

A New Vision of the Heartland  
**THE GREAT PLAINS  
IN TRANSITION**

# *A Case Study of Brush, Colorado*

## *Part One*

Prepared by the  
Center for the New West  
Denver, Colorado

Center Report 92-708  
May 1992



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(Population 4,165)

**PART ONE**

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This report was funded in part by the State Rural Policy Program of the Aspen Institute and The Ford Foundation, the Denver Regional office of the US Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration and the Center for the New West.

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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The Center for the New West is an independent, nonprofit and nonpartisan institution for policy research, education and economic development. A public-private partnership guided by an independent board of trustees, the Center was established in Denver in January 1989.

The work of the Center focuses on public policy and the changes that increasingly characterize US society and the US economy. Often referred to as the New Economy, these changes include dramatic demographic shifts, increased global competition, the growing impact of new and small businesses on job creation, technological change, rapidly changing consumer tastes and the impact of innovation and entrepreneurship on business formation.

*The Great Plains in Transition: A New Vision of the Heartland* is a major Center program, funded in part by the Aspen Institute/Ford Foundation and the Economic Development Administration-Denver Region. The Center began the Great Plains Project to demonstrate that new dynamics in the relationship of rural and urban areas and other important new forces provide hope for the region's future. Research for the Project has included a comprehensive review of the literature, demographic analyses and studies of economic change and how communities and people are adapting to the New Economy.

The Brush, Colorado, case study was directed by Lou Higgs and Colleen Murphy, Center senior fellows. Field research was conducted by the following Center senior staff: Andy Bane, Edie Dulacki, Claudia Giannetti, Lou Higgs, Colleen Murphy and John Shepard. Gabriela Gonzalez provided valuable administrative and logistic assistance to the research team and Matthew Muehlbauer took on a thorough task of checking our statistics. Any errors, of course, are the sole responsibility of the authors.

The City of Brush, its citizens and other residents of Morgan County, Colorado, provided outstanding support and assistance to our work. We gratefully acknowledge, in particular, the help of Mayor Larry Coughlin, city administrator Jim Collard, city clerk Cathy Smith, housing authority

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director Linda Grippin, state Department of Local Affairs field representative Kent Gumina, county economic development association director Jim Corbett and the 52 residents of Brush and Morgan County who contributed their time and opinions to our study.

We appreciate the visibility given to our Project and this case study by *NBC, CBS, the Rocky Mountain News, the Brush-News Tribune and The Fort Morgan Times.*

The research team acknowledges the expert counsel and assistance of Vicki Luther and Milan Wall, co-directors of the Heartland Center for Leadership Development (Lincoln, NE), from whose case study model we adapted our work.

Finally, we recognize the behind-the-scenes contribution of Center president Philip M. Burgess, who conceived the Great Plains Project and continues to provide creative and inspiring leadership.

## PREFACE

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We initiated the Great Plains Project, *A New Vision of the Heartland: The Great Plains in Transition*, in January 1991 to examine forces shaping the future of the region. The overall Project is a multiyear, comprehensive examination of the economic, social, political and cultural dynamics of the region. We conducted this case study as part of Phase 1 of the Project, which focused on the economy of the region in the context of the New Economy.

Our basic philosophy and approach stressed the need to challenge existing paradigms of rural and economic development; the way data are typically used to support those paradigms; and the need to develop new paradigms, new approaches to measurement and new indicators of development.

We determined that the emphasis of our initial effort should be descriptive, not rigidly analytical; and heuristic, not strictly evidential. We wanted to look, to reflect, to immerse ourselves in the turbulence and turmoil of what is actually happening throughout the region. Case studies and field work would provide that experience.

We conducted two in-depth case studies, including intensive field studies. First, we worked with colleagues at the Heartland Center for Leadership Development (HCLD) to find a town that we could examine closely. We wanted a town located in a county identified as "distressed" by the Buffalo Commons study. We were looking for a town that traditional indicators and a cursory glance would say is in trouble. This process led us to select Superior in Nuckolls County, Nebraska. HCLD developed a case study methodology, and Center and HCLD staff conducted the field study in Superior in August 1991.. *[The Superior case study is available separately from the Center for the New West as Center Report 91-704.]*

Using the HCLD case study model, Center staff selected Brush, in Morgan County, Colorado, and conducted a field study there in November 1991. We selected Brush as a community in "transition": It had not been labeled "distressed," but it had been through hard times and now appeared highly successful

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The result of this case study and our other studies is best characterized as a "window on the transformation" of the region. Rather than profiling and comparing communities, counties and states, we ended up doing what sociologists might call "life history" case studies as a way to create windows on understanding the process of change and transformation in the Great Plains as a whole.

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## ANECDOTAL PROFILE

### "You don't want a boom!"

Brush, Colorado, is not booming. It is, however, growing "*slow and steady*," and that's just the way this northeastern Colorado Plains community wants it. Many of the town's residents have lived in Brush long enough to have experienced previous boom times. In the 50s, it was oil and gas; in the 70s it was energy and agriculture. Like other people of the Plains, folks in Brush know too well that bust follows boom.

"*You don't want a boom*," warns antique dealer Al Parrish. "*Every time there's a boom, there's a bust. Only speculators wish for the boom to come back.*"

So Brush isn't waiting or wishing for the boom times to return. Instead, the community is working to diversify and add value to its historic agriculture and health care based economy. Council member Betty Herbst describes Brush this way: "*It's like a jar of candied apples. You keep it, add some spice — it stays good.*"

Five years ago, Brush appeared to be another small community in decline. With empty storefronts in the central business district, the closure of several major local employers and an unemployment rate hovering around 14 percent, the town looked grim; and the townspeople sounded even grimmer.

Today Brush has few vacancies downtown, three new large businesses, several expansions and an unemployment rate that has dropped to about four percent. And within the past year, at least 12 new small businesses have started up in or relocated to Brush. Moreover, the city council was able to lower property taxes in the 90 and 91 budget years.

What accounts for the town's success? Those who live and work in Brush say it's (1) the people; (2) location and access; (3) strong basic infrastructure, especially schools, city government and water; and (4) local leadership.

*"Every time  
there's a boom,  
there's a bust.  
Only speculators  
wish for the  
boom to come  
back."*



**"People make the community."**

Brush has a base of "homegrowns" and a recent injection of "newcomers," both of whom comprise the community's leadership. The "homegrowns," who include area natives and long time (20-year +) transplants, see themselves and are described by others as "survivors" — those who made it through the boom-bust cycles, supporting the community through "thick 'n' thin."

*"People here are ready for opportunity when opportunity knocks. They ask 'what's right?' rather than 'what's wrong?'"*

Downtown businessman Chick Ruhl, identified by his peers as an entrepreneur, describes Brush as a "stable farming community with a tradition of stick-to-it-ive-ness and faithfulness."

Steve Rohde, manager of the Public Service Company of Colorado's Pawnee Power Plant located southwest of town, says simply, "People make the community, and people want to live here." Council member Bill Laws came to Brush 10 years ago to become the administrator of East Morgan County (EMC) Hospital. When he retired from the hospital in 1985, he and his wife chose to stay in Brush. Laws, who during a 24-year military career lived all over the world, says, "I'm comfortable here. I find real people here."

Brush's new school superintendent, Doug Johnson, says that people ranked number one among his reasons for coming to Brush. "People here are ready for opportunity when opportunity knocks," he observes. "They ask 'what's right?' rather than 'what's wrong?'"

Farmer and elementary school principal Jo-Barbie Redmond agrees. Redmond, who moved to Brush from another western state two years ago, believes that the town's "#1 resource is its people. . . . They are," she says, "hometown people whose common motivation is 'What can we do to make Brush better?'"

**Location and Access Help**

The people of Brush say that the town profits in many ways from its location (figure 1) at the intersection of Interstate Highway 76, US Highway 34 and State Highway 71. I-76 and US-34 provide good accessibility to Denver (90 minutes), northern Front Range cities and the mountains.

In addition to being within one to two hours from major universities along the Front Range (including University of Colorado, Boulder and Denver; Colorado State University, Fort Collins; University of Northern Colorado, Greeley; and Colorado School of Mines and University of Denver in the Denver metro area), Brush is less than 10 minutes from Morgan Community College (MCC) and about 40 minutes from Northeast Junior College in Sterling. Also in Sterling there is a satellite campus of Regis College, a well respected private university based in Denver. This branch campus offers master's degree programs in several areas, including an MBA.



The town's location may also have important future implications. There is nearly unanimous belief locally that the new Denver airport will have positive spin-offs for Brush, including airport workers who will choose to live in Morgan County. That would add to Brush's market area, described by locals as a large semi-circle north, east and south of the city.

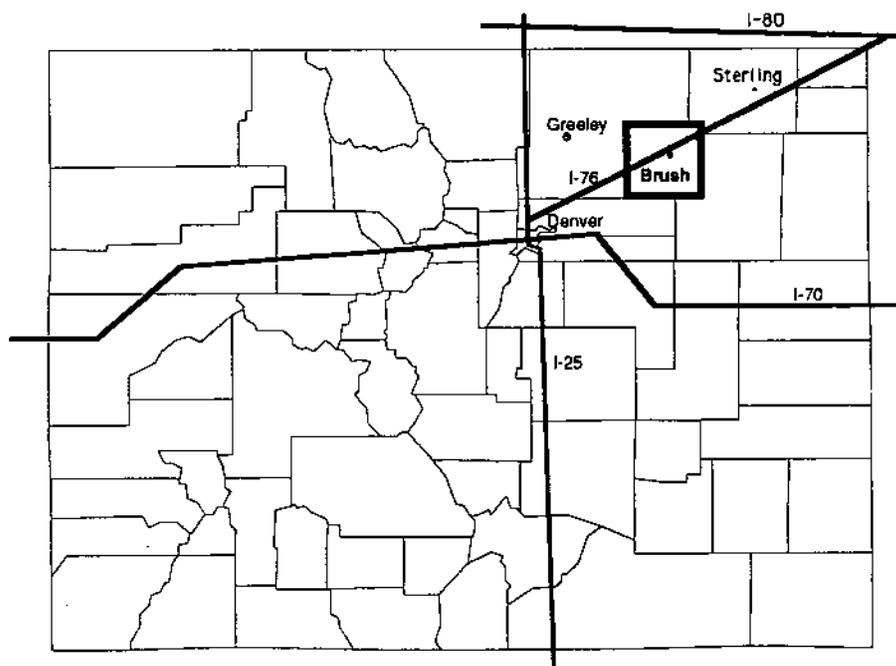
But, access in is also access out. A number of residents say they try to buy everything they can in town and end up getting as good a price as or better than in Denver, Fort Morgan or Greeley — especially figuring in the cost of fuel. There is also a perception that many out-of-town shopping trips are part of the "outing syndrome" — a form of recreation. "When you buy outside the community, you're cutting people's jobs," says school board president Larry Giaque. When you shop out of town, he continues, "once you've paid for gas, bought a meal, bought goods, you haven't saved money."

### Keep Your Eye on the Basics

Brush's school district is known statewide for both academic and sports excellence. In the past seven years, the high school has produced five Boettcher Scholars<sup>1</sup> and the "winningest" record in sports of any Colorado school in its division. The high school math-science teacher was named one of the top eight teachers in the state last year. The District's average pupil:teacher ratio is 23:1, 20:1 at the elementary level.

## Colorado

figure 1



<sup>1</sup>A full ride scholarship awarded annually to 40 top Colorado high school seniors for study within the state.

In large part because of Pawnee Power Plant's location within the District, Brush schools are among the better-funded schools in the state. According to Giauque, only about 10 percent of the District's funding comes from the state; this compares to a Colorado average of 45-50 percent.

