Metropolitan Area Magnets for Baby-Boomers

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The mention of baby-boom "magnet area" conjures up the image of a cosmopolitan center, with cultural amenities and urbane life style known to be attractive to the highly mobile, young professional. Yet this image of the boomer magnet was more applicable to the 1970s than it is today. While large numbers of baby-boomers still reside in classic boomer havens such as Washington, DC and San Francisco, results from the 1990 census reveal new growth preferences on the part of younger boomers who "came of age" in the 1980s. And older boomers, entering into middle age, have altered their preferences away from culture and downtown life.

The flurry of movement among members of the large baby-boom cohorts will not last for much longer. As with preceding cohorts, their migration levels tend to peak during their twenties and early thirties and wind down, thereafter, as they become settled in careers and families. Hence, the "boomer magnets" of the 1970s were defined by the location preferences of early baby-boom cohorts as they passed through their most mobile ages. The boomer magnets of the 1980s are influenced both by the new migration patterns of later baby-boom cohorts -- just entering their peak mobility years -- and the altered patterns of older boomer cohorts. The migration levels for both segments of boomers will slow to a snail's pace by the year 2000. Therefore, metro areas that have already captured large numbers of boomers are likely to keep them.

are attractive because of economic opportunities associated with their fast-growing industries.

Four boomer metros of the 1980s do conform to the image of the white collar cosmopolitan center that attracted so many young professional boomers in the past. They are Atlanta, Dallas, Seattle, and Washington DC. These areas rank high on a variety of quality of life measures, particularly on the dimensions of education and the arts. They are among the 9 metros with the highest proportions of baby-boomers (irrespective of recent boomer growth rates), suggesting their continued retention of the boomers they attracted during the 1970s. A noticeable omission from the 1980s magnet list is San Francisco. While it still retains a high proportion of baby-boomers as a share of its total population, its reduced attraction for boomers during the 1980s pushes it off the "magnet" list.

(Chart 2 about here)

Magnets for Young Boomers, Old Boomers

The list of boomer magnet areas, for the entire baby boom generation, is not replicated when separate magnet lists are compiled for younger boomers (born since 1955) and the more senior segment of the boomer generation. The younger boomer magnet list reflects the continued appeal of "bright lights" but tempered with a concern for housing costs and job availability. Like their more senior counterparts a decade ago, younger baby boom migrants include a disproportionate share of unattached, highly educated professionals (37% are college graduates, 35% hold executive or professional occupations, and 47% of

remains a magnet for the older baby boom generation. Other old boomer magnets include the stand-alone metros: Austin, Texas and Reno, Nevada.

Has the growth of these more suburban magnets resulted from a city abandonment by older boomers? Census results suggest that this is part of the explanation (see chart 4). At the same time that Santa Rosa-Petaluma, Orange County, Oxnard-Ventura, and Lake County were gaining large numbers of aging boomers, their neighboring "big city" metros were losing them. The suburban attractions, for these boomers, appeal to traditional middle-age preferences for a family-oriented community, lower crime rates, and a desire to escape the congestion and frenetic pace of the city. While lower housing costs (than in the city) may be a consideration in some cases, all of these suburban metros have median costs that rank above the national average.

(Chart 4 about here)

Magnets for Black Boomers

The list of black baby boom magnets shows only a small overlap with the total baby boom magnet list presented in chart 1. The fastest growing metros for baby boom blacks can be characterized as either (1) metro areas with suburban character that are accessible to middle class blacks; (2) major metros that represent new destinations for blacks that have begun to enter the mainstream national labor market; and (3) growing major metros of the South that are attracting rural-to-urban blacks from within the region, as well as return black migrants from the North.

"boomer loser" metro -- Provo-Orem, Utah -- is something of an anomaly. Its boomer losses were not the result of industrial declines, or economic shocks. Rather, they occurred because of the successful graduation of large cohorts of baby boomers who left this university town to start productive careers in other communities. Provo-Orem's experience is not uncommon among university towns. Ann Arbor, MI, Eugene-Springfield, OR, and Madison, WI, among others, bid farewell to their bloated baby boom student populations over the 1980-90 decade. Only Provo-Orem appears on the "boomer loser" list because of its exceptionally high rate of loss and the low share (25%) that baby boomers now comprise of its total population.

