

CHAPTER 4

GROWING THE FUTURE

Regional Growth

During the past decade the economy, housing, and the job market have all been through cycles of boom and bust, demonstrating the difficulty of predicting the future. The next 25 years will likely have more ups and downs. *Communities in Motion* forecasts that in 25 years, the valley will host more than 1.046 million people, almost 400,000 households, and one-half million jobs. This would make the region larger than Tucson, AZ, is now and almost as big as Salt Lake City, UT, is now. The effect of this population on roads, energy, air quality, water, agricultural land, and other resources can be problematic. However, taking necessary steps now can help to alleviate or even improve the situation in the future.

Communities in Motion considered future transportation needs by developing the Community Choices scenario (see Chapter 3: Defining the Vision). Community Choices is the scenario for land use and transportation that emerged from public workshops during 2004-2005. The COMPASS Board approved this scenario in 2006 and reconfirmed this vision in 2010. The name reflects choice in housing types (single family, multi-family, town homes, zero lot line homes, condominiums, and large lot) and in transportation modes (automobile, transit options, bike lanes, and walking paths). It is the growth pattern to be supported by public investments in transportation.

Understanding and anticipating demographic, housing, and transportation trends will be critical to anticipating and solving traffic problems of today and tomorrow.

Demographic Trends

Historically, the nuclear family has been the most common form of household in the United States. The Baby Boom generation is an example of how this family unit has impacted today's conditions. The way we shop, work, live, and commute is largely the result of the way our households are established. In the last decades, a tremendous shift has occurred; away from nuclear families and toward more diverse household units. Modern families will likely require a different built environment. Changing demographics, such as household makeup and age, will impact the demand for different types of housing and transportation options.

Housing Trends

Over the first part of the 2000s, the Treasure Valley saw sharp increases in in-migration, and housing prices escalated dramatically in accordance with this new demand (Figure 4-1). This caused a decline in housing affordability and pushed many family-wage households to suburban fringes. This new demand for road capacity expansion and transportation agencies caused difficulties building and maintaining a transportation network with limited resources.

The last several years saw the opposite as the subprime mortgage crisis struck. This crisis brought on a dramatic rise in mortgage delinquencies and foreclosures in the United States, with major adverse consequences for banks and financial markets around the globe.

The need for more affordable housing, together with shrinking household sizes and higher energy rates, have generated a demand for a different housing stock, with smaller houses in more walkable communities.¹ Mixed use and transit oriented developments can decrease the cost of housing and reduce the costs placed on the transportation network. However, high-density housing often face opposition from communities concerned about home values, safety, traffic, and other burdens to public services. Poorly-designed density and subsequent opposition to these developments can continue the trend of sprawling communities and associated transportation costs.

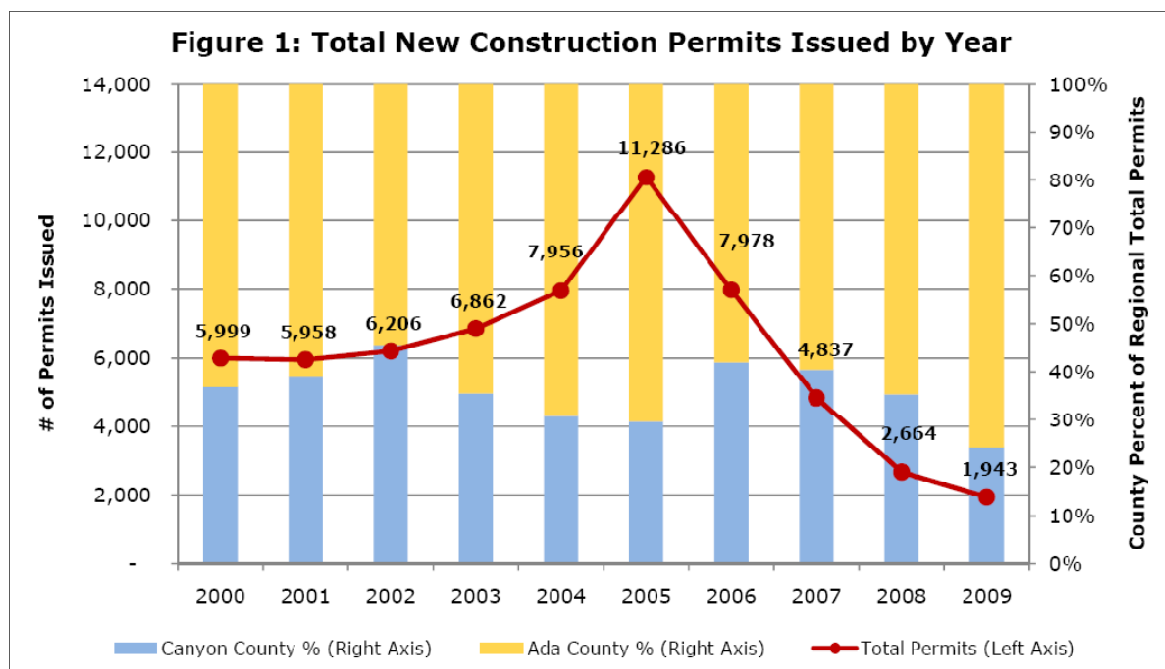


Figure 4-1: Total New Construction Permits Issued by Year

¹“The Coming Demand,” Congress for the New Urbanism, 2001. URL: http://www.cnu.org/sites/www.cnu.org/files/Coming_Demand.pdf

