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THE CHANGING FACE OF TEXAS COUNTY, OK

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Texas County, OK has experienced a recent population surge spurred by migration of Hispanic families into the area. The economic and population growth rate has exceeded the capacity of certain aspects of the existing infrastructure. While the new residents bring economic vitality and an in-demand workforce, the area also faces challenges to ensure adequate housing, education, and other services.

Population

- The U.S. Census American Community Survey estimates that Texas County had a population of 21,157 in 2013. That's a 28.9 percent increase since 1990, more than five percentage points higher than the growth rate for the state as a whole (23.3 percent).
- The biggest driver of population growth has been natural increase (1,490 births and 537 deaths since 2010, for a net increase of 953). The county also gained a net 541 residents through international migration, while losing a net 290 residents due to domestic migration. Those combined for an overall increase due to migration of 251 residents, or about 20 percent of the county's total population growth.
- Texas County is becoming more diverse due to strong growth in the Hispanic population accompanied by a slightly declining population of non-Hispanic whites. Hispanics are especially predominant among the county's youngest residents. While non-Hispanics still comprised a majority of the total population in 2013 (54 percent), Hispanics made up more than 50 percent of all age groups 44 and below, and nearly two-thirds (64 percent) of residents younger than 5 years.
- In 2010, Texas County's median age was 31.3, more than 5 years younger than the state as a whole (36.2). The percentage of residents younger than 18 in 2013 was moderately higher (27.9 percent) than for the state (24.6 percent). Residents over 65 were 10.3 percent of the population in Texas County while making up 14.3 percent of the state. The largest 2010 demographic difference came from the under-35 group; Texas County had 55.2 percent below age 35 while the state only had 48.5 percent.

Economy, Housing, & Health

- According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Texas County's unemployment rate has consistently been lower than the state as a whole. In March of 2015, unemployment had fallen to 2.7 percent, the lowest since September 2008 and significantly below the state's unemployment rate of 4.1 percent.
- Texas County had a lower poverty rate than the state as a whole between 2009 and 2013. Texas County's 2013 percentage (12.8 percent) of people whose income in the past 12 months was below the poverty level beat both the state's (16.9 percent) and the nation's (15.4 percent), according to the U.S. Census Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates.
- Texas County residents also earned higher incomes on average than Oklahomans as a whole. The 2013 Texas County median household income was \$49,901, more than \$4,500 above the state's median household income of \$45,339.
- The American Community Survey (ACS) reported Texas County's largest occupational group in 2013 to be in the manufacturing sector at 22.7 percent of the working population. Educational services and health care

and social assistance came in as the second largest occupational group (16.4 percent). Texas County's third largest occupational group -- agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting, and mining -- accounted for 15.3 percent of jobs.

- Texas County's Hispanic population profoundly impacts the local economy as employers, workers, and consumers. The percentage of Hispanic-owned firms (7.5 percent) is more than three times the state number (2.3 percent).
- Housing supply may not be keeping up with rapid growth in the county, which could impede economic development. Integra Realty Resource's Citywide Housing Market Study estimates Texas County estimates a need for 119 new housing units per year through 2018, mostly in the county seat of Guymon. Yet just 66 building permits for residential units have been issued in Guymon in the past decade.
- Another series deficiency in the county is access to health care. Nearly 26 percent of county residents under 65 were uninsured in 2013, the 10th highest rate among all counties in Oklahoma.

Education

- Educational attainment is a significant area where Texas County trails the state as a whole. Just 71.0 percent of Texas County citizens older than 25 have a high school diploma, significantly below the state's 86.4 percent with a high school diploma (2013). Similarly, just 18.8 percent of Texas County adults have a college degree, compared to 23.5 percent for the state (2013).
- According to the National Center for Education Statistics, the percentage of 9th-grade graduates who go on to graduate high school in 4 years is just 73 percent (2012-2013). That trails the State of Oklahoma's graduation rate of 85 percent and neighboring Beaver and Cimarron counties' rates of 83 percent and 100 percent, respectively.
- Between 2005 and 2013, Texas County school districts have added 544 new students, a 14 percent increase. The increase can be attributed almost exclusively to the groundswell of Hispanics into the area. On the other hand, Texas County has maintained a student:teacher ratio of 14:1 – an important indicator of educational health — slightly below the state average of 15:1 since at least 2005.
- The US Census American Community Survey estimates 38.1 percent of Texas County students age 5+ speak a language other than English at home, about 4 times the state's rate of 9.4 percent (2013).

Conclusion

Texas County is growing rapidly due to both in-migration and natural growth of the Hispanic population. The increase has contributed to a flourishing of new economic activity in the relatively sparsely populated region. However, this growth puts added pressure on housing inadequacies already present. The growing population also has significantly lower educational attainment than the state as a whole. While educational attainment does not seem to be limiting the county's current economic prosperity, it does create risks due to a lack of alternatives if current jobs in the meat-processing industry go away. A very high uninsured rate also is a sign of fragility in the county's economy.

These trends match what can be seen in the rising Hispanic population across Oklahoma, but their impact is magnified in a county where Hispanics comprise such a large share of the total population. The economy of Texas County and Oklahoma is benefiting from an infusion of hard-working immigrants and new families with Hispanic heritage. As these families become a larger part of our state, it will be important to invest in improving educational attainment and health care to ensure high wages and a competitive workforce.