(Chart 6 about here)

The remaining metro areas with small proportions and large losses of baby boomers are located primarily in the nation's interior and oil patch regions. Most are smaller metropolitan areas, with 1990 populations under 500,000, and have sustained significant cutbacks in blue collar industrial jobs, or those related to declining extractive or farming activities. Efforts have been made to restructure the economic bases in many of these areas, including Pittsburgh and Buffalo, the two largest. Losses to these areas' baby boom populations will be hard to replace, however, as boomers age and get settled in other areas. Still, most of these metros rank moderate to good on overall quality of life measures, and tend to rank below the national average on housing and living costs. These attributes should serve to retain and attract

Appendix to: Metropolitan Area Magnets for Baby Boomers

BOX A: Defining Baby Boom Magnet Areas

The metropolitan areas, compared in this paper, include all 1990 MSAs, PMSAs, and NECMAs with populations exceeding 250,000. Metropolitan area magnets, for each category of baby boomers, are defined on the basis of growth rank (% change, 1980-90) for areas with large 1990 shares of baby boomers. The baby boom population is approximated by cohorts aged 25-44 in 1990 (born between 1946-65). Young baby boom cohorts are those aged 25-34 in 1990 (born between 1956-65), and old baby boom cohorts are those aged 35-44 in 1990 (born between 1946-1955). The baby boom population growth, for an area, is calculated by comparing its population of baby boom cohort members in 1980 (ages 15-34, for the entire baby boom generation) with its population of baby boom cohort members in 1990 (ages 25-44). Listed below are the criteria for defining specific types of baby boom magnet metros.

Baby Boom Magnet Metros (for the entire baby boom generation) are metros with the fastest-growing baby boom populations, among those with baby boom shares that are greater than 35% (Note: each of these baby boom magnets had growth rates higher than 20%).

Young Baby Boom Magnet Metros include metro areas with the fastest-growing young baby boom populations, for areas where the share of young

Chart 1: Top 12 Metro Magnets for Baby Boomers, 1980-90[a]

Percent Growth 1980-90	Name	Metro Pop Size (in millions)	Boomer Percent of Total	Places Rated Percentile	Median Housing Value	Percent Nonfamily Households
1) +51.6	Orlando, FL	1.07	35.1	71	$ 84,000	31
2) +34.5	Fort Worth-Arlington, TX	1.33	36.1	59	$ 72,000	29
3) +33.0	Atlanta, GA	2.83	37.7	97	$ 90,000	30
4) +30.2	Santa Rosa-Petaluma, CA	0.39	35.1	75	$ 201,000	33
5) +29.1	Vallejo-Fairfield-Napa, CA	0.45	35.3	57	$ 155,000	26
6) +28.3	Dallas, TX	2.55	37.5	88	$ 83,000	32
7) +24.2	Manchester-Nashua, NH	0.34	36.3	31	$ 126,000	33
8) +23.4	Reno, NV	0.25	36.3	59	$ 111,000	37
9) +23.3	Portsmouth-Dover-Rochester, NH	0.35	36.4	44	$ 134,000	31
10) +22.1	Seattle, WA	1.97	37.6	100	$ 137,000	36
11) +21.8	Austin, TX	0.78	37.7	41	$ 77,000	38
12) +20.6	Washington, DC-MD-VA	3.92	37.9	99	$ 166,000	34

[a] Percentile based on relative rank among US metro areas in Richard Boyer and David Savageau, *The Places Rated Almanac* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1989)