Figures 4-2 and 4-3 show how the “drive to qualify” mentality (a person must travel away from the city center and major job centers to find a home in a price range where he or she can qualify for the mortgage), has pushed affordable housing to the rural areas, while making transportation costs higher.

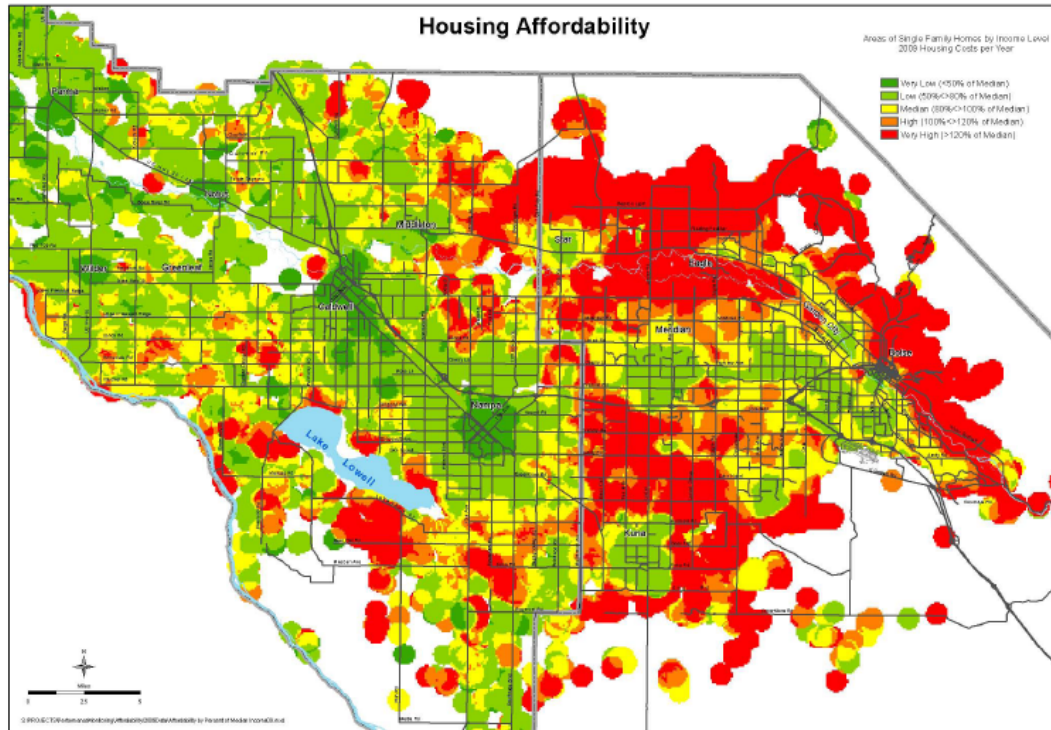


Figure 4-2: Housing Affordability

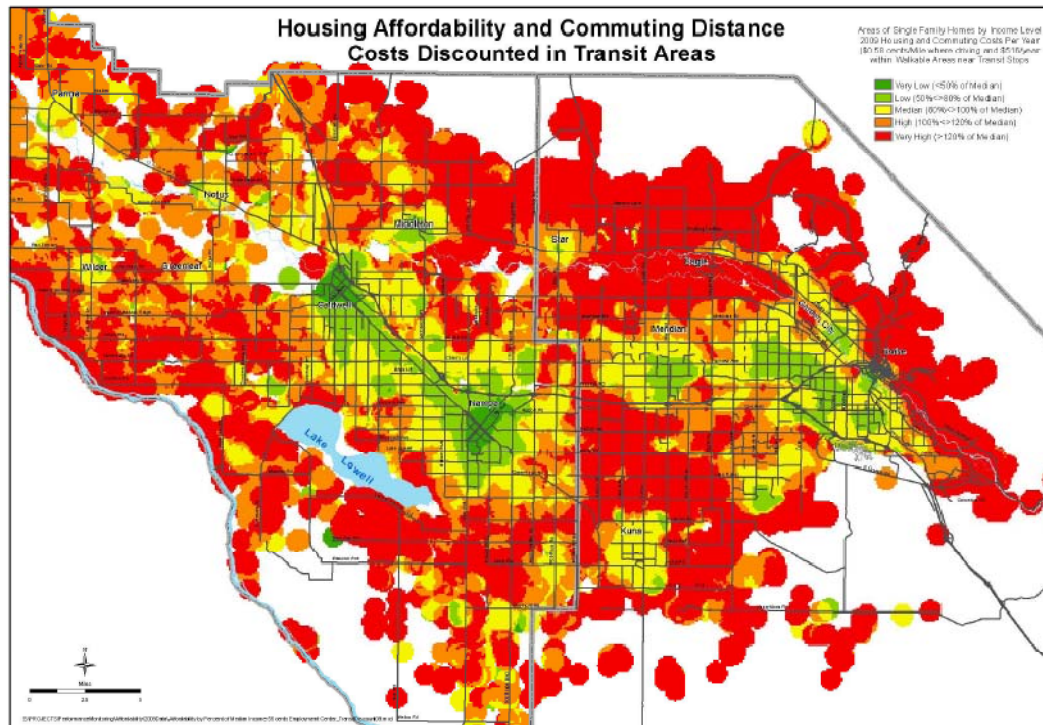


Figure 4-3: Housing + Transportation Affordability

Energy Trends

Energy trends, both supply and demand, could have a drastic impact on planning the future transportation network. From a supply standpoint, the Gulf oil spill in summer 2010 shows the difficulty of extracting cheap oil in environmentally-sensitive ways. Demand is also likely to increase as many developing nations are entering into an economy that promotes increased energy use. Both factors can result in higher energy costs. Rising energy costs, both incremental and sudden, can result in macro-level changes in travel behavior and new technologies that planning agencies may not be able to accurately predict. This can result in reactive instead of proactive efforts to build and maintain an effective transportation network. Increasing fuel prices may also shift growth demands toward employment centers, walkable neighborhoods, and near transit routes.

Household fuel prices for heating and cooling could also reduce the amount of discretionary income for households. This increased economic burden may make it difficult for households to afford consumer expenditures, taxes for roadway and transit improvements, and other quality of life demands. Should fuel cost continue to rise, will this begin to affect such decisions