Barbara Bradshaw, administrator of Sunset Manor, praises the schools for providing "*lots of opportunities for all kids to get involved in school activities such as sports, forensics, drama.*"

Most agree that "*the school system is excellent*" and provides "*good college-preparatory*" skills. However, some newcomers say the schools "*do a good job on the basics*" but lack enrichment programs such as those for gifted and talented students. Others say that the schools are "*satisfied with the status quo. They need to stretch more.*"

*With its own aquifers under the nearby Sandhills, Brush's water quality is high and its supply dependable. In the semi-arid Plains of Colorado, this is a strategically critical asset.*

MCC is a comprehensive post-secondary institution, offering two-year degree programs, vocational and continuing education programs; and GED-preparatory, English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) and citizenship classes. The state's Small Business Development Center (SBDC) is also housed at MCC, providing grantsmanship assistance, leadership training and other advisory services for area businesses.

With its own aquifers under the nearby Sandhills, Brush's water quality is high and its supply dependable. In the semi-arid Plains of Colorado, this is a strategically critical asset. Brush residents relate many stories about folks from other northeastern Colorado towns who stop in the city's parks to fill containers with "*good Brush water.*"

In October 1990, U S WEST Communications upgraded Brush's telephone system, replacing the town's old electro-mechanical central office with digital switching. The new system enhances the use of modems and faxes and enables various "custom calling" options. Brush and other small towns in Morgan County are also tied in to a fiber optic cluster configuration which "loops" to Denver via a host office in Fort Morgan and a hub in Greeley. By the end of this year U S WEST will also complete another upgrade which will make one-party service available to any subscriber who wants it.

Brush supports two small banks. One is owned and operated by a local family who also controls the town's two foundations; the other is one of several banks owned and operated by another northern Colorado family.

Although many people contrast the town's two banks, describing one as "*aggressive, progressive*" and one as "*conservative,*" it is clear that both are extremely supportive of the community and that both invest in ag- and nonag-related local businesses. Only a few citizens express the opinion that it would be difficult to borrow money in Brush to start or expand a business. Most say that it would be "*fairly easy*" and cite their own experience with one or the other bank. Each bank has its champions, with some of those champions perceiving "*the other bank*" as less responsive.



There appear to be many sources for business assistance in the area: Morgan Community College, the chambers, Northwest Junior College (Sterling), state offices — including the SBDC and a Colorado Department of Local Affairs field office — and several accounting and financial services businesses located principally in Fort Morgan. It also appears, however, that few businesses take advantage of these resources — although there is a general perception that a local chamber's business classes are well attended.

East Morgan County (EMC) Hospital was opened in the 1970s. EMC's budget has increased 114 percent in the past four years; only about one percent of its annual revenues comes from taxes; yet the hospital has substantial reserves and no debt. Its occupancy rate and number of surgeries are higher than most rural hospitals; its cardiac rehabilitation unit gets referrals from doctors in Greeley; and it is building a niche in physical and occupational rehabilitation.

In spite of the strong local health care industry, a number of residents express a desire for local doctors to have more flexible hours and the need for a pediatric specialist. Several people also mention their concern about the town's ability to keep doctors; one person describes the community as a "revolving door for doctors."

Many cite the need for more youth- and family-oriented recreation, such as a health club, a "real country club," an indoor pool. The need for "recreational opportunities for young people" is a recurring theme: "There needs to be something for kids to do at night and on the weekends."

The one consistent complaint among those who live or work in Brush is "the housing shortage." Most see housing as the town's single most serious current problem and as a continuing severe future problem as "more people move in from the city." Townspeople cite a need for single family and low-income rentals, low- and moderate-income housing. Several note that housing has become particularly tight in "especially the last two years." "Nice housing is a problem; you can't move up to a nice place when you make more money. There's no sense in attracting business if they have to live elsewhere," says a young professional. People also say that "What's on the market is overpriced."

*Although many people contrast the town's two banks, it is clear that both are extremely supportive of the community and that both invest in ag- and nonag-related local businesses.*

### Without Leadership, Most Things Don't Matter

People who live and work in Brush give the city government high marks for its "proactive" attitude and actions.

Many describe Mayor Larry Coughlin as one of the town's "greatest assets." Coughlin, a low-key veterinarian who avoids the spotlight, seems to typify the value the community places on "leadership in the wings," of "making things happen without tooting your own horn." Both council members and private citizens credit Coughlin for "working the council

hard." Council member Betty Herbst explains, *"The Mayor encourages us to think for ourselves. He's always pushing; he won't let the council quit working. He wants us to 'wish big.'"*

City administrator Jim Collard and housing authority director Linda Grippin are named as *"very active"* people who *"get things done."* Collard is also described as a *"long and short range planner who spurs people to think."* Councilman Laws says, *"Collard is a businessman. He operates the city like a business, and that's how it should be run."*

*"In the give and take, city government is headstrong. But it's good for the community, because that's how you build a good team."*

City government is seen as the lightning rod for Brush's economic development activities and for *"getting new business to invest in the town."* In addition, according to Darlene Doane, editor of the *Brush News Tribune*, *"The city has been effective at educating the public about economic development."*

The city is also credited with smart *"grantsmanship,"* with developing a good working relationship with state and federal agencies and with being successful in getting money from outside sources, both public and private.

As one might expect, the city police department is both praised and criticized. Some say it's *"ineffective"* and *"doesn't share information,"* others say it's *"doing a good job."*

There is no single leadership group in Brush; rather, there are several distinct leadership groups. But, *"they work well together; they're not polarized like many small towns."* A local businessman observes, *"It's a cooperative town. Leadership is pretty well balanced. There isn't just one leader; it's not like 25 years ago when we had one or two people calling all the shots."* One professional says, *"There're no animosities that last longer than a city council meeting. Disagreements don't paralyze the town."* A community official explains, *"In the give and take, city government is headstrong. But it's good for the community, because that's how you build a good team."*

Most frequently, people say that the mayor/city council, individual business leaders and local service clubs comprise Brush's civic leadership. Many also include the two banks and the schools.

A number of people believe that the chamber of commerce, particularly under the leadership of newcomer Joe Medina, is emerging as a major player and an important community asset. Some say that the chamber may fill the vital role formerly played by Brush Cares, an organization of local businesses that most perceive has atrophied in the past couple of years. Under the Brush Cares umbrella, people say, major employers worked together and communicated effectively.

Several people say that the campaign to bring the Superconducting Super Collider (SSC) to the area in the mid-80s was a *"turning point"* for the community and the county, encouraging networking and alliances. To a large extent, they say, that cooperative attitude continued beyond the SSC campaign.



Although several people noted that the Young Farmers' organization plays a strong and active role in community leadership, most said that the traditional farm groups do not.

While newcomers give high marks to the traditional community for its openness to both new and younger leaders, long time residents applaud recent arrivals as a source of "new energy and "a cross-section of new ideas."

EMC Hospital administrator Craig Aasved confirms that "The town has no hesitancy about bringing in young people for responsible positions." Aasved, 30, has been the head of the hospital for four years.

"It's never mattered if you're a newcomer or an old hand," avers rural health care consultant Jeff Bauer. "If you're talented and committed, Brush wants you." Bauer and his attorney wife moved to the Brush environs from Denver in the early 80s because they "didn't want to raise their kids in the city."

Brush may be exceptional in having two homegrown philanthropic foundations, noted for their support to the community. The Joslin-Needham Foundation and the Pettis Foundation provide grants for parks, the library, academic scholarships, support to the hospital and long term care facilities, scouting, public safety and other causes.

Only a few express the opinion that the foundations "may have stifled volunteerism." Praise for the foundations' support of the community is nearly unanimous, and most people say that volunteerism, in terms of both time and money, is strong in Brush. Current examples include: the chamber of commerce raised money to buy new holiday street decorations, then donated the decorations to the city; a group of townspeople organized an auction to raise \$3,500 for a local woman who could not afford a needed organ transplant.

Long time residents applaud recent arrivals as a source of "new energy" and "a cross-section of new ideas."

"From business leaders to moms who stay at home, everyone gets involved," says Aasved. Another businessman notes that there are so many local organizations that "You have to fight to not get over-involved."

When asked if there is a common vision for the future, most indicate that they believe there is a "general perception," or that they assume that there is "general agreement" on "adding nonagricultural business and reducing some overdependence on agriculture" while continuing to nurture the agricultural base. But there is recognition and some concern that there is no ongoing strategic effort to articulate a vision. Says one businessperson, "Nobody's getting together to think about how to improve the community." Another observes, "There is understanding of the demands for change but no strategic response." Even the city administrator is "not sure" if the city's vision of "slow, steady growth" is shared by the community as a whole.

Many say that there is a need for "more concentrated discussion and planning for the future," that they would like to see "leadership that pulls a game plan together on a regular basis." Others talk about Brush as an



*“adaptive” and “responsive” community, rather than one that proactively and strategically deals with its future.*

Some examples: Only after taking several hard hits in the mid-80s did the community begin serious efforts to bring in new employers. *“We waited too long to do anything. People thought every store would always be there,”* observes a long time resident. At the time, those recruitment initiatives were controversial. Large numbers of people expressed opposition to bringing the High Plains Youth Center (HPYC) to Brush, and some — mostly outside the city limits — were opposed to siting the Colorado Power Partners (CPP) cogeneration facility in the area. Similarly, locals report that in the 70s there was significant opposition to siting the Pawnee Power Plant in Brush. Yet now most view these facilities — and particularly the Power Plant — with pride and acknowledge their economic and social importance to the town.

*A large discounter “would attract more business to Brush and would make existing retail more competitive. The shrewd businesspeople find a way to turn a Wal-Mart to their benefit.”*

In 1989, Linda Grippin had to *“fight city hall”* and a number of businesspeople when she first proposed renovating a crumbling old hotel in downtown Brush. She persevered, turning The Carroll into a community/convention center (lower level) and market rental apartments (upper levels) — a showpiece that is now a source of great community pride.

Another example of the lack of an articulated common vision is the issue of a Wal-Mart. There is a general perception of broad community opposition to Wal-Mart’s siting in or near Brush, yet, with few exceptions, interviewees state that a large discounter would be a boon. *“It would attract more business to Brush and would make existing retail more competitive,”* says one downtown retailer. *“The shrewd businesspeople find a way to turn a Wal-Mart to their benefit,”* agrees a local official. *“The town’s reluctance to bring in discounters like Kmart or Wal-Mart is a missed opportunity,”* states a civic leader. *“You need to find out from the whole community, not just the vocal minority, what kinds of businesses they want to attract,”* advises another.

Some say flatly that *“there’s a problem with information sharing.”* Almost everyone agrees that local coffeeshops and restaurants are the best source of information in town. Some, however, say that *“businesspeople don’t have time to hang out, so they’re left out.”*

Brush’s population is now 20 percent Hispanic, and many — both non-Hispanic and Hispanic — talk about the challenge this presents for the city’s future. There is concern that Hispanics are not *“well integrated”* into the larger community, that they lack *“visible leadership.”* There is also recognition that there is not a monolithic Hispanic community; instead, there are, as in the community at large, *“homegrown”* and *“newcomers.”* A large percentage of the Hispanic newcomers do not speak English and hold unskilled jobs at the Excel plant in Fort Morgan and the CPP facilities in Brush. There are a number of public and private ongoing and planned activities to tackle this challenge: MCC’s ESL/citizenship program; community efforts to address special needs (such as housing, a community center, ESL in K-12); and the City’s continuing outreach programs.



## An Economy in Transition

Brush's traditional farm and ranch economy is still strongly ag-based. Few people expect that this will change much in the future, and fewer believe that it should. Most of the community recognize that, *"without ag, Brush wouldn't exist."*

Brush is a national center for cattle buying. The Livestock Exchange, Inc. (LEI), a livestock auction/feedlot/elevator east of town, is the fourth largest in the US and was the first to become completely computerized.

*"The area's agriculture products are very diversified,"* notes county commissioner Cindy Erker, *"including sugar beets, wheat, corn, millet, onions and both cattle and hogs."* Erker — the first woman to be elected to the Morgan County Board of Commissioners and, with an MBA, the first with an advanced degree — also helps her husband run their family-owned grain business.

