

BY WILLIAM H. FREY

Growth begets growth – or so it appeared a few years ago when cheap housing and easy credit fueled moves to high flying metros in the nation's interior West and Southeast, as well as to exurbs all over the country. But new Census Bureau numbers show the housing bust has stopped this migration on a proverbial dime.



Young couples, empty nesters and retirees have all proved to be extremely sensitive to the double whammy of ice-cold markets for their old houses and higher mortgage costs at their prospective destinations. During the

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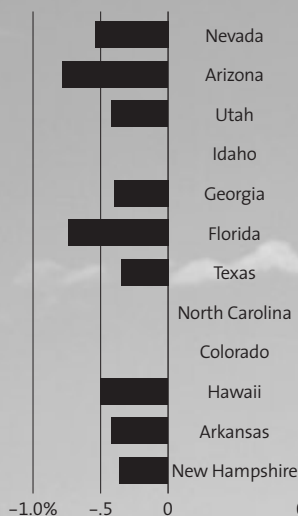
boom, Phoenix, Las Vegas and the Riverside/San Bernardino metros all enjoyed 3-5 percent population growth rates. For its part, Florida was welcoming some 200,000 domestic migrants annually. Last year, Florida picked up just 35,000 domestic migrants, while San Bernardino County saw migration turn negative.

It's too soon to tell how long the migration

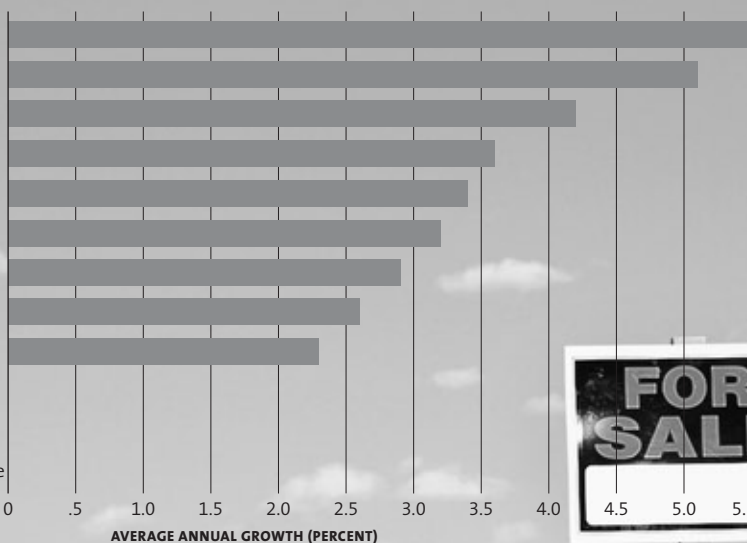
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HIGH FLYERS AND HIGH DIVERS

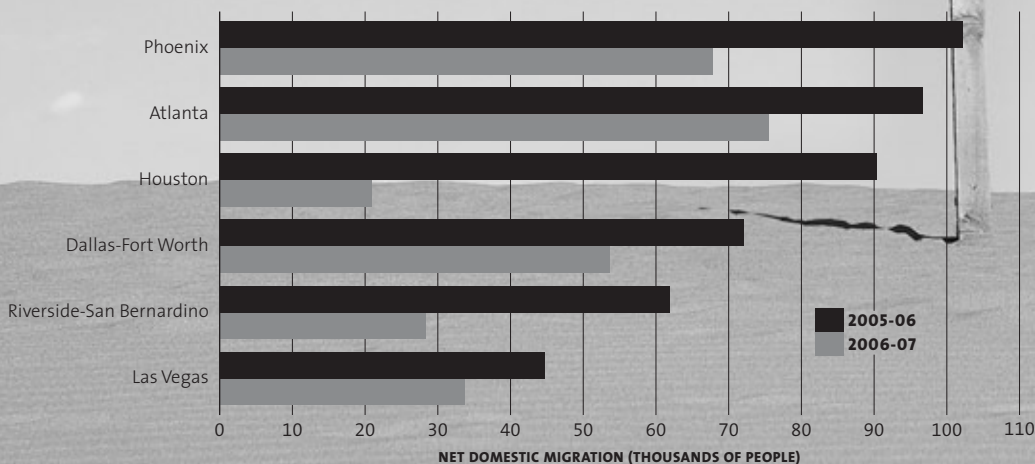
THE 9 STATES WITH THE GREATEST POPULATION GROWTH DECLINE, 2006-07



THE 9 STATES WITH THE GREATEST AVERAGE ANNUAL POPULATION GROWTH, 2003-06



TOP MIGRATION METROS



lull will last. It could still prove to be a pause that refreshes, giving the go-go markets time to catch up on lagging infrastructure development and to rethink the question of whether it is really in the rapid-growth localities' inter-