Employment Trends

Despite losing more than 30,000² jobs in the metropolitan area during the Great Recession (Figure 4-4), demographers expect almost 500,000 jobs will be added in the region by 2035.³ The location and type of employment can have a significant impact on the type and level of transportation improvements needed to keep up with demand. Jobs that are spread out and far from housing create a greater burden on transportation networks. New jobs may result in escalating housing prices and land values, which in turn can result in affordable housing located further and further from employment centers.

This “jobs/housing imbalance” is facing this region and many other metropolitan areas. The transportation system works much better when jobs are located near housing and vice-versa, thus creating shorter commute distances. *Communities in Motion* anticipates that jobs will be spread more efficiently throughout the region, thus creating the opportunity for people to live closer to where they work – creating better balance in jobs and housing. Also, jobs that are clustered near transit routes can reduce the amount of vehicles on the road.

² Idaho Department of Labor, Monthly Labor Force Data. URL:

<http://lmi.idaho.gov/EmploymentUnemployment/CivilianLaborForceLAUS/tabid/804/Default.aspx>.

³ Idaho Department of Labor and “Economic and Population Forecasts for Ada and Canyon Counties in Idaho,” John Church, Idaho Economics. URL: <http://compassidaho.org/documents/prodserv/demo/JohnChurchForecast.pdf>.

