ECONOMIC INDICATORS FOR THE MIDCONTINENT METROPOLITAN AREAS, 1977

Introduction

Socio-economic data have long been important planning tools for policy makers, businessmen and investors. Since 1973, the Center for Applied Urban Research, with the cooperation of the Economic Development Council of the Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce, has compiled and published quarterly data to assist readers in assessing the economic vitality of the Omaha area. In 1975, these quarterly indicators were expanded to include 25 metropolitan areas located in the eleven-state Midcontinent Region. Another revision occurred in 1977 when the Omaha subareas were redefined to better monitor Omaha's westward expansion. All data presented in this report were obtained from Federal, State and local agency sources and represent the latest revised figures.

Metropolitan Area Growth Above National Rate

Most of the negative recessionary trends of 1974-75 were reversed in 1976. In 1977, all the economic indicators showed improvement for the nation and for the 25 Midcontinent metropolitan areas as a group. The Regional increase was also more rapid during 1977 than a year earlier in most indicator categories. Only residential building permits and air passenger traffic increased more slowly in 1977 than in 1976.

Among the 25 metropolitan areas in the Midcontinent Region, conditions varied greatly. For example, energy resource development in the far western Regional cities produced many increases, while prolonged strikes and the loss of a manufacturer left Sioux City with an economic slowdown during 1977.

Quarterly data for 25 Midcontinent metropolitan areas through 1976 and 1977 appear in Table 1. The aggregate data for those areas represent short term Regional patterns of change and allow for comparisons with economic growth in the nation.

Average Weekly Earnings in Manufacturing. Average weekly earnings received by manufacturing production workers in the Midcontinent Region increased by eight percent during 1977, a rate well ahead of the annual increase in the Consumer Price Index. The 1977 annual average weekly earnings for the Region were $241.07, slightly above the nationwide average of $226.59.

Unemployment. During the past two years the Region's jobless rate dropped at a pace slightly faster than in the rest of the nation (Figure 2). Consequently, the unemployment rate

1 Year-end summary data for 1973 through 1976 for the 25 metropolitan areas and the Omaha subareas were reported in the March, 1977, issue of the Review of Applied Urban Research.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Period</th>
<th>Average Weekly Hourly Earnings of Production Workers</th>
<th>Average Weekly Hours</th>
<th>Average Hourly Earnings</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1976-1977</td>
<td>$4.20 - $4.80</td>
<td>41.3 - 49.4</td>
<td>$0.10 - $0.12</td>
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**Footnotes:***
### Selected Midcontinent Regional Urban Indicators, 1976 and 1977

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colorado</td>
<td>154.0 142.4 143.5 170.7 570.7</td>
<td>287.2 268.7 263.8 261.6 262.5</td>
<td>264.2 267.9 281.7 288.7 291.1</td>
<td>30.9</td>
<td>100.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kansas</td>
<td>21.5 18.7 21.1 24.8 61.1</td>
<td>41.9 39.7 39.7 39.7 39.7</td>
<td>39.7 39.7 39.7 39.7 39.7</td>
<td>8.2</td>
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<td>Missouri</td>
<td>14.0 13.0 18.0 24.7 31.7</td>
<td>19.8 19.8 19.8 19.8 19.8</td>
<td>19.8 19.8 19.8 19.8 19.8</td>
<td>5.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nebraska</td>
<td>11.0 12.5 13.5 14.5 15.4</td>
<td>21.3 21.3 21.3 21.3 21.3</td>
<td>21.3 21.3 21.3 21.3 21.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>South Dakota</td>
<td>20.4 19.1 22.5 24.8 28.1</td>
<td>34.1 34.1 34.1 34.1 34.1</td>
<td>34.1 34.1 34.1 34.1 34.1</td>
<td>3.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td>21.3 20.8 22.3 23.8 25.3</td>
<td>31.7 31.7 31.7 31.7 31.7</td>
<td>31.7 31.7 31.7 31.7 31.7</td>
<td>2.4</td>
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Note: N.A. = Not available

This table presents estimates of real gross product (in current dollars) for selected Midcontinent Metropolitan Areas for the four quarters of 1976 and 1977. The data are presented in current dollars, not chained dollars.