*"It's still a rural, ag economy,"* asserts Glenn Babcock, *"95 percent based on how well the farmers and ranchers do."* Babcock, general manager of Farmland Co-op, goes on to explain that Brush's ag economy is stabilizing, and he attributes this to a mix of reasons: (1) only the best have survived; (2) both crop and stock farmers have been diversifying their operations; and (3) there has been an increase in value-added agriculture, such as food processing.

Ag-related employment actually increased by nearly 44 percent in Morgan County from 1980-90, a trend many expect will continue — primarily due to bigger operations, diversification, food processing and other types of value-added agriculture. There is recognition of, but very few complaints about, big agribusiness in the area. In fact, most people say that recent local business purchases by large corporations — including Cargill — are good for the community.

*"We're still dependent on ag,"* says city administrator Collard. *"But we're getting safeguards."* Mayor Coughlin agrees, saying, *"There's nothing wrong with an ag-based economy; Brush was founded as a cattle delivery point. But we've been working to diversify, to smooth out the boom-bust cycle."*

For the most part, Brush citizens recognize that the town's health care business is an important, baseline industry — a hometown strength on which the community is building. Brush has a hospital and two long term care facilities — all of which are expanding. Two years ago, the community successfully attracted another care facility: the privately owned HPYC, a nationally recognized residential center that provides treatment for troubled youth from all over the United States. Currently treating 171 youth from more than 30 states, HPYC is a \$6 million business with 143 employees.

*"There's nothing wrong with an ag-based economy; Brush was founded as a cattle delivery point. But we've been working to diversify, to smooth out the boom-bust cycle."*



One of the oldest, and the first, health care businesses in town is Eben Ezer Lutheran Care Center, which Danish farmers built 88 years ago. Opened as a center for treatment of tuberculosis, for the first half century Eben Ezer was a hospital — the first hospital and the first surgical suite on the High Plains. Providing 200 jobs and a range of programs and living facilities, Eben Ezer continues as a cornerstone of the town's economy. And, over the years, its success and visibility in the health care community have attracted other health care related institutions.

Sunset Manor, a multi-purpose health care facility offering short and long term residential care, adult foster care and adult day care, is the oldest center for the treatment of Alzheimer's disease west of the Mississippi and was one of the first in the nation to concentrate on the disease. Administrator Bradshaw credits community foresight for Sunset Manor's success and reputation. *"The community made Sunset Manor what it is,"* she says. *"Local businesspeople made long term care an economic development priority for the town."*

*Residents praise the Pawnee Power Plant for its contributions to the community — not just because of its significance to the economic base but also because of the quality of people and new leadership it has brought to the community.*

Consistently, residents praise the Pawnee Power Plant for its contributions to the community — not just because of its significance to the economic base but also because of the quality of people and new leadership it has brought to the community. *"We wouldn't have made it without Pawnee; it turned the town's attitude around,"* states one local leader.

Finally, Brush is modernizing. Businesses, both small and large, are information- and computer-intensive, with many businesses having computerized within the last five years. Although not all have fax machines, those who don't use one at the bank or the library or Radio Shack.

The elementary school has a computer in every classroom. The high school has both a Macintosh and an IBM computer lab. The school district has a technology committee which is looking at computers, distance learning, networks, video and other technologies as tools for enhancing student learning.

The major health care providers have been computerized for some time, and local grain and livestock producers not only use computers for accounting and business management, they are hooked in on-line to commodities and stock exchanges (e.g., DTN, Standard & Poors) to give them real-time information needed for trading. Most local computer systems are purchased in and serviced from the northeast Colorado region, including Brush's own Mortec Industries.

### Postscript

So what is the secret of Brush's success? Perhaps because it's a community of people like Rueben Ewert who, in planning for survival in the mid-80s, wrote on a piece of paper, *"I WILL NOT QUIT."* Or, perhaps Mayor Coughlin has the answer: *"Brush,"* he says, *"is a risk-taking community. It's willing to seek out economic development."* After a pause, he continues, *"Brush is just a little gambler."*

# CONTEXT FOR THE CASE STUDY

## Brush and Morgan County, Colorado

### *History and Background*

Brush, Colorado, (population 4,165) lies in the South Platte River Valley of northeastern Colorado, straddling the Burlington Northern railroad. This location along busy Interstate 76 affords Brush easy access to Denver, 90 minutes to the southwest, and Interstate 80 in Nebraska, two hours to the northeast. US-34 connects Brush to the county seat 10 miles away in Fort Morgan, and Greeley and Rocky Mountain National Park farther to the west.

Although settled in 1882 as Beaver Valley after the waterway a few miles to the east, the town soon became a bustling cattle shipping point. The name was changed to Brush in honor of cattleman Jared L. Brush, an Ohio immigrant who actually lived in Horace Greeley's Union Colony, 60 miles northwest of Brush. He is credited with holding Brush's first rodeo on July 4, 1884, "bringing a trainload of visitors from Denver to view the phenomenon."

In 1988, Morgan County was a finalist in the competition to house the \$4.4 billion Superconducting Super Collider (SSC) project. Although the SSC was ultimately awarded to Texas, community leaders credit that effort with planting seeds for better cooperation within the county.

Major employers in Brush include the Eben Ezer and Sunset Manor health care centers, Livestock Exchange, Inc. (LEI), Colorado Power Partners (CPP), Mohrlang Manufacturing, RE-2 school district and the High Plains Youth Center (HPYC). Morgan County overall has a strong and relatively diverse economic base in agriculture and ag goods processing, health care, and oil and gas extraction.

Beef sales still have an impact on the Brush economy, with the LEI sale barn east of town and Superior Livestock video auction headquarters in the industrial park north of I-76. In 1988, a pork processing plant in the middle of town closed, eliminating 120 jobs, and remains vacant.

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Many residents of Brush work in nearby Fort Morgan. There, the Excel beef packing plant recently expanded and the Western Sugar Co. beet processing facility on I-76 was running on overtime after 1991's harvest. Located between Fort Morgan and Brush, the Pawnee Power Plant — a 500-megawatt generation station — employs 130 people.

figure 2 Population & Housing Characteristics  
Brush & Morgan County, CO, 1970, 1980, 1990

BRUSH	1970	1980	1990	Absolute	% Change
				Change	80-90
<b>Brush population</b>	3,377	4,082	4,165	83	2.03%
Black	1	1	9	8	
Am. Indian	1	23	16	-7	
Asian	n/a	7	22	15	
Hispanic	n/a	558	845	287	51.43%
% Hispanic		14%	20%		
Median Age	31.5	32.8	36.8	4.0	12.20%
# of Households	1,123	1,493	1,577	84	5.63%
Persons/Hhld	2.84	2.59	2.46	-0.13	-5.02%
<b>Total Housing Units</b>	1,182	1,669	1,720	51	3.06%
Single Family	857	1,203	1,238	35	2.91%
% SF	73%	72%	72%	-0.10%	
Units Vacant	56	169	143	-26	-15.38%
Vacancy Rate	5%	10%	8%	-1.81%	
Median Home Price	\$11,300	\$42,100	\$46,100	\$4,000	9.50%
Median Rent	\$63	\$153	\$222	\$69	45.10%

MORGAN COUNTY	1970	1980	1990	Absolute	% Change
				Change	80-90
<b>Morgan Co. population</b>	20,105	22,513	21,939	-574	-2.55%
Black	21	22	61	39	
Am. Indian	46	82	124	42	
Asian	44	59	83	24	
Hispanic	n/a	2,665	4,034	1,369	51.37%
% Hispanic		12%	18%		
Median Age	28.7	29.3	33.1	4	12.97%
# of Households	6,300	7,981	8,139	158	1.98%
Persons/Hhld	3.15	2.78	2.64	-0.14	-5.04%
<b>Total Housing Units</b>	7,032	9,019	9,230	211	2.34%
Single Family	5,526	6,594	6,587	-7	-0.11%
% SF	79%	73%	71%	-1.75%	
Units Vacant	480	901	1,091	190	21.09%
Vacancy Rate	7%	10%	12%	1.83%	
Median Home Price	\$11,600	\$44,200	\$52,000	\$7,800	17.65%
Median Rent	\$71	\$165	\$245	\$80	48.48%

Note: n/a - not available  
Source: US Census Bureau



## Basic Facts

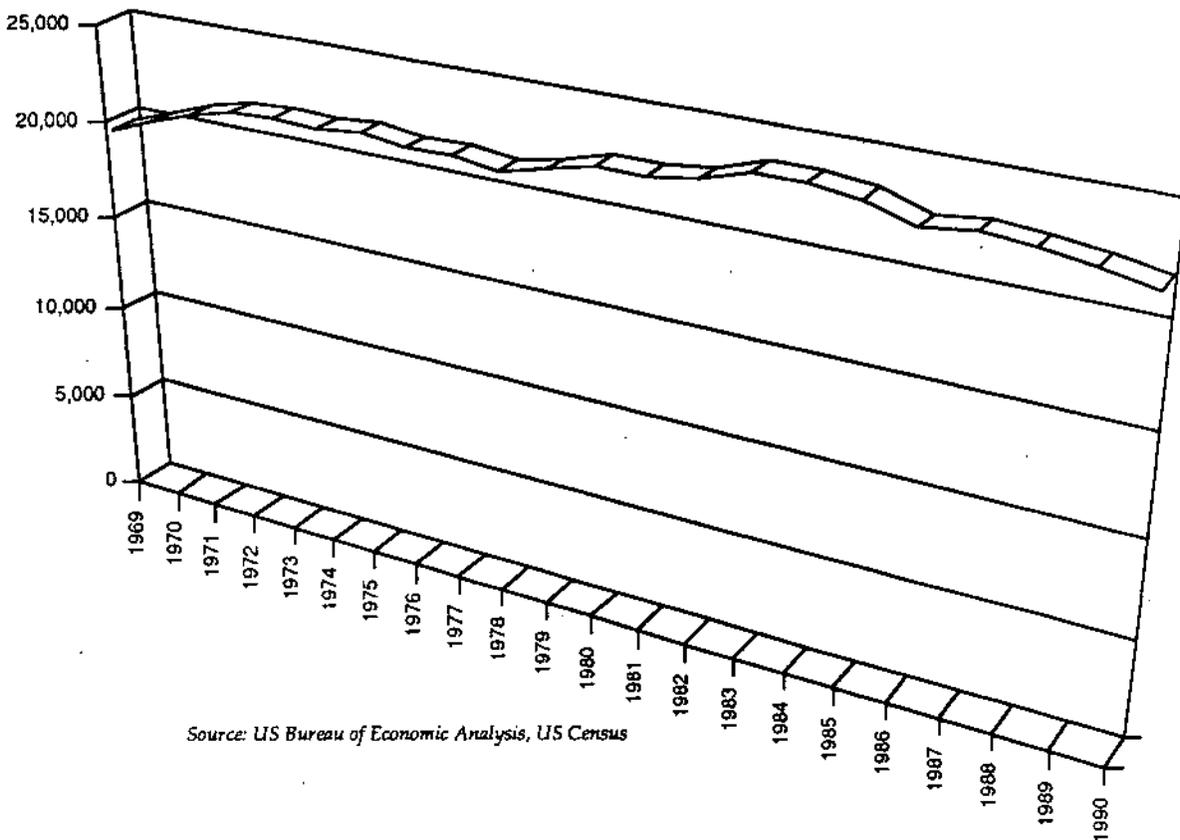
Traditional indicators of economic and social well-being are supposed to quantify the condition of a place and the people who live there. Often these numbers do not agree with what people see happening every day.

### Population and Housing

Brush is bucking population trends for the Plains region of Colorado. US census figures indicate that the city gained population between 1970 and 1980 and again between 1980 and 1990, with an 2.03% growth rate (80-90). (See figures 2 and 2a.) Morgan County, on the other hand, gained between 1970 and 1980, but suffered a 2.6% loss between 1980 and 1990. Both the city and county became more ethnically diverse — currently about one-fifth of both are Hispanic, a 50% increase over 1980. Population in both aged, reflecting national trends and the influence of long term care facility residents.