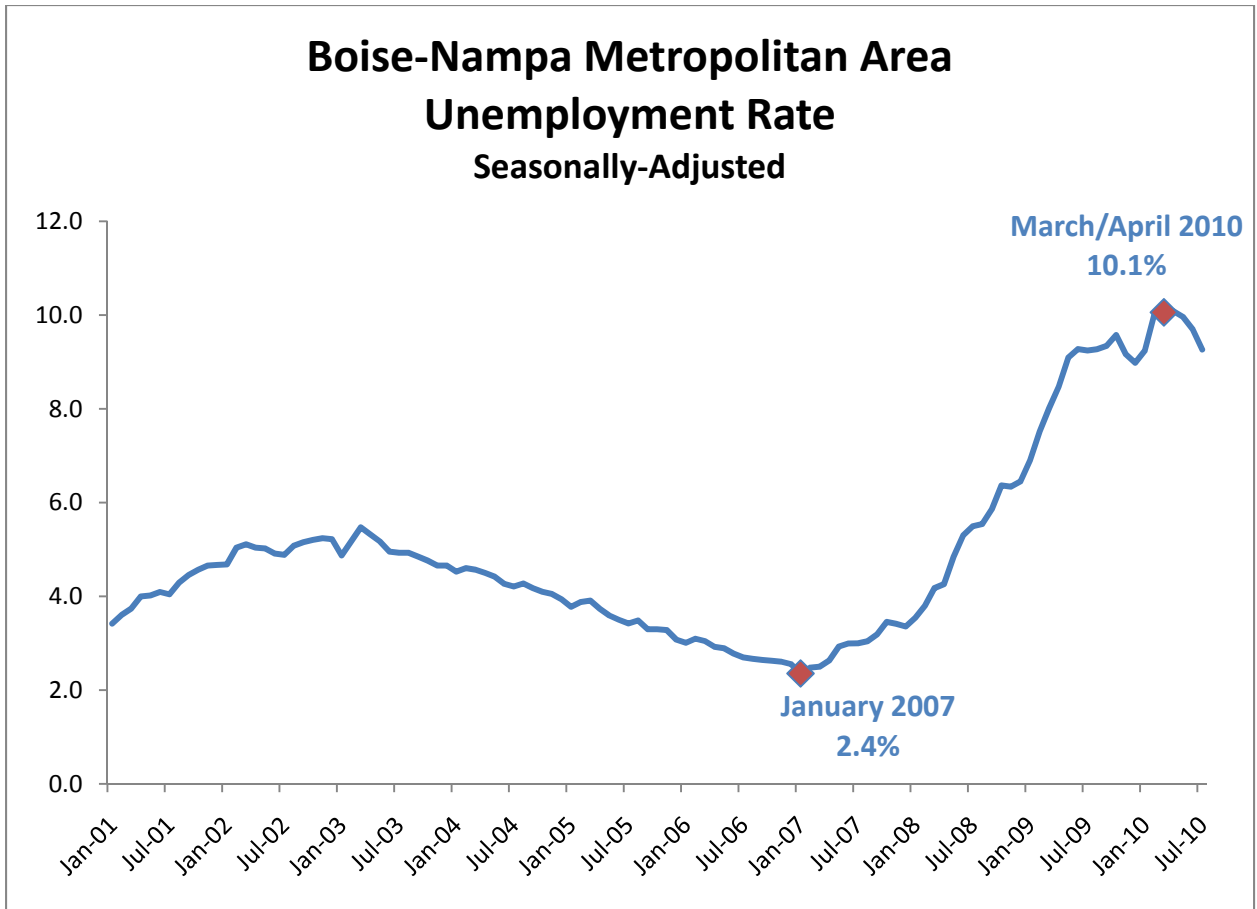


Figure 4-4: Boise-Nampa Unemployment Rate

Changes in how, when, and where people will work in the future can change transportation patterns. For example, if more people work from home or work flexible schedules, then rush-hour traffic can become less severe, not because of a reduction in employment or population, but because fewer workers will be working during similar hours of the day.

Treasure Valley as a Key Regional Hub

In addition to those who live and work in southwest Idaho, many people also pass through the region. Interstate-84 (I-84) is the major east/west freeway through southwest Idaho, and is the main route for people or products to get from major shipping ports such as Seattle, Tacoma, and Portland to locations in the Intermountain West and beyond (Figure 4-5). The prosperity of southwest Idaho is tied in part to the futures of other regional cities.

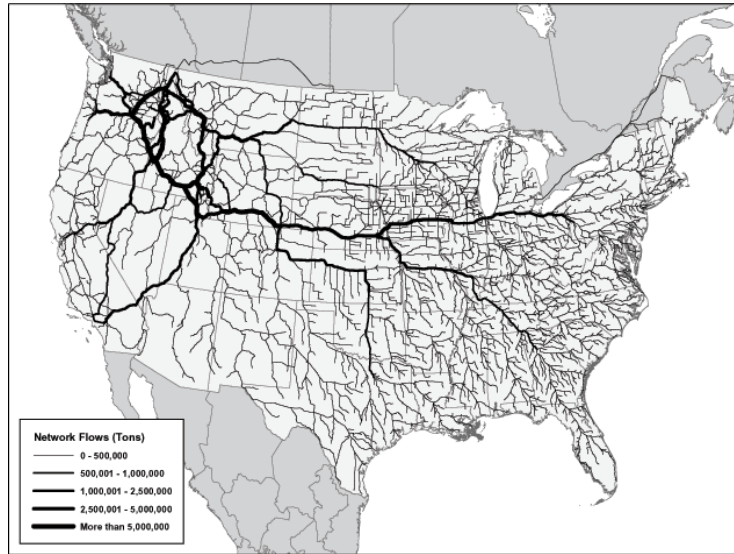


Figure 4-5: Truck Flows Map

Most newcomers to the Treasure Valley come from Los Angeles, Salt Lake, Seattle, Phoenix, and other areas of Idaho.⁴ Would the success of other regional areas likewise promote this area or attract households and jobs to those places? On the other hand, would failure in other regional areas make this a more or less attractive place to relocate?

Additional information on freight and air traffic can be found in chapter 11 of *Communities in Motion*.