Chart 3: Top Metro Magnets for Young Baby Boomers, Old Baby Boomers, 1980-90

	Percent Growth 1980-90	Name	Metro Pop Size (in millions)	Young/Old Boomer Pcnt of Total	Median Housing Value
		Young Boomers			
1)	+72.7	Riverside-San Bernadino, CA	2.59	18.7	$ 134,000
2)	+60.3	Las Vegas, NV	0.74	18.8	$ 93,000
3)	+54.5	Orlando, FL	1.07	19.6	$ 84,000
4)	+46.0	Atlanta, GA	2.83	20.3	$ 90,000
5)	+45.8	Dallas, TX	2.55	21.3	$ 83,000
6)	+45.8	Fort Worth-Arlington, TX	1.33	20.4	$ 72,000
7)	+38.1	Phoenix, AZ	2.12	18.5	$ 85,000
8)	+33.1	Manchester-Nashua, NH	0.34	19.7	$ 126,000
9)	+33.0	San Francisco, CA	1.60	20.0	$ 332,000
10)	+32.2	Seattle, WA	1.97	19.8	$ 137,000
11)	+31.9	Washington, DC-MD-VA	3.92	20.4	$ 166,000
12)	+31.1	Reno, NV	0.25	19.0	$ 111,000
		Old Boomers			
1)	+27.1	Santa Rosa-Petaluma, CA	0.39	18.4	$ 201,000
2)	+24.7	Vallejo-Fairfield-Napa, CA	0.45	16.9	$ 155,000
3)	+21.2	Orange County, NY	0.31	16.1	$ 142,000
4)	+21.0	Sacramento, CA	1.48	16.3	$ 137,000
5)	+20.5	Atlanta, GA	2.83	17.5	$ 90,000
6)	+20.4	Oxnard-Ventura, CA	0.67	16.4	$ 245,000
7)	+20.3	Portsmouth-Dover-Rochester, NH	0.35	16.8	$ 134,000
8)	+16.9	Austin, TX	0.78	16.4	$ 77,000
9)	+16.1	Lake County, IL	0.52	16.9	$ 137,000
10)	+15.8	Reno, NV	0.25	17.3	$ 111,000
11)	+15.7	Middlesex-Somerset-Hunterdon, NJ	1.02	16.2	$ 174,000
12)	+15.1	Manchester-Nasgua, NH	0.34	16.5	$ 126,000

Chart 5: Top Metro Magnets for Blacks, 1980-90

Percent Black Boomer Growth	Name	Boomer Percent of Black Total	Total Metro Pop Size (in millions)	Black Percent Metro Pop
1) +96.1	Riverside-San Bernadino, CA	34.9	2.59	6.9
2) +54.7	Fort Lauderdale, FL	34.5	1.26	15.4
3) +53.9	Minneapolis-St. Paul, MN-WI	34.2	2.46	3.6
4) +48.6	Vallejo-Faurfield-Napa, CA	36.9	0.45	10.4
5) +42.8	Sacramento, CA	34.5	1.48	6.9
6) +39.5	Anaheim-Santa Ana, CA	41.1	2.41	1.8
7) +39.5	Middlesex-Somerset-Hunterdon, NJ	37.9	1.02	6.9
8) +29.3	Atlanta, GA	37.6	2.83	26.0
9) +28.3	Fort Worth-Arlington, TX	34.8	1.33	10.8
10) +26.8	Austin, TX	34.5	0.78	9.2
11) +25.8	Orange County, NY	34.6	0.31	7.2
12) +24.5	Seattle, WA	36.4	1.97	4.1