### Air Passengers

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Airlines</td>
<td>210.5 200.5 210.5 220.5 230.5</td>
<td>400.5 400.5 400.5 400.5 400.5</td>
<td>400.5 400.5 400.5 400.5 400.5</td>
<td>90.5</td>
<td>100.5</td>
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### Building Permits

- Private housing construction in 1977 was more than one-third higher than in 1976 in the Region. The number of private residential units authorized by permits increased even faster in the 25 Midcontinent metropolitan areas than in the nation as a whole, showing a significant increase in the second quarter and maintaining high levels as the construction year progressed.
- Yearly fluctuations in residential permits ranged from Cheyenne's 11 percent increase to St. Joseph's 36 percent decrease from 1976.

### Employment

- Employment in the Region remained relatively stable in 1977, with the unemployment rate rising slightly from 5.1 percent in 1976 to 5.2 percent in 1977.
- The employment growth was lower in the Region than in the nation as a whole, but the number of manufacturing jobs, on the other hand, grew faster in the Region's metropolitan areas than in the nation during 1977.

### Monthly Price Index

- The general level of prices in the Region increased during 1977, with the monthly price index for all items rising from 100 in 1976 to 102 in 1977.
- Despite higher inflation rates in the nation, the Region's monthly price index for all items was lower than the national average throughout the year.

### Gross Product

- The gross product for the Region increased by 5.1 percent in 1977, compared to a 3.8 percent increase in the nation.
- The region's gross product growth was faster than the national average, reflecting the region's strong economic performance.
improved during 1977 but the rate of improvement was slower than that of other Midcontinent metropolitan areas in many cases.

Economic and demographic indicators of conditions within the City zoning jurisdiction demonstrate a continued improvement in economic conditions, particularly in construction permits, mortgages, water hookups, bankruptcies and mechanic liens (Table 2).

Increases in the number and value of single-family housing permits occurred in seven City subareas. While the number of multi-family housing units declined slightly from 1976, single-family houses authorized for construction increased by more than 25 percent in 1977. Western suburban subareas claim two-thirds of the total single-family permits issued.

4Exact subarea boundaries are shown in the heading of Table 2.

Although 1977 motor vehicle registrations failed to meet 1976 levels, two other indicators suggest increased stability in personal finances since the recession of 1974. Bankruptcy cases decreased by nearly 10 percent in Omaha during 1977, most notably in the Southwest and Northeast subareas. Mechanic liens increased only in the suburban subareas.

Table 2 also shows intrarural migration. In 1977, the number of households moving to another part of the City declined from the previous year. Of particular significance is the 28 percent decline in the household movement from the older Northeast and Southeast subareas to newer parts of the City.

In summary, economic conditions monitored during 1977 were definite cause for optimism as economic activity improved over that of 1976 in almost every aspect, and the moderate rates of increase may be expected to continue into 1978.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Center for Applied Urban Research is seeking candidates for Senior Research Fellow, a full-time research position. As a member of the senior research staff, the Fellow will participate in all phases of applied urban research, from proposal writing and research design to completion of the project and the written report. The position requires a Ph.D. or equivalent experience in one of the social sciences or related disciplines. Prior experience in applied research is desirable. Resumes will be accepted until May 31, 1978, by Dr. Murray Frost, Acting Director, Center for Applied Urban Research, University of Nebraska at Omaha, Box 688, Omaha, Nebraska 68101.

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The Sixth Annual Senior Citizen Celebration Days will by May 16 through 18, under direction of the UNO Gerontology Program. The Celebration Days are a festival of educational and social activities for persons 55 and older, including mini-courses, displays, an arts, crafts and hobby show, and health testing. The festival will also include a style show, a presentation by the president-elect of the American Association of Retired Persons, a dance, movies and entertainment. A senior olympics will consist of golf, horseshoe and shuffleboard tournaments and a walkathon. Most activities will be at the UNO Student Center, 62nd and Dodge Streets, and all events will be free of charge. For more information, contact Kathy Sullivan at the UNO Gerontology Program (554-2272).

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