Morgan County Population, 1969-90

figure 2a



Housing units grew by 2-3% from 1980-90 in both Brush and Morgan County. The housing mix became more homogenous; 71-72% of residences are now single family homes, as Brush built mostly single family units and Morgan County overall built mostly multifamily. Median home prices in Brush grew only half as much (9%) as in the county overall (18%), standing at \$46,100, 88.7% of the county average. Median rents of \$222/\$245 (city/county) increased about 45-48% from 1980-90. Vacancy rates recorded by the decennial census have hovered near 10% in both the city and county. City officials, however, say that the figures are seriously inaccurate; they calculate a 2-3% vacancy rate (closer to 0% for mid-range rentals) for the city.

figure 3 Employment & Wages by Industry  
Morgan County, CO, 1980, 1985, 1990

AVERAGE ANNUAL EMPLOYMENT				Change	% Change
MORGAN COUNTY	1980	1985	1990	80-90	80-90
Morgan Co. population	22,513	22,829	21,939	-574	-2.55%
Agriculture	221	290	318	97	43.89%
Mining	342	514	215	-127	-37.13%
Construction	787	313	235	-552	-70.14%
Manufacturing	1,080	1,113	1,714	634	58.70%
Transp/Comm/Util (TCU)	359	265	227	-132	-36.77%
Wholesale Trade	652	593	489	-163	-25.00%
Retail Trade	1,440	1,384	1,272	-168	-11.67%
FIRE	330	331	239	-91	-27.58%
Services	927	1,183	1,527	600	64.72%
<b>Total Private</b>	<b>6,138</b>	<b>5,987</b>	<b>6,238</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>1.63%</b>
Federal Govt.	98	96	108	10	10.20%
State Govt.	181	182	278	97	53.59%
Local Govt.	1,067	1,083	1,305	238	22.31%
<b>Total Govt.</b>	<b>1,346</b>	<b>1,361</b>	<b>1,691</b>	<b>345</b>	<b>25.63%</b>
<b>COUNTY TOTAL</b>	<b>7,484</b>	<b>7,348</b>	<b>7,929</b>	<b>445</b>	<b>5.95%</b>

TOTAL EARNED WAGES (in thousands)				Change	% Change
MORGAN COUNTY	1980	1985	1990	80-90	80-90
Agriculture	2,633	4,538	5,129	2,496	94.80%
Mining	7,168	11,133	5,291	-1,877	-26.19%
Construction	15,924	5,736	3,834	-12,090	-75.92%
Manufacturing	15,432	18,434	30,681	15,249	98.81%
Transp/Comm/Util (TCU)	6,063	5,127	5,613	-450	-7.42%
Wholesale Trade	8,203	9,190	8,074	-129	-1.57%
Retail Trade	10,867	12,537	12,469	1,602	14.74%
FIRE	4,205	5,334	4,759	554	13.17%
Services	6,692	12,560	19,528	12,836	191.81%
<b>Total Private</b>	<b>77,187</b>	<b>84,791</b>	<b>95,385</b>	<b>18,198</b>	<b>23.58%</b>
Federal Govt.	1,764	2,198	2,823	1,059	60.03%
State Govt.	1,887	2,768	4,935	3,048	161.53%
Local Govt.	11,763	16,145	21,746	9,983	84.87%
<b>Total Govt.</b>	<b>15,414</b>	<b>23,111</b>	<b>29,504</b>	<b>14,090</b>	<b>91.41%</b>
<b>COUNTY TOTAL</b>	<b>92,601</b>	<b>105,902</b>	<b>124,889</b>	<b>32,288</b>	<b>34.87%</b>
Per Capita Earned Income	\$4,113	\$4,639	\$5,693	\$1,579	38.40%

(Note: numbers may not add to totals due to rounding. Per capita earned income is in whole dollars.)  
Source: Colorado Department of Labor and Employment



## Non-Farm Employment and Wages

Colorado Department of Labor and Employment reports show that Morgan County's economy has gone through some adjustment, adding significant numbers of jobs in manufacturing and services while losing as many in other sectors during the 1980s. The number of agricultural workers covered by unemployment insurance (e.g., contracted labor, custom harvesters, farm managers, veterinarians) grew by 44% for a net gain of 97 jobs. The Department of Labor estimates that these ag workers represent about 40% of the county's total ag employment. Manufacturing now employs the most workers, followed by services, government and retail trade (figure 3). The smallest sectors are mining (gas and oil); transportation, communications and utilities (TCU); construction; and finance, insurance and real estate (FIRE).

Employment by Industry, Morgan County, CO 1990

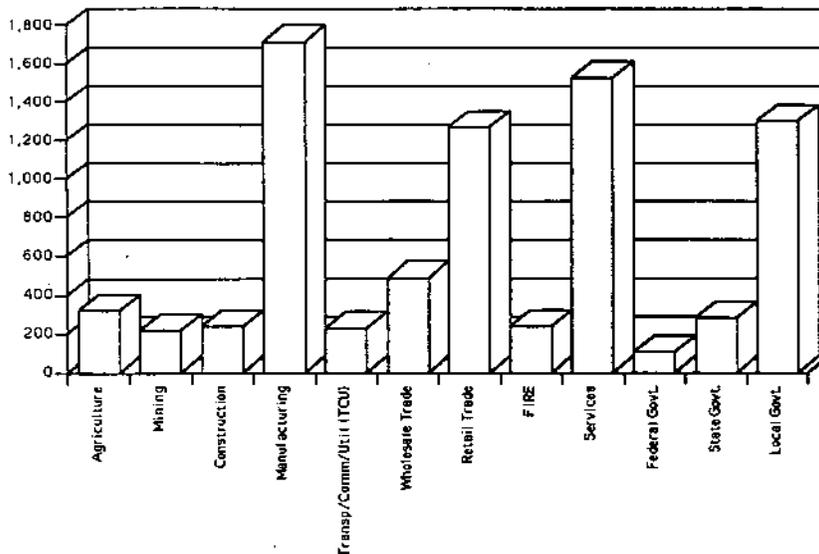


figure 3a  
Source: Colorado Department of Labor and Employment

Total Wages by Industry, Morgan County, CO 1990

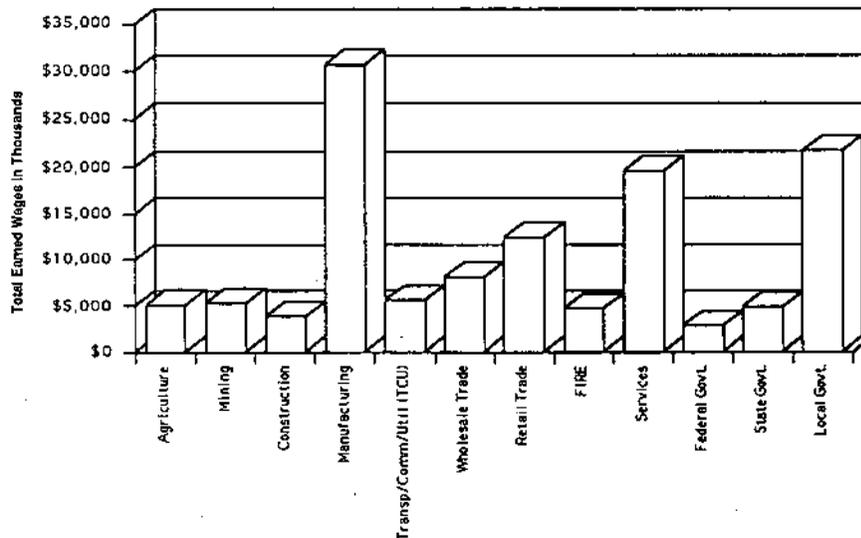
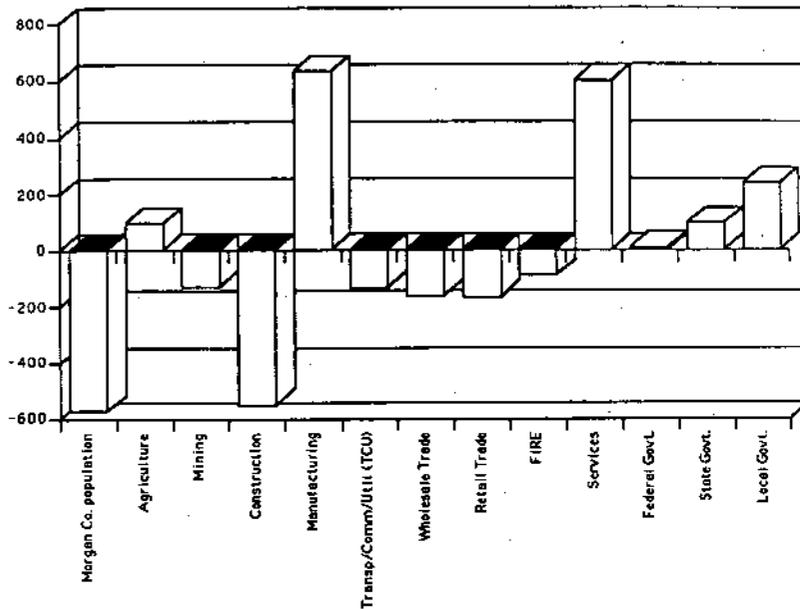


figure 3b  
Source: Colorado Department of Labor and Employment

A cursory examination of the economic base using location quotients<sup>2</sup> (figure 4) indicates that agriculture (especially livestock), oil and gas extraction (mining), food products manufacturing, nondurable wholesale trade, banking and health services are more important to Morgan County than to the state as a whole. Non-livestock agriculture, oil and gas, communications, and hotels and lodging saw the greatest gains versus the rest of the state from 1987-1990. Printing, trucking, durable wholesale trade, apparel, and personal and legal services declined in importance compared to Colorado overall.

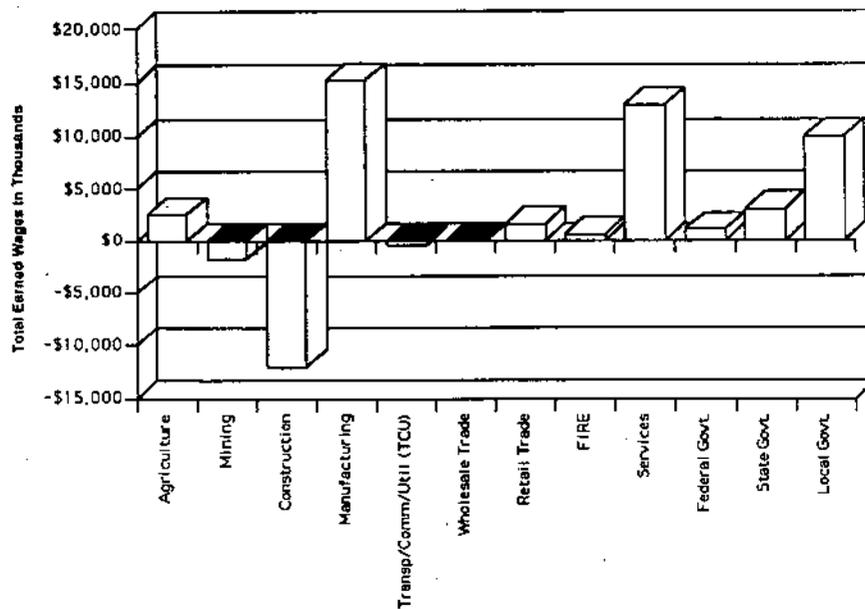
figures 3c & 3d  
Source: Colorado  
Department of Labor and  
Employment

Absolute Change in Employment by Industry, Morgan County, CO 1980-90



<sup>2</sup> A community's economic base can be estimated using a location quotient (LQ), which compares the percentage of a community's workers in a specific sector with the percentage of the state's, region's or nation's workers in that sector. Values greater than 1.0 indicate that a community has more than the average number of people employed by a particular sector, which implies that that sector is a "basic" or "export" industry which brings dollars into a community. (After R.E. Klosterman, *Community Analysis and Planning Techniques*, Savage, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1990, pp. 128-148.)