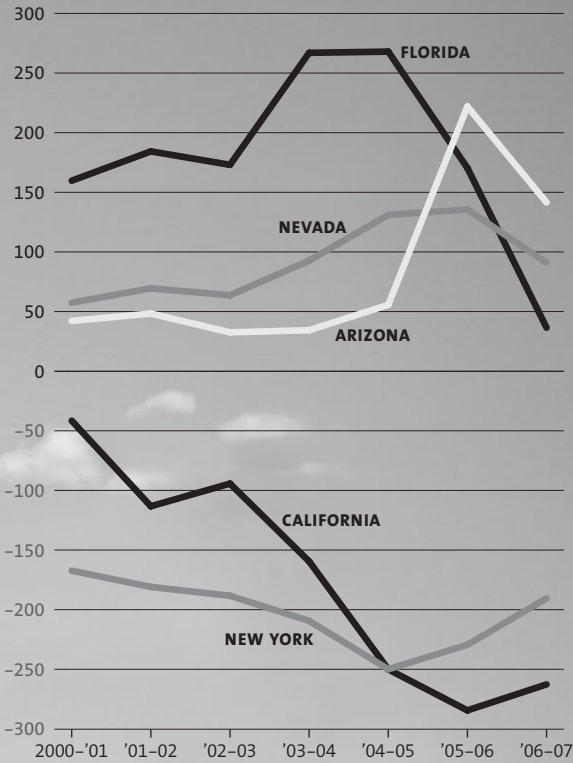
ests to once again put out the welcome mat. By the same token, the lull gives stagnant parts of the country time to find ways to make the old neighborhoods attractive once more.

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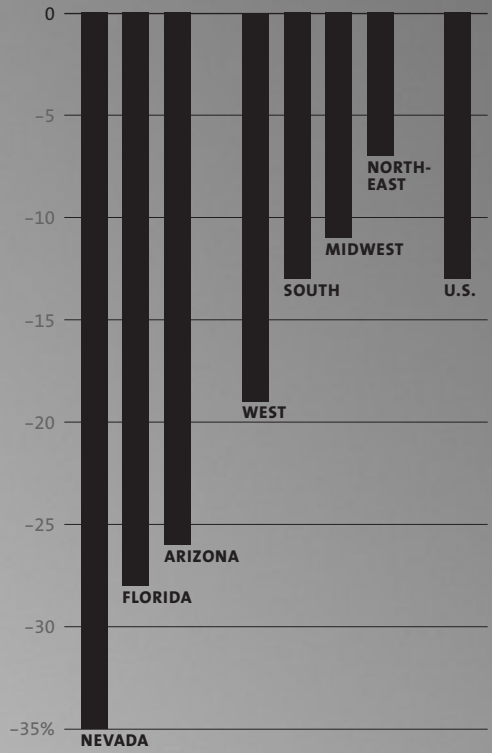
MIGRATION SLOWDOWNS AND UPTURNS

NET DOMESTIC MIGRATION (THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE)



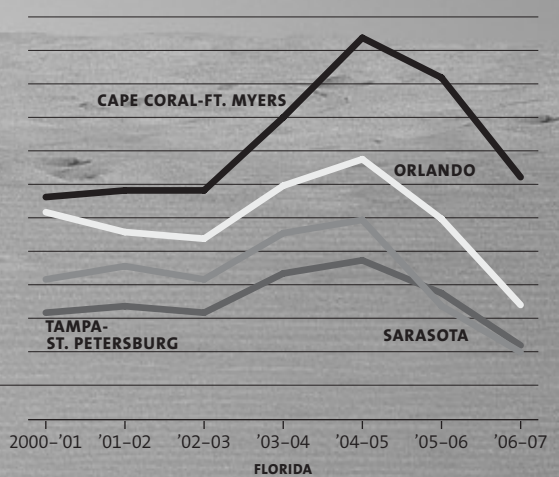
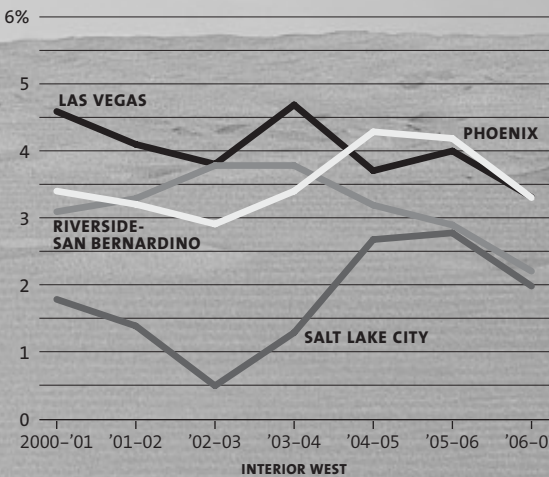
HOUSING PRICE MELTDOWNS, 2006-07

CHANGE IN MEDIAN HOUSING PRICE (PERCENT)



METRO GROWTH BUBBLE BUSTS

POPULATION GROWTH RATE



NOTE: All figures are for July 1 to June 30 fiscal year

SOURCES: Author's analysis of Annual Census Bureau Population Estimates; National Association of Realtors, Median Housing Values