Appendix A: Top 25 Boomer Magnets

Growth Rate	Boomer. Pcnt of Pop	Name	Met Size (in millions)
1) 51.6	35.1	Orlando, FL	1.07
2) 34.5	36.1	Fort Worth-Arlington, TX	1.33
3) 33.0	37.7	Atlanta, GA	2.83
4) 30.2	35.1	Santa Rosa-Petaluma, CA	0.39
5) 29.1	35.3	Vallejo-Fairfield-Napa, CA	0.45
6) 28.3	37.5	Dallas, TX	2.55
7) 24.2	36.3	Manchester-Nashua, NH	0.34
8) 23.4	36.3	Reno, NV	0.25
9) 23.3	36.4	Portsmouth-Dover-Rochester, NH	0.35
10) 22.1	37.6	Seattle, WA	1.97
11) 21.8	37.7	Austin, TX	0.78
12) 20.6	37.9	Washington, DC-MD-VA	3.92
13) 17.8	35.2	San Diego, CA	2.50
14) 17.8	35.8	Anaheim-Santa Rosa, CA	2.41
15) 16.8	36.1	Oakland, CA	2.08
16) 16.8	37.5	Raleigh-Durham, NC	0.74
17) 16.1	35.7	Middlesex-Somerset-Hunterdon, NJ	1.02
18) 12.0	37.5	San Jose, CA	1.50
19) 11.9	37.9	San Francisco, CA	1.60
20) 11.5	35.7	Colorado Springs, CO	0.40
21) 11.5	36.7	Houston, TX	3.30
22) 10.4	36.6	Minneapolis-St. Paul, MN-WI	2.46
23) 9.0	37.5	Denver, CO	1.62
24) 7.8	35.4	Portland, OR	1.24
25) 7.7	35.1	Richmond-Petersburg, VA	0.87

Appendix C: Top 25 Old Boomer Magnets

Growth Rate	Boomer Pcnt of Pop	Name	Met Size (in millions)
1) 27.1	18.4	Santa Rosa-Petaluma, CA	0.39
2) 24.7	16.9	Vallejo-Fairfield-Napa, CA	0.45
3) 21.2	16.1	Orange County, NY	0.31
4) 21.0	16.3	Sacramento, CA	1.48
5) 20.5	17.5	Atlanta, GA	2.83
6) 20.4	16.4	Oxnard-Ventura, CA	0.67
7) 20.3	16.8	Portsmouth-Dover-Rochester, NH	0.35
8) 16.9	16.4	Austin, TX	0.78
9) 16.1	16.9	Lake County, IL	0.52
10) 15.8	17.3	Reno, NV	0.25
11) 15.7	16.2	Middlesex-Somerset-Hunterdon, NJ	1.02
12) 15.1	16.5	Manchester-Nashua, NH	0.34
13) 14.3	16.8	Raleigh-Durham, NC	0.74
14) 12.5	17.8	Seattle, WA	1.97
15) 11.7	16.1	Colorado Springs, CO	0.40
16) 10.8	17.3	Oakland, CA	2.08
17) 10.8	16.2	Dallas, TX	2.55
18) 9.8	17.6	Washington, DC-MD-VA	3.92
19) 7.4	16.1	Nashville, TN	0.99
20) 7.0	16.1	Poughkeepsie, NY	0.26
21) 4.2	16.7	Richmond-Petersburg, VA	0.87
22) 4.1	16.2	Aurora-Elgin, IL	0.36
23) 2.8	17.8	Portland, OR	1.24
24) 1.9	16.0	Baltimore, MD	2.38
25) 1.2	16.4	Minneapolis-St. Paul, MN-WI	2.46

Appendix E: Top Boomer Losers

Growth Rate	Boomer Pcnt of Pop	Name	Met Size (in millions)
1) -27.7	25.2	Provo-Orem, UT	0.26
2) -20.2	30.7	Davenport-Rockfield, IA-IL	0.35
3) -20.1	30.1	Peoria, IL	0.34
4) -17.4	29.2	Huntington-Ashland, WV-KY-OH	0.31
5) -16.9	30.9	Gary-Hammond, IN	0.60
6) -16.8	29.4	Youngstown-Warren, OH	0.49
7) -15.8	29.9	Erie, PA	0.28
8) -15.5	30.1	Beaumont-Port Arthur, TX	0.36
9) -13.1	30.6	Pittsburgh, PA	2.06
10) -12.4	30.8	Buffalo, NY	0.97
11) -12.3	30.7	Shreveport, LA	0.33
12) -10.1	30.8	Canton, OH	0.39
13) - 8.3	29.9	Utica-Rome, NY	0.32
14) - 7.5	30.2	Johnson City, TN-VA	0.44
15) - 6.2	28.7	Scranton-Wilkes-Barre, PA	0.73
16) - 6.2	30.5	Mobil, AL	0.48