Absolute Change in Wages by Industry, Morgan County, CO 1980-90





Total wages, unadjusted for inflation, increased not only in the growth sectors but also gained modestly in retail and financial sectors. Total manufacturing wage gains were almost double job growth, and service wage gains were three times total service job growth. Total employment and wages in construction dropped by 70% and 76% respectively from 1980 levels; however, most of that drop was experienced between 1980 and 1985. Public sector jobs grew by 25% while wages grew by 91%, mostly at the state level.

**SELECTED LOCATION QUOTIENTS BY INDUSTRY  
MORGAN COUNTY COMPARED TO COLORADO OVERALL, 1990**

figure 4

	SIC CODE	ESTAB- LISHMENTS	AVG. ANNUAL EMPLOYMENT	LOCATION QUOTIENT	% CHANGE 87-90 LQ
AGRICULTURE		39	318	3.39	1.23%
AGRI PROD CROP	01	12	104	4.25	38.02%
AGRI PRO LIVESTK	02	15	164	8.45	-33.64%
MINING (OIL & GAS)		22	215	2.06	23.31%
CONSTRUCTION		59	235	0.70	2.10%
MANUFACTURING		21	1,714	1.69	-0.77%
PRINTING-PUBLISH	27	6	42	0.33	-19.51%
TRANS. COMM. & UTILITIES		30	227	0.47	-16.70%
TRUCKING-WAREHOUSE	42	18	93	0.82	-33.74%
COMMUNICATION	48	4	44	0.28	73.49%
WHOLESALE TRADE		62	489	1.11	-4.29%
DURABLE GOODS	50	28	139	0.51	-29.09%
NONDURABLE	51	34	350	2.12	9.08%
RETAIL TRADE		52	1,272	0.84	-2.02%
BLDG MAT-GARDEN	52	8	36	0.71	-21.60%
GEN MERCH	53	5	139	0.83	4.49%
FOOD STORES	54	14	241	1.08	-2.81%
APPAREL & ACCESS	56	13	37	0.48	-0.48%
FURN & HOME FUR	57	11	24	0.42	-33.07%
EATING & DRINKING	58	35	449	0.76	-10.53%
F.I.R.E.		48	239	0.47	-14.18%
BANKING	60	13	150	1.12	-14.18%
INS AGENTS-BROKERS	64	10	42	1.02	4.30%
SERVICES		63	1,527	0.75	2.22%
HOTELS & LODGING	70	13	178	1.01	28.25%
PERSONAL SERVICE	72	12	38	0.44	-28.64%
BUSINESS SERVICE	73	17	111	0.25	-4.96%
HEALTH SERVICES	80	37	800	1.53	-7.03%
LEGAL SERVICES	81	14	27	0.37	-30.96%
ENGINEERING SERVICES	87	12	66	0.29	NEW CLAS.
GOVERNMENT		99	1,691	1.21	5.66%
TOTAL ALL INDUSTRIES		649	7,929		

Source: Colorado Department of Labor and Employment

## Types of Business Establishments in Morgan County

Additional business establishments in services, agriculture and wholesale trade offset losses in retail trade and construction sectors, leading to a static total number of establishments between 1980-1990. The largest number of establishments are in the service and retail trade sectors. The smallest number of establishments are in the manufacturing and mining sectors. This reflects manufacturing's dependence on a small number of large agricultural processing plants. (See figure 5.)

figure 5 Establishments by Industry  
Morgan County, CO, 1980, 1985, 1990

MORGAN COUNTY	1980	1985	1990	Absolute Change 80-90	% Change 80-90
Agriculture	23	27	39	16	69.57%
Mining	20	31	22	2	10.00%
Construction	76	71	59	-17	-22.37%
Manufacturing	27	25	21	-6	-22.22%
Transp/Comm/Util (TCU)	33	27	30	-3	-9.09%
Wholesale Trade	53	58	62	9	16.98%
Retail Trade	179	171	151	-28	-15.64%
FIRE	53	50	48	-5	-9.43%
Services	130	139	161	31	23.85%
Unclassified	-	-	1	-	-
<b>Total Private</b>	<b>594</b>	<b>599</b>	<b>594</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0.00%</b>
Federal Govt.	16	17	19	3	18.75%
State Govt.	12	11	20	8	66.67%
Local Govt.	26	19	16	-10	-38.46%
<b>Total Govt.</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1.85%</b>
<b>COUNTY TOTAL</b>	<b>648</b>	<b>646</b>	<b>649</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0.15%</b>

Source: Colorado Department of Labor and Employment

## Retail Sales Receipts by Industry

Brush retail sales, unadjusted for inflation as reported by the Colorado Department of Revenue, gained modestly between 1980-1990, at 2.8% compared to 4.6% for Morgan County overall.

In the county overall, big gainers were services and the retail sector's subgroups of automobiles/gasoline and building material/farm equipment. Finance, Insurance and Real Estate (FIRE) took the biggest drop. Figure 6 displays a breakdown of retail sales by industry.



### Retail Pull Factor

Brush's retail pull factor, included in figure 6, fell from 1.005 to 0.702 from 1980-1990. Morgan County's retail pull factor also fell, from 1.191 to 0.885 over the same period. The retail pull factor is per capita taxable sales of the community or county divided by state per capita taxable retail sales.<sup>3</sup> Values greater than 1.0 show "pull," while values less than 1.0 show "leaks" from the local economy.

These figures indicate that Morgan County is losing retail dollars to out-of-county firms, a conclusion supported by low location quotients (about 80% of the state average) in the retail sector. (See figure 4 and the Non-Farm Employment section above). Consolidation in retail and services sectors has favored nearby accessible metropolitan areas such as Greeley and Denver as shopping malls and companies such as Wal-Mart draw rural and small town customers with high-volume price discounting.

**Retail Sales Receipts by Industry**  
Brush & Morgan County, CO, 1970, 1980, 1985, 1990

figure 6

BRUSH	(in thousands of dollars)				Absolute	
	1970	1980	1985	1990	Change 80-90	% Change 80-90
TOTAL	\$23,780	\$38,978	\$40,988	\$40,084	\$1,106	2.84%
Brush % of Morgan Co.	34.50%	15.31%	16.05%	15.05%	-0.26%	
<b>Retail Pull*</b>		<b>1.005</b>	<b>0.771</b>	<b>0.702</b>	<b>-0.303</b>	<b>-30.18%</b>

MORGAN COUNTY	(in thousands of dollars)				Abs	
	1970	1980	1985	1990	Change 80-90	% Change 80-90
AGRICULTURE	n/a	\$1,004	\$1,578	\$2,020	\$1,016	101.20%
MINING		\$2,151	\$1,470	\$4,181	\$2,030	94.37%
CONSTRUCTION		\$6,543	\$8,973	\$7,022	\$479	7.32%
MANUFACTURING		\$12,286	\$4,941	\$14,128	\$1,842	14.99%
TANSP/COMM/UTIL(TCU)		\$12,793	\$18,601	\$18,922	\$6,129	47.91%
WHOLESALE TRADE		\$51,252	\$13,176	\$14,688	(\$36,564)	-71.34%
RETAIL		\$154,760	\$185,848	\$172,636	\$17,876	11.55%
Bldg Mat/Farm Equip		\$17,814	\$10,649	\$28,292	\$10,478	58.82%
General Merch		\$7,644	\$8,402	\$10,522	\$2,878	37.65%
Food		\$21,897	\$24,211	\$28,044	\$6,147	28.07%
Auto/Gas		\$52,745	\$66,743	\$75,845	\$23,100	43.80%
Apparel		\$4,445	\$3,380	\$2,948	(\$1,497)	-33.68%
Home Furn.		\$3,698	\$2,531	\$4,062	\$364	9.84%
Eat/Drinking		\$9,251	\$10,348	\$12,384	\$3,133	33.87%
Misc.		\$37,266	\$59,588	\$10,539	(\$26,727)	-71.72%
FIRE		\$273	\$2,068	\$44	(\$229)	-83.88%
HOTELS		\$2,080	\$1,900	\$2,766	\$686	32.98%
SERVICES		\$8,313	\$11,742	\$25,238	\$16,925	203.60%
GOVERNMENT		\$3,203	\$5,045	\$4,725	\$1,522	47.52%
OTHER		\$0	\$0	\$42	\$42	—
TOTAL	\$68,954	\$254,669	\$255,345	\$266,407	\$11,738	4.61%
Morgan Co. % of Colorado	0.85%	0.93%	0.65%	0.59%	-0.34%	
<b>Retail Pull*</b>		<b>1.191</b>	<b>0.818</b>	<b>0.885</b>	<b>-0.305</b>	<b>-25.64%</b>

Note: 1970 n/a- breakdowns not available. Numbers may not add to totals due to rounding.  
\* Community per capita taxable sales divided by state per capita taxable sales.

Source: Colorado Department of Revenue, Tax Analysis Division

<sup>3</sup> This should be taken with a grain of salt, as some practitioners and academics have raised questions about the accuracy of the retail pull factor, calling the statistic "empty records of past performance." (See John B. Cribfield, "Elves and Other Mischief in the Analysis of Community Economic Development," *Economic Development Review*, Summer 1991, pp 35-38.)



## Annual Average Unemployment

According to the Colorado Department of Labor, Morgan County lost 19% of its labor force between 1980-1990, while the state on average gained 17%. Unemployment rates in the county, shown in figure 7, have averaged about a point higher than the state's for 1985, 1990 and 1991.

figure 7 **Annual Average Unemployment  
Morgan County, CO, 1975, 1980, 1985, 1990, 1991**

MORGAN COUNTY	1975	1980	1985	1990	1991	Absolute Change 80-90	% Change 80-90
Morgan Co. population	n/a	22,513	22,829	21,939	n/a	-574	-2.55%
Morgan Co. Labor Force	9,852	12,282	10,061	9,915	10,186	-2,367	-19.27%
Employment	9,177	11,558	9,067	9,353	9,551	-2,205	-19.08%
Unemployment							
Number	685	724	994	562	635	-162	-22.38%
Rate	6.9	5.9	9.9	5.7	6.2	0	-3.39%
Colorado Labor Force	n/a	1,500,000	1,720,000	1,756,000	1,778,027	256,000	17.07%
Employment		1,412,000	1,619,000	1,669,000	1,683,654	257,000	18.20%
Unemployment							
Number	n/a	88,000	101,000	87,000	94,373	-1,000	-1.14%
Rate		5.9	5.9	4.9	5.3	-1	-16.95%

Note: 1975 n/a-not available, 1991 is Jan.-Aug. average  
Source: Colorado Department of Labor and Employment

## Personal Income Change

Morgan County's average annual real per capita personal income (earned and unearned, adjusted for inflation and published in 1982 dollars), reported by the US Bureau of Economic Analysis and detailed in figure 8, rose by 1.98% between 1985-89. This compares to 0.68% growth in Colorado and a 2.21% jump in the entire United States for that period.

figure 8 **Personal Income Change  
Morgan County, CO, 1981-1985, 1985-1989**

### Average Annual Real Per Capita Personal Income Change

	1981-85	1985-89
United States	1.88%	2.21%
Colorado	1.23%	0.68%
Morgan County	-2.49%	1.98%

Source: US Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis



## Banks

The locally-owned Farmers State Bank and Fort Lupton-based First Security Bank have offices in Brush. They are both rated by the Sheshunoff Bank guide as "sound." Three banks in Fort Morgan serve Brush: Farmers State Bank of Fort Morgan (unaffiliated with Brush's), First National Bank of Fort Morgan and Fort Morgan State Bank. (See figure 9.) Morgan County has slightly more banking employment than the statewide average, as shown in figure 4.

