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## Urban Jobs, Rural Life Combined

**M**ETROPOLITAN centers are providing more and more jobs for an increasing number of people who prefer to live in the country.

That conclusion is derived from a report on population shifts in the United States, published in *Agricultural Outlook*, a periodical of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and has been confirmed by personal observation in years of travel.

For 40 years, displaced farmers and their families have been moving to town. Now, there is a distinct trend away from the cities to the countryside, but those moving in that direction are not going there to farm, at least not full time.

All around Oklahoma and in other states, housing developments are springing up along interstate and other highways.

This is true because the automobile makes it possible for workers to enjoy urban pay scales and rural living at the same time. Counties immediately adjacent to metropoli-

tan centers are most affected, but many employees commute to jobs in businesses and industries 50 or 100 miles away.

The USDA report says the turnaround is changing the face of the countryside and is of major significance to agriculture. An obvious effect is inflation of farm land prices.

Since 1970, the growth rate in small cities and rural areas averaged 6.6 per cent, well above the 4.1 per cent growth rate for metropolitan areas.

From 1970 to 1975, about 1.6 million more people moved into non-metropolitan communities than moved out. By contrast, a net of 3 million moved away from these areas during the decade between 1960 and 1970.

Three broad influences cited as major factors in this change are reduced displacement of people from rural industries, increased rural and small town employment, and non-money motivations, such

as retired people seeking better places to live.

Many rural communities in Oklahoma are thriving under the impetus of proliferating small industries. These and ability to commute to Oklahoma City, Tulsa or other job centers are bringing new economic life to most parts of the state.

A frequent problem of rapid growth is inability of towns to deal effectively with demands for police, fire and utilities services. However, the factor that could override the momentum is a fuel shortage or major increase in gasoline prices and higher gasoline taxes.

City workers who live in the country must keep their cars rolling just to survive.

They use them not only for transportation to work, to school, to church, but also to bring their families to shopping centers in the cities to spend part of the money they earn in town.