maximum of 7,500 people for a concert. Since its opening, the facility has showcased many events, such as concerts, rodeos, banquets, trade shows, and motocross racing (Center for Community and Economic Development, 2005).

In 2005, the Center for Community and Economic Development assessed the economic impact of the Forrest County Multipurpose Center on its community. Defining impact as money spent locally by event participants, tax revenue collected by the multipurpose center, and profits from local retail establishments, the summary of findings appears in the chart below.

<i>Impact</i>	<i>FY 2003</i>	<i>FY 2004</i>
Number of events	88	246
Number of participants	150,000	185,000
Financial impact	\$6,900,000	\$8,900,000
Local state sales tax	\$480,000	\$620,000
Tax revenue for Hattiesburg, MS	\$88,000	\$115,000

(Center for Community and Economic Development, 2005)

Davie Pine Island Park Multipurpose Center

Another multipurpose center, the Davie Pine Island Park Multipurpose Center, is utilized by the residents of Davie, Florida. This center includes Cypress Hall (a theater-type setting for a maximum of 100 people), the Palm Room (meeting rooms with a kitchen for up to 100 people), an Arts and Crafts Room (can be used for ceramics and other arts classes), a game room, and a gymnasium (Town of Davie, 2003).

Texas and San Antonio region

West Dallas Multipurpose Center

In West Dallas, a 20,000 square foot multipurpose center was opened in 1988. The services at this center include emergency social services, community partnership building, community, cultural, and special events, and a

utility pay station. Of the people who used this facility in 2004, 80% lived below poverty level and the users averaged a 6.9% unemployment rate (Environmental and Health Services, 2005).

Lakehills Civic Center

Lakehills is a small community located within the Bandera County limits. In Bandera County during 2005, nearly 16% of the population consisted of senior citizens, while another 22% were children 18 years and under. The 2000 census stated that 3,438 people over the age of 5 lived with one or more disabilities in Bandera County (United States Census Bureau, 2007).

The Lakehills Civic Center was built in 1971 to serve as the community's multi-purpose center (Bandera County Texas Chamber of Commerce, n.d.). This center "offer(s) recreational programs, exercise programs, arts/theatre performances, pet vaccination programs, community events, and a meeting location to its customers" (Texas Association of RC & D Councils, n.d.). The building also holds senior activities and Meals on Wheels, wellness programs, youth activities, and is also used as a Red Cross Disaster Preparedness site (Kronkosky Charitable Foundation, 2006).

The Texas Association of Resource Conservation and Development is a nonprofit organization that works to "promote conservation, development, and utilization of natural resources; to improve the general level of economic activity; and to enhance the environment and standard of living in rural communities" (Texas Association of RC & D Councils, n.d.). This organization recently

collaborated with the Medina Lake Betterment Association (MLBA) to renovate the Lakehills Civic Center.

Funding for Rural Development

Federal programs exist to support the construction of multi-purpose centers. For example, the Housing and Community Facilities Programs (HCFP) was created by the United States Department of Agriculture to provide support for rural development through loans and grants. Some of the organizations funded include:

"community facilities, such as libraries, child care centers, schools, municipal buildings, and firefighting equipment to Indian groups, nonprofit organizations, communities and local governments." (United States Department of Agriculture, n.d.)

However, the qualifications are specific and often rule out smaller communities classified as urban, who may not meet poverty or size requirements. For example, HCFP funds counties or towns with no more than 20,000 people and an average household income below the poverty line or 80 percent of the state rural areas' household income. The Texas Office of Rural Development handles requests for HCFP in the San Antonio area. The office for Bandera and Kendall County requests is located in Fredericksburg, while the office for Bexar and Comal County requests is located in Seguin (Texas Rural Development Office, n.d.).

References

- Center for Community and Economic Development. (2005). *Economic impact of the Forrest County Multipurpose Center*. Retrieved November 19, 2007, from <http://www.usm.edu/dewd/pdf/FCMultiPurposeCenterbrochure.pdf>
- Economic Research Service. (2004). *Rural income, poverty, and welfare: rural poverty*. Retrieved November 16, 2007, from <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Briefing/incomepovertywelfare/RuralPoverty/>
- Economic Research Service. (2006). *2004 county-level poverty rates for TX*. Retrieved November 16, 2007, from <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Data/PovertyRates/PovListpct.asp?ST=TX&view=Percent>
- Economic Research Service. (2006b). *Rural America at a glance 2006 edition* (United States Department of Agriculture Economic Information Bulletin Number 19). Retrieved November 16, 2007, from <http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/eib18/eib18.pdf>
- Economic Research Service. (2007). *County-level unemployment and median household income for Texas*. Retrieved November 16, 2007, from <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Data/Unemployment/RDLList2.asp?ST=TX>
- Environmental and Health Services. (2005). *West Dallas multipurpose center*. Retrieved November 19, 2007, from http://www.dallascityhall.com/committee_briefings/briefings/20050328_hehs_westdallas_multipurpose_program.pdf
- Federal Register. (2000). *Office of Management and Budget standards for defining metropolitan and micropolitan statistical areas notice*. Retrieved November 16, 2007, from <http://www.census.gov/population/www/estimates/00-32997.pdf>
- George Bush School of Government and Public Service. (2004). *Rural viability index: A tool for assessing rural communities*. Retrieved November 16, 2007, from http://www.orca.state.tx.us/pdfs/RVI_Rural_Viability_form_Index_FULL.pdf
- Kronkosky Charitable Foundation. (2006). *Letter of Inquiry for Alamo Resource Conservation & Development Area, Inc.* San Antonio: TX.
- Texas Association of RC & D Councils. (n.d.). *Resource conservation and development in Texas*. Retrieved November 16, 2007, from http://www.tx.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/rcd/rcdocs/TexasRC&D_2005.pdf
- Texas Rural Development Office. (n.d.). *Office and employee directory*. Retrieved November 16, 2007, from <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/tx/solist.htm>
- Town of Davie. (2003). *Davie Pine Island Park multipurpose center*. Retrieved November 19, 2007, from http://www.davie-fl.gov/pages/DavieFL_ParksRcrtn/programs/pineisland/index
- United States Census Bureau. (2000). *American fact finder detailed tables: Urban and rural universe: total population*. Retrieved November 16, 2007, from http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/DTTable?_bm=y&-context=dt&-ds_name=DEC_2000_SF1_U&-CONTEXT=dt&-mt_name=DEC_2000_SF1_U_P002&-tree_id=4001&-redoLog=true&-all_geo_types=N&-caller=geoselect&-geo_id=05000US48019&-geo_id=05000US48029&-geo_id=05000US48091&-geo_id=05000US48259&-search_results=01000US&-format=&-lang=en
- United States Census Bureau. (2007). *State and county quick facts: Bandera county, Texas*. Retrieved November 21, 2007, from <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/48/48019.html>
- United States Department of Agriculture. (n.d.). *Rural development housing and community facilities programs*. Retrieved November 16, 2007, from <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rhs/faqs/faq.htm>