figure 9

Bank Assets & Ratings  
Brush & Fort Morgan, CO, 1987, 1988, 1989

Bank	Year	SIZE & GROWTH		SHESHUNOFF RATING OF SOUNDNESS	LOAN EXPOSURE % Assets in Ag	INCOME	RETURN ON AVG. ASSETS
		Asset Size	% An. Change				
Farmers State Bank Brush	89	\$22,000,000	-3%	3B/B	21%	\$107,000	0.46%
	88	\$23,000,000	3%	3B/B	18%	-\$24,000	-0.11%
	87	\$22,000,000	-10%	4B/B	21%	-\$204,000	-0.87%
Fort Lupton State Bank Ft. Lupton (owner: 1st Security)	89	\$95,000,000	44%	6B/B+	16%	\$1,117,000	1.47%
	88	\$66,000,000	18%	6B/B+	9%	\$981,000	1.60%
	87	\$56,000,000	76%	7B/A	8%	\$540,000	1.23%
Farmers State Bank Ft. Morgan	89	\$84,000,000	7%	9B/A+	19%	\$1,477,000	1.65%
	88	\$88,000,000	-2%	8A/A	18%	\$1,439,000	1.63%
	87	\$90,000,000	2%	8A/A	18%	\$1,304,000	1.48%
First NB of Fort Morgan Ft. Morgan	89	\$31,000,000	2%	4B/B	19%	\$344,000	1.14%
	88	\$30,000,000	-12%	82/A	19%	\$309,000	1.00%
	87	\$35,000,000	-8%	70/A	17%	\$372,000	1.02%
Fort Morgan State Bank Ft. Morgan	89	\$11,000,000	6%	23/C+	20%	\$98,000	0.92%
	88	\$10,000,000	-4%	7/NR	14%	\$5,000	0.05%
	87	\$10,000,000	-7%	3/NR	13%	-\$364,000	-3.44%

Source: Sheshunoff Bank Quarterly, 1990

## Building Permits

City of Brush building permits numbers and values vary significantly year to year. Permitted values ranged from \$160 to \$6,300 per capita in the period from 1980-1991, as shown in figure 10. Two major projects, the HPYC buildings and CPP greenhouse and cogeneration plant, contributed heavily to building permit values in 1986 and 1989. While the total number of permits has grown over the past decade, there has been little other new construction.

figure 10

Building permits  
Brush, CO, 1970, 1980, 1985-1990

BRUSH	1970	1980	(Population Estimated 1985-1989)					1990	Absolute Change 80-90	Percent Change 80-90	
			1985	1986	1987	1988	1989*				
Brush population	3,377	4,062	4,362	4,323	4,283	4,244	4,204	4,166	83	2.03%	
Building Permits		99	169	122	194	145	166	182	199	30	17.75%
New Construction					8	4	3	2	1		
Valuation (in \$)	270,295	1,400,033	1,446,655	6,870,447	694,088	761,669	26,466,284	2,646,003	1,245,970	89,00%	
Value/Capita	\$80	\$343	\$332	\$1,589	\$162	\$177	\$6,293	\$636	\$292	85.23%	

\* Colorado Power Partners (CPP) facilities  
# High Plains Youth Center (HPYC)

Note: 1985-89 population estimated by annualizing period change.  
Source: City of Brush



### Assessed Valuations

City of Brush assessed valuations grew by 60% from 1980-1990. School District RE-2 valuations climbed by 150% total, 180% per student enrolled, over the same period. This allowed for a significant reduction in mill levies for the school district, from 63.38 in 1973 to 40.08 in 1992. See figure 11.

figure 11 Assessed Valuations & Mill Levy  
School District RE-2 & Brush, CO, 1977, 1980, 1985, 1990, 1992

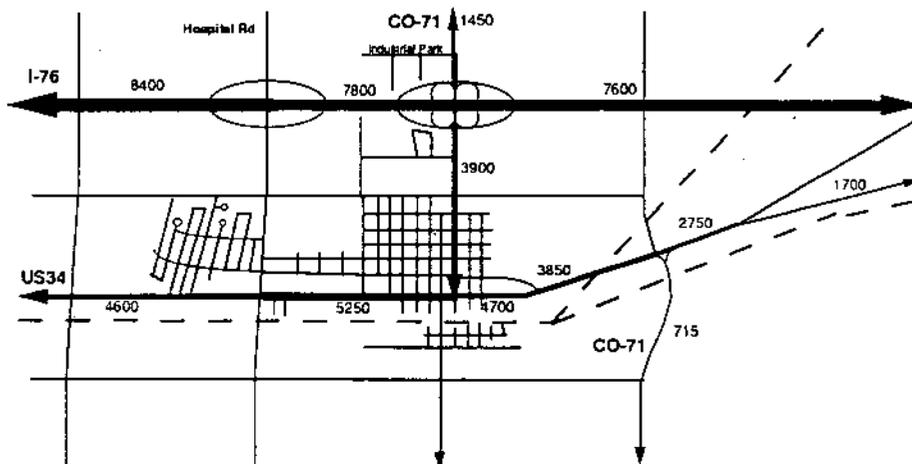
	1977	1980	1985	1990	1992	Absolute Change 80-90	% Change 80-90
<b>BRUSH</b>							
Assessed Value	7,852,880	9,599,760	12,860,730	15,377,159	22,793,500	5,777,399	60%
Mill Levy	n/a	21.06	27.84	23.32	22.82	2.26	11%
<b>SCHOOL DISTRICT</b>							
Assessed Value	15,500,780	44,017,640	101,106,040	110,436,360	116,437,110	66,418,720	151%
Per Student	10,130	32,268	81,761	90,484	89,892	58,216	180%
Mill Levy	63.38	43.69	33.71	39.25	40.08	-4.44	-10%

Note: 1977 n/a-not available  
Source: City of Brush, RE-2 School District.

### Traffic Counts

Circulation on Brush streets and roads is concentrated on US-34 east-west and Colorado 71 north-south, as shown on figure 12. I-76 bypasses the city on the north. Morgan County figures for 1990 indicate significant changes in average daily traffic (ADT) volume occurring at I-76 and Hospital Road, US-34 and Hospital Road, and Industrial Park Road and Colorado 71.

figure 12 BRUSH, CO TRAFFIC COUNTS, 1990 (ADT)



Note: Not to scale, ADT is Average Daily Traffic.  
Source: Morgan County Economic Development Association.



## Library Use

Between 1980-1990, the East Morgan County Library District increased total inventory by 63% while the number of registered patrons increased by 85%. The budget increased by \$170,000, rising from 1980-1985 and falling slightly from 1985-1990. See figure 13 for annual breakdowns.

**Library Use**  
East Morgan County (CO) Library District, 1970, 1980, 1985, 1990

figure 13

BRUSH	1970	1980	1985	1990	Absolute Change 80-90	% Change 80-90
Total Items	4,900	14,797	19,880	24,055	9,258	63%
Per Capita	1.45	3.62	4.56	5.78		215%
Registered Patrons	1,521	2,429	2,795	4,497	2,068	85%
Annual Budget	\$6,700	\$16,297	\$194,557	\$186,877	\$170,580	1047%
Brush Population	3,377	4,082	4,362	4,165	83	2%
Morgan Co. Pop.	20,105	22,513	22,829	21,939	-574	-3%

Note: Cataloging and office operations are computerized.  
Source: East Morgan County Library District, Brush, Colorado

## Business, Enterprise and Community Indicators

### Total Number of Businesses:

As of November 1991, there were 594 private businesses listed in Morgan County by the Colorado Department of Labor publication *Employment and Wages*. Breakout by industry sector is shown in Table 3.

### Total Number of New Businesses:

According to the Brush Chamber of Commerce, 12 new businesses were started in the last year.

### Telecommunications:

Digital switching was installed in autumn 1990 by U S WEST Communications, Inc. Brush is served by fiber optics through a node in Fort Morgan.



### Use of Local Information Resources:

East Morgan County Library has been active in expanding access to and use of computerized data bases. Adult education classes (including farm management, truck driving, business accounting) are offered at Morgan Community College (MCC) in Fort Morgan. Also located at MCC is the state's Small Business Development Center. The Brush Chamber of Commerce sponsors frequent seminars and hosts speakers of area and regional interest.

### Internal and Area-Wide Cooperation:

MCC serves the entire county. The City of Brush is a member of the Morgan County Economic Development Association, and private businesses form the Morgan County Economic Development Corporation. The Brush and Fort Morgan housing authorities, local hospitals and school districts have begun cooperative programs recently.

*East Morgan County Library has been active in expanding access to and use of computerized data bases.*

### Use of Outside Help:

Additional protection for Brush's water supply was obtained through a joint effort of the City and Ducks Unlimited to acquire a nearby ranch and convert it to a watershed maintenance and wildlife refuge area. And in addition to a State of Colorado Department of Local Affairs (DOLA)-funded Revolving Loan Fund and other state and federal grants, Brush recently sought and received a \$5,000 grant from the Colorado Department of Agriculture to conduct a feasibility study for a proposed salsa plant. Over \$250,000 in Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds was obtained for The Carrol Hotel. CDBG and Colorado Energy Impact Program funds (both through DOLA) helped to finance infrastructure for the CPP facilities. The City has also promoted the Small Business Administration-sponsored Colorado Leading Edge training program in the Colorado Office of Business Development.

### News Sources:

A weekly newspaper, the *Brush News-Tribune*, has been published in Brush since 1894. One radio station is located there, but the Greeley-based owner plans to move to a new building in Fort Morgan within the next year. The county is served by a daily newspaper, *The Fort Morgan Times*. Both papers are owned by American Publishing Company, itself a unit of Vancouver-based Hollinger, Inc., which owns the London *Daily Telegraph*. The Denver media market (two daily newspapers and several radio and television stations) extends service to the area. Sterling's television station also serves northeastern Colorado. Brush has had cable TV service since the early 1970s.



### **Commuting Patterns:**

Most Morgan County residents work within the county — about 2% leave the county to work. A recent University of Colorado study found that about 8% of Morgan County workers commute into the county from elsewhere.<sup>4</sup> A majority of those respondents stated that they would live in Morgan County if “adequate housing” were available.

### **Local Investment:**

Brush’s two foundations, the Joslin-Needham Foundation and the Pettis Foundation, have contributed heavily to the parks, hospitals and other causes in Morgan County. Local citizens also raised \$125,000 to help recruit doctors to the community.

Private businesspeople joined together in the 1960s to build the Brush Industrial Park on the then newly-constructed I-76. The park is now built-out, and a new group is looking to continue the effort on adjacent parcels. Residents of Brush and surrounding areas also invested in a project to revive the pork processing facility — an effort that ultimately turned up short.

*Both public and private citizens are heavily involved in civic leadership.*

### **Leadership:**

Both public and private citizens are heavily involved in civic leadership. The mayor, city council, city administrator, housing authority administrator and school officials are all strong public sector actors. From private business, the new chamber president, health care professionals, bankers, the industrial park partnership, directors of both utility plants and many others devote time and talent to projects as diverse as parks and recreation and the SSC project.

### **Economic Development Leadership:**

The City of Brush and the Brush Chamber of Commerce are the lead agencies for economic development within the municipality, and two countywide development groups provide additional resources.

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<sup>4</sup> Wobbekind, Richard, Joseph Kreikemeier, and Linda Nehls, *Morgan County Housing Needs Survey*, University of Colorado at Boulder, Business Research Division, January 1991.

## CASE STUDY THEMES

### New Economy Themes

Brush is more adaptive than strategic. As one person told us, *"We may not have a common vision, but we have a strong sense of a changing world, and the town needs to adapt with it."* Business and government leaders recognize the need to expand markets beyond the region, even internationally, and to find market niches. They seem to understand the need to innovate and take risks — in starting new businesses, diversifying existing business, modernizing methods of doing business (particularly in taking advantage of new information and telecommunications technologies) and finding new markets.