Continuing Compact Growth Vision

Forecasting

Planning transportation facilities for rapidly growing urban area like the Treasure Valley requires an adequate understanding of future usage. Population, employment, and land use are basic determinants of travel; therefore, a first step in assessing transportation needs is to prepare a population estimate and forecast. One of the initial steps to identifying transportation improvements is to realize land use, growth, and subsequent travel demand impacts.

COMPASS' forecasts are used by policymakers and the general public, as well as by public and private agencies throughout the region. Local jurisdictions use the forecasts for general plan updates and capital facilities planning, including environmental impact reports, and for local transportation planning. Other agencies such as the school districts, public services, and retail businesses use aspects of COMPASS' forecasts to develop plans for providing services.

COMPASS' forecasts represent the changes we can anticipate for the region and its communities based upon the best available information at the time the forecast is produced and reputable computer models.

They are meant to help policy and decision-makers prepare for the future and are not an expression for or against growth.

⁴ Census 2000 Migration Data. County-to-County Migration Flow Files - U.S. Census Bureau.

Modeling

COMPASS uses models in travel demand and land use forecasting. Models are reflections of rational views of how the world works and provide a consistent framework for our discussions and analyses. Good models are complex enough to represent a great variety of social, economic, and environmental phenomena and simple enough to create transparency. Models are valuable tools for consensus building and for making informed planning decisions; however, models do not make policy decisions. Models can be useful for the following:

1. Analysis of past and present growth patterns and travel demand.
2. Projection of land use patterns and conditions.
3. Prescription of desired future conditions and requisite policies.

For a more rational and scientific approach to growth forecasting COMPASS acquired a land use model. This model, UPlan, demonstrates likely areas for growth due to their level of attractiveness, such as the proximity to transportation facilities, existing infrastructure, political boundaries, and employment sites. Areas are given values based on their characteristics and then growth is allocated accordingly (Figure 4-6). This model reflects land use types desired by local land use plans and policies and shows how decisions made today are most likely to impact the region decades into the future.

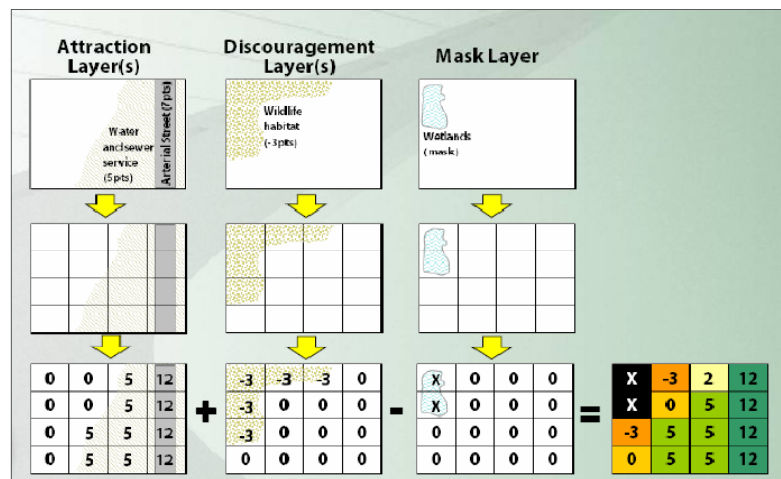


Figure 4-6: UPlan Land Use Model

COMPASS uses a travel demand model to forecast roadway deficiencies, level of service analysis, and other transportation planning applications. The COMPASS travel demand model is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5 and at www.compassidaho.org/prodserv/traveldemand.htm.

A summary of the growth allocation is shown in Table 4-1. This table depicts changes in population and jobs by demographic areas. These areas are not city limits, but generally are close to the area of impact⁵ configurations. More detailed allocation information can be viewed at <http://www.compassidaho.org/prodserv/demo-forecasts.htm>. Current and future population and employment forecast maps are on pages 4-10 through 4-12 (Figures 4-7 through 4-9).

⁵ Areas of impact are required under Idaho Statute (Idaho Code 67-65, et. al.) as part of the annexation process. Such areas are approved by the county commissioners upon negotiation with the city or cities. Within the area of impact, city plans and development standards are often adopted by the county.

Table 4-1: Summary Demographics for 2035

Demographic Area	Population			Employment			Ratio of Employment to Population	
	2008	2035	Increase	2008	2035	Increase	2008	2035
Boise	250,645	343,712	37%	150,656	232,836	55%	0.60	0.68
Caldwell	49,149	96,691	97%	12,298	40,570	230%	0.25	0.42
Nampa	101,396	168,078	66%	30,869	65,108	111%	0.30	0.39
Meridian	86,229	172,576	100%	28,662	74,469	160%	0.33	0.43
Eagle	24,049	54,179	125%	5,364	12,304	129%	0.22	0.23
Kuna	17,102	54,599	219%	1,516	5,896	289%	0.09	0.11
Middleton	10,743	33,965	216%	1,131	7,924	601%	0.11	0.23
Garden City	11,459	25,753	125%	8,364	13,815	65%	0.73	0.54
Star	7,476	20,825	179%	729	2,061	183%	0.10	0.10
Parma	3,611	10,703	196%	759	4,381	477%	0.21	0.41

Monitoring the Vision

COMPASS tracks growth in the economy, jobs, building permits, and other indicators to determine the health of the area and the potential demand on the transportation system. Growth and Transportation Monitoring Reports were discussed in Chapter 2. These reports highlight traffic congestion, growth impacts, and implementing results.