#### **New and Expanding Markets: International, National and Niche**

Key industries in Brush are developing new markets — creating business opportunities that place them squarely in the New Economy. Several examples are in agriculture related businesses:

Brush has always been cattle country. The Livestock Exchange, Inc. (LEI) is the fourth largest cattle auction in the US. Yet it covers only the regional market, drawing cattle sellers and buyers from about a 250-mile radius. Several years ago, a new company, the Superior Livestock Auction Company, was formed by a local resident and his out-of-state partners. They established offices in Fort Worth and Brush, but located the corporate office in Brush because *"local banks understand the cattle business and its financing needs."* Superior is a video auction company which operates auctions nationally through satellite TV and sells cattle from all over the US to buyers all over the US. It sells only in lots of 50 or more animals.

Mohrlang Manufacturing makes cattle feeders which it sells nationally and in Australia, Japan, the former Soviet Union, China and the Middle East. As a result of initial sales, the company has also established a large international market for replacement parts.

Colorado Power Partners (CPP) is a new company operating a cogeneration plant that generates electricity which it sells to Public Service Company of Colorado. CPP includes an 18-acre greenhouse that raises and sells tomatoes in major urban markets all over the US. CPP is currently developing

*Key industries in  
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18 additional acres of greenhouses, part of which will be dedicated to raising melons for the Japan market.

Small businesses, as well, are finding niche markets. An antique store also runs a small estate sale management business. An entrepreneur is trying to raise capital to start a commercial laundry to service the hospitals, nursing homes and motels in Morgan and nearby counties. The former owner of the local grain elevator is starting a financial services company that will focus on the discount mortgage market nationwide. A local artist markets her work in Japan, England, Germany, Canada and France.

### Information and Technology Intensive

New telecommunications and information technologies are well entrenched in both public institutions and businesses in Brush. The Pawnee Power Plant has its own telephone system; computers control many of the functions within the plant and provide on-line performance monitoring. CPP's cogeneration plant uses state-of-the-art computer technologies in every aspect of its business: from generating the electricity, to monitoring and controlling the temperature of the steam heat piped to the greenhouse, to controlling the irrigation and feeding system for the greenhouse's tomatoes, to sorting and packing the tomatoes by color and size, to monitoring the national tomato market, to controlling the inventory and distribution system.

*New telecommunications and information technologies are well entrenched in both public institutions and businesses in Brush. . . .The schools, the hospital, the long term care facilities, the youth center, the banks and city government are all computer intensive, with state-of-the-art hardware and software.*

Superior Livestock's reliance on satellite TV is no greater than its reliance on fax machines and computer modems to manage logistics and financial transactions. LEI has long recognized that any exchange operation, be it stocks and bonds, currency or cattle, is information intensive. LEI has been fully computerized for a number of years — in its market information, customer and sales records, inventory, shipping, business and financial management. Owner Bob Walker points out that most of LEI's customers are also sophisticated users of computer technologies. The local grain company has a satellite link into market data systems, and one of the banks has an on-line link to Denver for all its computer applications.

The schools, the hospital, the long term care facilities, the youth center, the banks and city government are all computer intensive, with state-of-the-art hardware and software. Computer training begins early in elementary school and continues through high school. The new librarian is committed to expanding the library's business planning software and its access to major data banks and to promoting greater use of these resources by the business community. In addition, the library provides training for students in information search and retrieval and other basic library technologies.

County government has been computerized for about four years; it also is uplinked with Colorado Counties, Inc., the state Division of Motor Vehicles and voter registration databases. Since 1990, Morgan County has had a state-of-the-art public safety (police, fire, ambulance, 911) communications system; it was one of the first counties in the state to have E-911 — the enhanced system that "knows" and displays a caller's location. The county is also in the first stages (training, software acquisition and data verification) of putting in a Geographic Information System (GIS).



Small businesses and farmers are also taking advantage of information and communications technologies for business management, market analysis, inventory control and even desktop publishing.

Mohrlang Industries uses a numerically controlled machine press and a plasma cutter in its production systems. Its subsidiary, Mortec, has developed new scale techniques. CPP has adopted a Danish growing system in its greenhouse, combining hydroponic techniques with organic nutrient systems that avoid the use of pesticides and herbicides. CPP also uses the latest in sensor technology in sorting and packaging. Sunset Manor's patients benefit from the latest treatment technologies.

### Enterprise Development, Entrepreneurship, Innovation

Business development is taking place in a variety of ways: new business start-ups, business expansion based on new products and services and innovative ways to take advantage of changes in the business climate.

LEI, for example, has had to deal with major economic and technological developments in the cattle breeding business, which substantially affected their business. The introduction of new breeds and the consolidation of the beef packing industry has reduced the beef production business from a three-stage process in which the cattle were fed by three different parties to a one-step process — paring the number of cattle sales by two thirds. The Exchange has handled this reduction in transactions by diversifying — now running its own feedlot, a grain elevator and a newspaper for cattle buyers.

Mohrlang Industries' subsidiary, Mortec, is in the agricultural communications and electronics equipment and service business. Mortec, however, has also developed a niche in the large truck scale service business. In addition, Mohrlang Industries has built its own parts business to over \$1 million in annual sales.

As one person said, "*Everybody in Brush has more than one thing.*" Chick Ruhl recently moved and expanded his auto parts store to the heart of the downtown area and is now running four businesses out of that one location: the auto parts store, a precision machine shop, a lawn and garden equipment store and a warehouse. Rueben Ewert also runs multiple businesses: His office supply store is also the Radio Shack dealership, and he owns and operates the roller rink and clothing store. The Parrishes, who recently relocated their antique business to Brush, have added a service business (estate sale management). The hospital offers office space to health care professionals, provided space for an alcohol and drug rehabilitation program, and has developed a range of services geared specifically to the two long term care facilities. The local newspaper offers printing services. Even the Pawnee Power Plant has more than one business: It sells its flyash for use in making cement to construct the new Denver airport.

New business start-ups and expansions have also played a role in strengthening the business environment in Brush. Such start-ups include relocations or expansions from nearby towns and local businesses started by outside investors or owners. These new businesses include agricultural production and services, retail and other service businesses.

*Business development is taking place in a variety of ways: new business start-ups, business expansion based on new products and services and innovative ways to take advantage of changes in the business climate.*

*"Everybody in Brush has more than one thing."*



New agriculture related businesses include the Superior Livestock Auction, which was started by a local businessman with outside investors; the CPP, started by outside investors; and the Pinneo Feedlot, also started by outside investors. In addition, the local grain elevator was purchased by Cargill, which is investing in the expansion of the business.

New retail and service businesses include two antique stores, a crafts boutique, a florist, three beauty salons, two restaurants, an appliance store which is an expansion of a Fort Morgan store, and a grocery market.

The High Plains Youth Center (HPYC) was established by the Mayflower Group from Boston, Massachusetts. HPYC bought and renovated two existing detention facilities whose previous owners had been unable to maintain viable operations. The new facility is well capitalized, well equipped and provides over 140 jobs.

### ***Economic Development Themes***

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*In small towns, it's not easy to separate economic development from community development, nor government action from community action, nor the local economy from the regional economy.*

In small towns, it's not easy to separate economic development from community development, nor government action from community action, nor the local economy from the regional economy. Moreover, in recent years there has been a growing realization that economic development is not just, or even primarily, a set of activities focused on business and industry recruitment, but that it must inevitably include a broader range of business development and expansion and community development activities. In this realm of new economic development approaches, Brush's inherent pragmatism stands out.

#### **Building on Existing Strengths**

There is a common sense of pragmatism in the community and a firm conviction that the key to Brush's success is to play to its strengths. The incremental revitalization of the local economy has built on Brush's existing assets. Although lacking an articulated, cohesive economic development strategy, all local economic development initiatives recognized existing assets and the need to build upon them. There are a number of examples:

Agriculture, particularly cattle, has always been a primary element in the area economy. Most people in Brush believe that ag will always be a significant, if not dominant, contributor to the local economy. Both the private and public sector have taken a number of steps to strengthen and build upon local agricultural activity and expertise. The Pinneo feedlot makes sense in light of LEI and also provides LEI with a new customer. Superior positioned itself to take advantage of local cattle and financial expertise. The local market provides ideas and the test bed for some of Mortec's new services. Many in the community invested in the start-up of a local pork slaughterhouse to add value to the agricultural base, although the investment was unsuccessful.



CPP built on three existing assets: the Pawnee Power Plant as a market for the electricity, the excellent water quality as the basic element of its hydroponic system and the community's understanding of agricultural economies. CPP adds a major element of agricultural diversification to the local area by focusing on high value crops. The planned expansion of the greenhouse into other vegetables is considered a major opportunity for a new food processing business. CPP has also provided the impetus to form a new fresh vegetable distribution company to serve the High Plains region.

Nearly 30 years ago, the community identified I-76 as an asset. In 1963, a group of business people formed the Brush Development Corporation, bought 70 acres at the off ramp and created an industrial park. Today the original park is completely sold out and houses 12 businesses.

The industrial park provides another example of asset thinking: When two detention centers located in the park failed in the early 1980s, the community saw the empty facilities as assets and made a focused effort to recruit a business that would build on those assets.

### Quality of Life as Economic Development

The people of Brush take an "everyday living" approach to their community. There is strong intuitive recognition of the coupling of economics and quality of life. Brush, like every small community, is concerned about both the social and economic opportunities for its children to remain at home. But the town also realizes that *"many of the more ambitious and brighter kids will always move away, and most won't return."* And, the town believes that its vitality is dependent upon its ability to attract and retain bright and capable people; people are convinced that bringing in new talent is just as important as bringing in new jobs. The way newcomers have been integrated into leadership roles demonstrates this conviction.

People also are aware that organizations providing services directly related to the quality of life have played a large role in bringing human talent into the community — people like Craig Aasved the hospital administrator; Barb Bradshaw, administrator of Sunset Manor; Jim Collard, the city administrator; Ruth Hensen, the new librarian; Frank Knappenberger, director of the HPYC; Joe Medina, district manager for the Colorado Public Service Company; and Jo-Barbie Redmond, an elementary school principal. A number of townspeople point to the Pawnee Power Plant as a major factor in the town's development, not just because it provides jobs and power, but also because it has brought a number of talented people to Brush and Morgan County.

There are also people who came to Brush *because* of the quality of life, like Jeff Bauer, who has a successful health care consulting firm specializing in rural health care. The Parrishes moved their business to Brush because of the quality of the business climate. Their landlord, the bank and even Public Service Company worked with the Parrishes to make the move viable and attractive. Shirley and Darrell Wangelin, a young couple, bought a local business because of both the business opportunity and their desire to be in a small town environment. And others, like Larry Giaque, have returned home after many years away.

*The town believes that its vitality is dependent upon its ability to attract and retain bright and capable people; people are convinced that bringing in new talent is just as important as bringing in new jobs.*



So, Brush pays attention to its quality of life. It considers investments in schools, health care, infrastructure and the physical appearances of the town as investments in its economic future. It raises 90 percent of its school funds locally, and its schools repeatedly gain statewide honors in academics and athletics. The town cherishes and protects its water supply. It invests heavily in its physical appearance, especially in its parks and recreation programs; has recognized its housing problems; and is addressing them. And it pays attention to who moves into town.

### The Changing Relevance of Place

*"There's a Mason-Dixon line between Brush and Fort Morgan that results in fragmented political leadership and fragmented solutions to common problems."*

There is increasing need for cooperation and increasing evidence of more mutual dependence among small communities. In many places, planned cooperation in many forms and even "clustering" of communities is beginning to occur. In Brush, as in many communities, there is great ambivalence about cooperative efforts.