Implementing the Vision

Community Choices offers a vision for a more cost-effective, multi-modal transportation system. Implementation of the Community Choices vision will require buy-in of many different stakeholders. Livable and sustainable communities (Chapter 13) are not created by a single organization. Public, private, and non-profits are needed to coordinate land use, transportation, environmental, economic development, education, health, social services, housing, and transit. Every stakeholder has a role, including local municipalities, transportation agencies, neighborhood groups, developers, financial institutions, and the public (Figure 4-10, page 4-12).

A variety of local government policies and projects were initiated to implement the Community Choices vision of *Communities in Motion*. These are tracked in the *Communities in Motion Implementation Guidebook*: <http://www.compassidaho.org/prodserv/reglrtranpl.htm>.

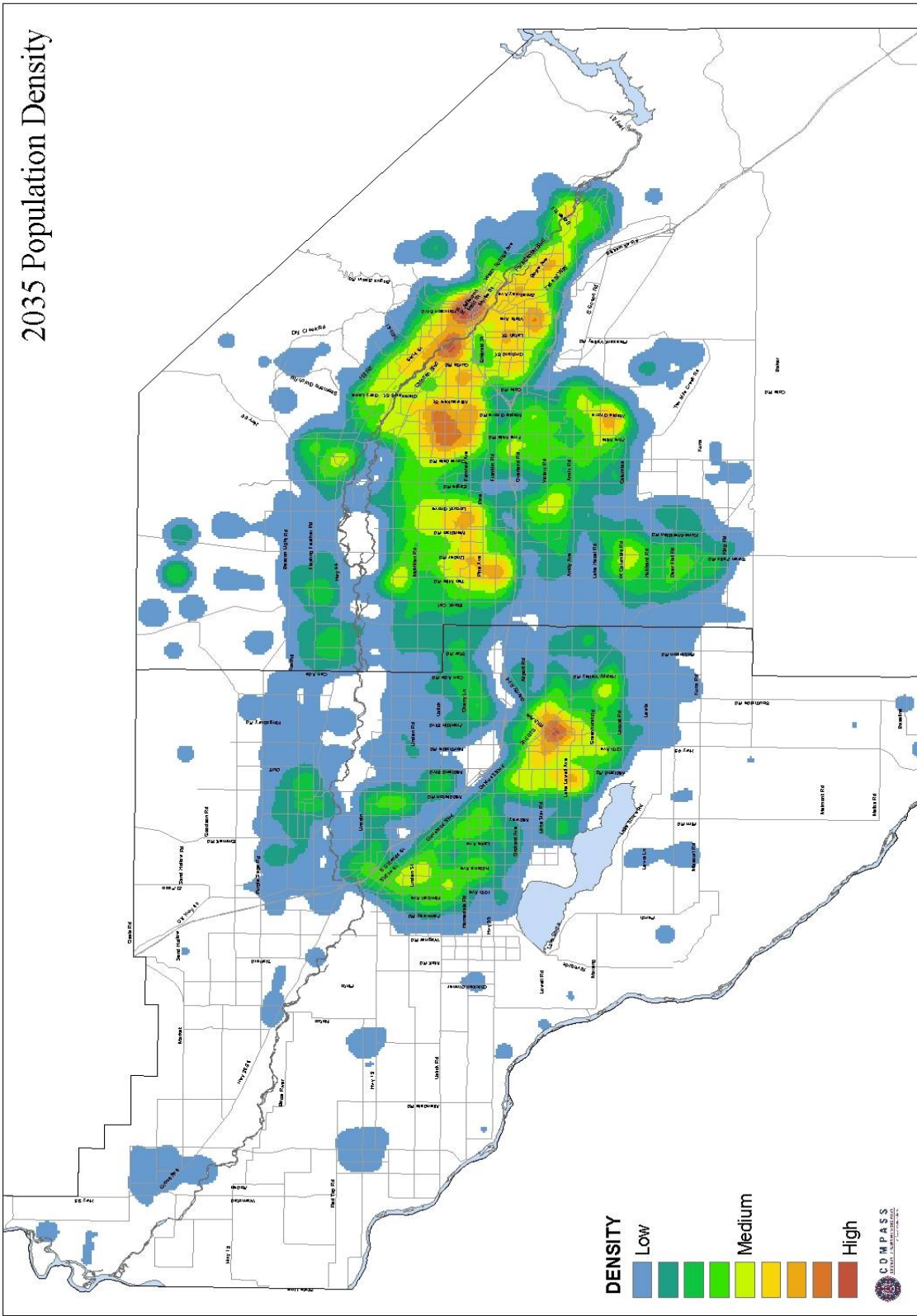


Figure 4-7: 2030 Population Density

2010 Employment Density

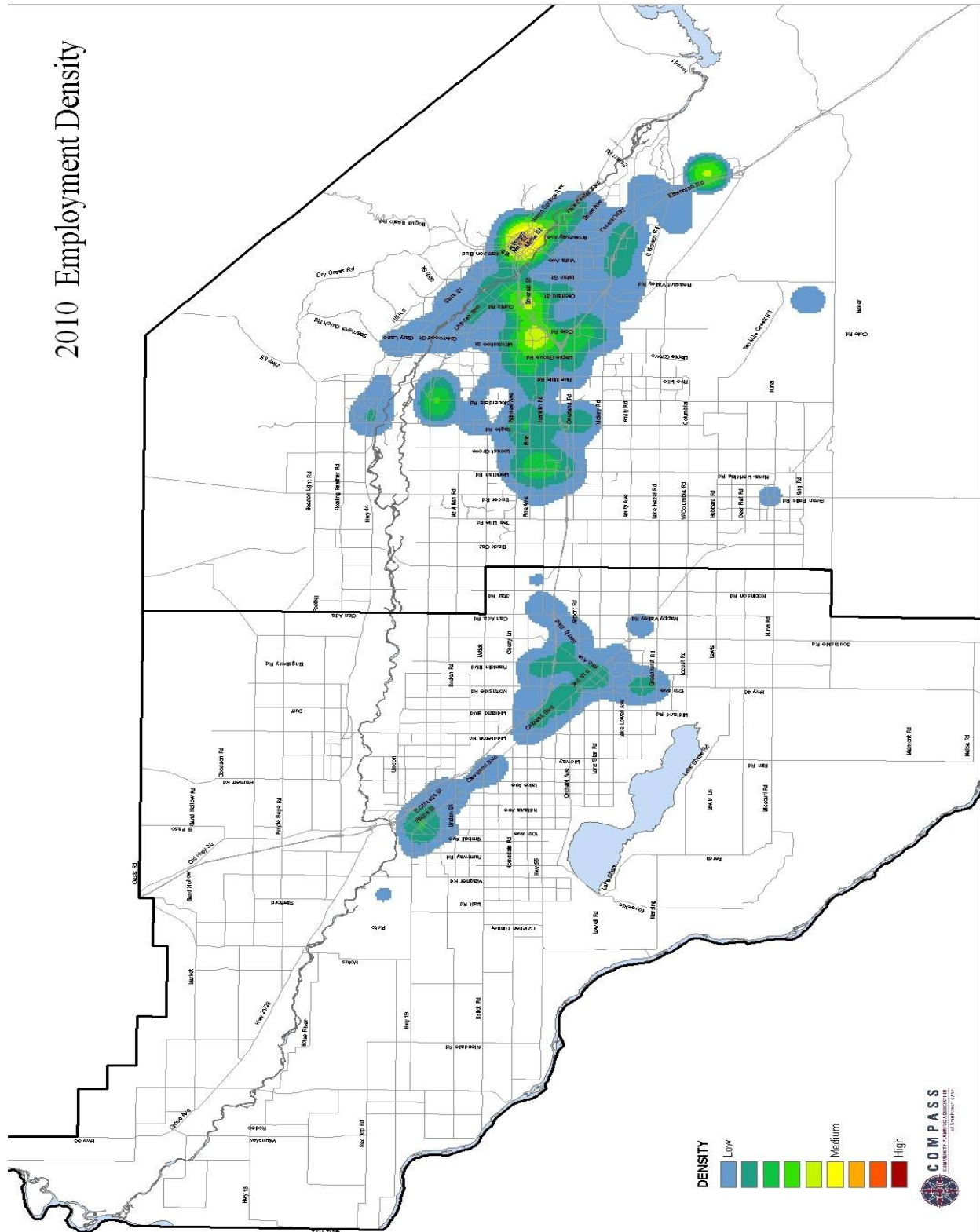


Figure 4-8: 2010 Employment Density

2035 Employment Density

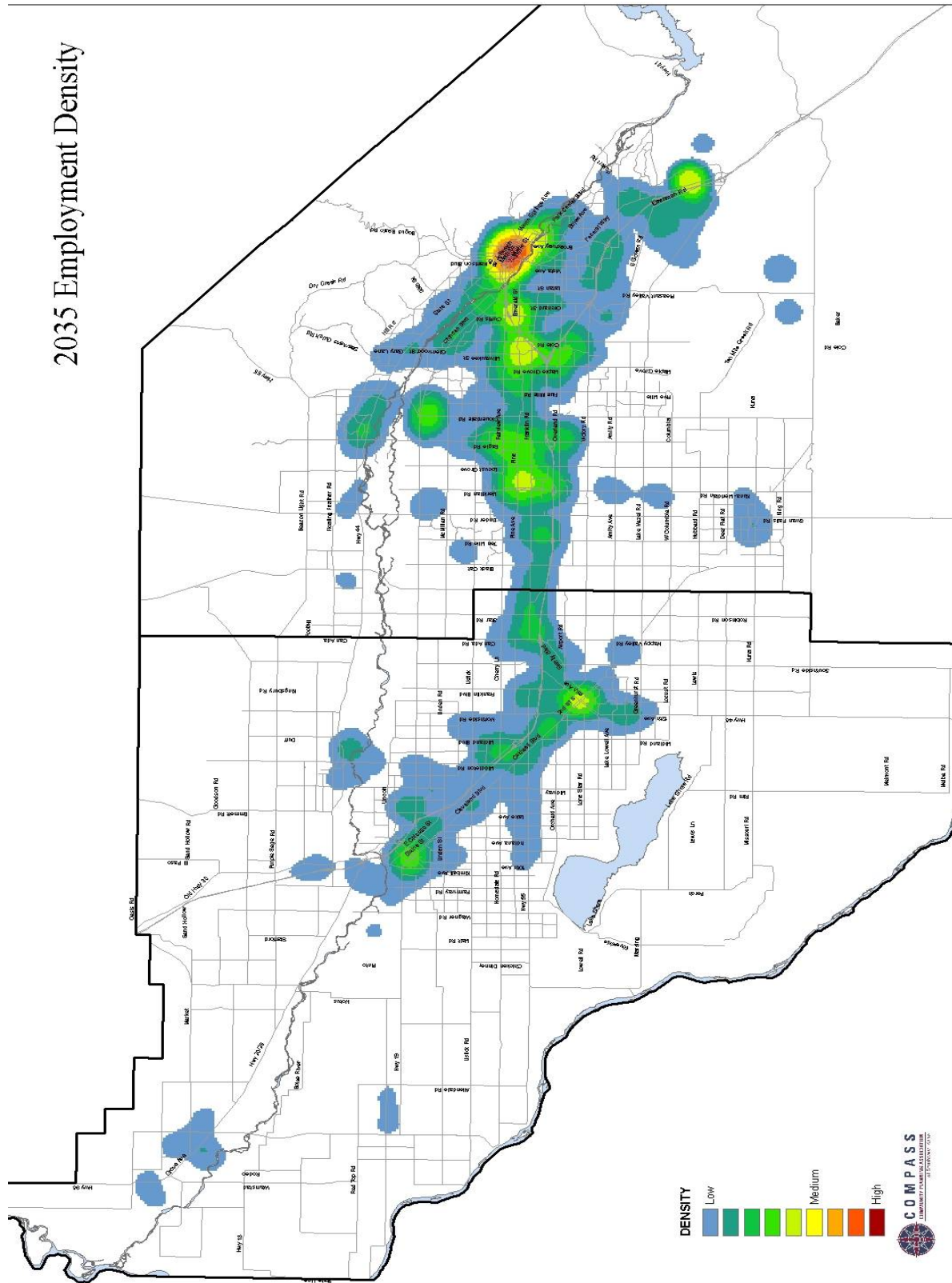


Figure 4-9: 2035 Employment Density

Stakeholder Benefits: This regional long-term collaborative approach provides advantages for all stakeholders. Some of these stakeholder advantages include:

Elected Officials

- Higher, more stable property values
- Reduced pollution and environmental destruction
- Enhanced ability to maintain economic competitiveness
- Reduced dependence on foreign oil
- Less taxation needed for roadways
- Revitalize neighborhoods
- Reduce crime and increase safety
- Increase social capital and public involvement

Developers

- Increased foot traffic and customers for area businesses
- Reduced incentive to sprawl, increased incentive for compact development
- Less expensive than funding road building and sprawl
- Increased land values, rents, and real estate performance
- Larger market as it increases affordable housing opportunities
- Available transit reduces parking requirements and costs
- Increase access to labor pools

Public

- Higher quality of life
- Better places to live, work, and play
- Less cookie-cutter and strip development
- Increased opportunities for quality urban lifestyle
- More walkable lifestyles away from traffic
- Reduced household spending on transportation, resulting in more affordable housing
- Healthier lifestyle with more walking and less stress
- Shorter commutes and more free time
- Environmental quality
- Increased transit ridership
- Reduced traffic congestion and driving
- Reduced car accidents and injuries
- Preservation of open space

Figure 4-10: Stakeholder Benefits