The community boundaries of Brush have traditionally extended to the surrounding farms and smaller towns; town and farm cooperation on "community" problems has been fairly good; but achieving cooperative relations with the most obvious potential partner, Fort Morgan (10 minutes west), has been frustrating to most. There are strong *de facto* economic ties between the two communities: Many people live in one community and work in the other community; many people shop in the other community for specific goods or services; people from both towns attend MCC in Fort Morgan, and the community college provides good outreach services to the area. But formal or informal cooperative arrangements on a government level, community level or business group level have been few and far between. And most focused initiatives over the years have been unsuccessful.

History plays a role in this, as does the fact that Fort Morgan has twice the population of Brush and is the county seat. Many feel the decision to locate MCC in Fort Morgan rather than at a midpoint between the two towns not only caused intensely negative reactions in Brush, it was also a lost opportunity to bring the two communities closer together. *"There's a Mason-Dixon line between Brush and Fort Morgan that results in fragmented political leadership and fragmented solutions to common problems,"* said one observer.

Nevertheless, there are hints that change could be forthcoming. First, along with the frustration and negative feelings of competition, most people in Brush recognize the many mutual benefits of cooperation. Especially intriguing to the case study team, nearly everyone mentioned the Brush-Fort Morgan conflict and stated that it is not good for either town. And, almost without exception, people revealed their perception that it is the elected and appointed officials of both towns and the county who are responsible for the continuing rift.



Most people acknowledged a need for, but see no movement toward, regional cooperation. There appears to be a general, if reluctant, understanding that it will be increasingly difficult for the two communities to continue to support two hospitals, two school districts, two libraries, two airports, etc. "*It's asinine,*" said one executive.

There are some incipient efforts to cooperate. Brush institutions, particularly the chamber and the hospital, are using the services of MCC more. A new association of health services agency representatives and concerned citizens, called Morgan County Visions Unlimited, has been formed to serve as a forum, coordinating network, and planning and assessment focus for human services. The Brush Housing Authority and the Fort Morgan Housing Authority have recently joined forces on a low and middle income rental property rehabilitation program. There are two county economic development organizations: the Morgan County Economic Development Association, an association of public officials, and the Morgan County Economic Development Corporation, a private organization focused on providing financial assistance to businesses. There is criticism and skepticism about the effectiveness and the future of both organizations, yet their continued existence reflects some recognition of the need for cooperation.

Place also connotes place of business, and that is changing, too. Patterns of commuting, shopping and service delivery show that Brush is part of a regional economic *place*, if not a regional economic *community*. For many firms, the place of business is even more extensive. For LEI and the Superior Livestock Auction Company, for the Pawnee Power Plant and CPP, for Sunset Manor and Eben Ezer, for Mohrlang Industries and the HPYC, for the mayor and the city administrator, the world is inevitably a much larger place than Brush or Morgan County or even the West. Local companies are increasingly selling into national and international markets. This is a sign of health and vitality.

### Role of Government

Patterns of state and federal government involvement in economic development vary substantially in the Great Plains region. In more and more places, towns are exercising leadership to affect their community's future. Progressive communities don't ignore financial and technical assistance from state and federal agencies, and they will even take advice. But there is often reluctance to take advantage of state or federal financial resources if doing so would result in some loss of local control.

The role of local government in development also varies. In some cases, local government is in the background, providing for the delivery of city services but not a major driving force in the community's development. In other cases, it is the main driving force. In still others, leadership is shared among local government and community and business organizations.

*Brush seems to have a number of leadership groups and few signs of major power struggles or unseemly competition among these groups.*



*The Brush pattern of multiple leadership groups, strong local government involvement and cooperation among the leadership groups has many inherent advantages.*

Brush is an example of the last case. Brush seems to have a number of leadership groups and few signs of major power struggles or unseemly competition among these groups. City government has made economic development a priority, and the mayor and the city administrator have been deeply involved in the recruitment of industry, encouraging new businesses and, in general, being cheerleaders for economic development activities by the community as a whole. The HPYC and CPP compliment the City's recruitment efforts and its help in expediting their own start-ups. The council, the mayor and the city administrator have also supported and worked with economic and community development efforts led by community organizations such as Brush Cares or business organizations such as the Brush Development Corporation and the chamber of commerce. The chamber is now moving into a leadership role, particularly in regard to strengthening existing businesses, and city government is supportive of this role.

The recent focus of city government has been industrial recruitment — because city leaders viewed recruitment as the best way to strengthen and diversify the economic base and because recruitment was the role the City was better able to play, both functionally and politically. Now the City is looking to pay more attention to business expansion and to play more of a support role to other development groups.

The City has also played a major role in obtaining outside assistance, especially from state government. City officials have developed a strong relationship with the state Department of Local Affairs and the Governor's Office and have obtained grants from both agencies for specific development projects.

Small communities have difficulty in getting people to run for local office, especially business people. Brush is no exception. "If you upset rural customers, you lose them because they know you," explained one local businessman. Because "community leaders won't run for office," many perceive that the town is "apathetic," citing two city council candidates who ran unopposed in the recent election and the low turnout at public hearings and city council meetings. County commissioner Cindy Erker, while agreeing that there is generally a "lack of interest in public meetings," noted that "a broad spectrum of the public" do get involved if the issue is major, e.g. a plan to site a hazardous waste incinerator in the county.

Business people realize that being deeply involved in local controversies can hurt business. Thus, other channels for exercising leadership on issues that involve the community's future are valuable, particularly if these channels can work in partnership with city government. Each local community will inevitably require its own leadership pattern, but the Brush pattern of multiple leadership groups, strong local government involvement and cooperation among the leadership groups has many inherent advantages.



## ***Clues to Community Survival Themes***

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The viability of a community and its future development are not solely a function of economic and social forces. They are primarily functions of people, their ability to work together, their capacity for leadership, their attitudes toward the present and the future, the value they place in their community and their determination to survive. The Heartland Center for Leadership Development identified many of these factors in their *20 Clues to Rural Community Survival* which they developed from a study of 19 small towns in 12 states in the Midwest. We have touched on a number of these themes in our discussion of the New Economy and new economic development themes. Our focus in this section is on community attitudes and leadership.

### **Evidence of Community Pride**

Like most healthy towns, Brush has a strong sense of community pride. It is manifest in the bragging about the quality of the water and the climate. It is manifest, too, in the quality of the maintenance of the town, its parks, its waterfowl habitat, its clean streets, its new community center, its schools and its hospitals. This pride is also symbolized in its name — the town is not Brush, but Brush! — and in the name chosen by one of the most successful community organizations, Brush Cares.

*"Brush is a gambler; if you lose a few, you keep playing."*

But community pride is most evident in Brush's tradition of volunteerism. Volunteers contribute to major community events like the Oktoberfest and the rodeo. Volunteers work hard to support school activities, especially special programs. Volunteers raised over \$125,000 to help recruit doctors to the community. Volunteers played a major role in the renovation of The Carroll Hotel into a community center.

### **Willingness to Invest in the Future and Emphasis on Quality in Business and Community Life**

Whether it's private businesses, local government or the voluntary sector, Brush continues a tradition of investing in its own future. As one person said, *"Brush is a gambler; if you lose a few, you keep playing."* The town's self-investment is driven by a sense of the need for quality: quality in business to compete, quality in community life both for itself and for the community to grow economically.

Companies like LEI, Mohrlang Industries and the health care centers continue to make investments to bring state-of-the-art technologies to their businesses. Private citizens made the investment to develop the industrial park; its success is generating an effort to create a new park. A number of townspeople invested in the pork slaughterhouse, and, although the investment failed, people indicate their willingness to try again if the right opportunity presents itself.

The Joslin-Needham and Pettis foundations, set up by local families, have contributed much to Brush's development, and this tradition permeates the community. The renovation of The Carroll Hotel was not only planned and



managed by community volunteers, but a local bank provided a low cost loan for its renovation. The raising of \$125,000 for the recruitment of doctors and the contributions of the foundations and the Rotary club to support excellence for the schools are also important examples of the town's focus on quality and the role of self-investment in maintaining that quality.

Most of the community is satisfied with the efforts of public institutions, including city government and the public schools, to maintain the quality of the physical infrastructure and services. This is illustrated in many ways, including an expressed satisfaction with the "professionalism" in the administration of city services, even from those not necessarily in agreement with policy and program decisions made by city government.

### Participatory Approach to Community Decision Making and Cooperative Spirit

Brush has always had strong community leadership. Twenty years ago, that leadership group was comparatively small. Now, however, there are multiple opportunities for leadership, and newcomers to the community have ample opportunity to exercise leadership and are welcomed as leaders. Both chamber president Joe Medina and chamber director Verna Morgan are newcomers, yet they have been instrumental in raising the chamber membership from 89 to 104. Moreover, the leadership in Brush is not just an interesting mix of oldtimers and newcomers. It is a healthy mix of older, middle aged, young people and women. This openness to newcomers, young people and women in leadership positions is a significant source of strength for the community.

*Newcomers to the community have ample opportunity to exercise leadership and are welcomed as leaders. . . . This openness to newcomers, young people and women in leadership positions is a significant source of strength for the community.*

The development process, Brush-style, is opportunistic, entrepreneurial, informal and open ended. There is no articulated community development vision and no strategic plan nor set of programs for achieving that vision, no single organizational entity responsible for development, no insider group that runs everything and no turf boundaries written in stone. There are many stimulators, many project leaders, many project volunteers, many informal communication networks, the normal amount of complaining and a terrific bandwagon spirit.

To the planning mentality, this may seem like chaos and a recipe for disaster. But there are both "glue factors" and a "rational balance" that make the process work. A strong consensus about the future prevails in the community. Citizens don't want boom or bust, but they do want steady incremental and sustainable improvement of their economy and their well-being. They want to retain a strong agricultural base, but they also want to diversify that base with new industries that have the same prospect for continuity as agriculture. They want industries and businesses that bring professional skills and opportunities to the community, but they are well aware that Brush is not likely to be, nor do they want it to be, a "Super City."



There is, moreover, a strategic *approach*, if not a strategic *plan*. The strategic approach is really a "make-it-work" approach. If there are things that city government or community groups or individual businesses can do to help a project or a development effort, they do them. The schools make their facilities open to businesses. The hospitals have tried to develop programs that help the nursing homes. The library is trying to develop programs that serve local businesses and the schools. Different private groups are looking at a new industrial park and at new real estate developments to address the housing shortage.

Finally, most projects tend to be developed and managed in a cautious and methodical way. Ironically, the major failures — such as the pork slaughterhouse — have not been a result of faulty vision or bad strategy, but bad project management. The projects fit within a vision and within a broad strategic development framework, but lacked due diligence and thorough assessment of the business plan.

Part of the glue that holds it all together is an extraordinary spirit of cooperation. There is a bandwagon mentality driven by pragmatism, common sense and caring. When something looks good, people want to help. Not that there isn't serious disagreement and even conflict. The HPYC had its opponents and its skeptics. So did the CPP project. There is continuing disagreement about the location of a major discount operation such as Wal-Mart in the community. Nevertheless, there is no evidence at all of "a town divided." People win and lose battles, but they seem to care enough about the community and to have enough mature wisdom to avoid unleashing destructive forces when they are on the losing side.

A related glue factor is also driven by pragmatism, common sense and caring: a remarkable sense of balance in the way people assess projects, events and even leaders; balance between objective and subjective factors; and balance between an event and contextual factors. People seem to be in the middle, not at the extremes.

The balance of objective and subjective factors is illustrated by the way people approached criticism during our interviews: Those who criticized a project or the actions of a leader also presented the "other side." That is, they usually mentioned the positive aspects of the project, or the good arguments for it, as well as the negative. Or — even where there was apparent personal dislike — they cited examples of effective actions of a leader, even if in a "give-the-devil-his-due" context.

The balance of event and contextual factors is best illustrated by the attitudes of those who are skeptical of or even moderately opposed to the active economic development role of city government. In those cases, critics look at the City's economic development role in the context of the traditional role and performance of city government. And because most are pleased with the administration of traditional city services, skeptics are willing to give the benefit of the doubt to the City's economic development efforts. That is, their overall level of satisfaction with the operations of city government seems to be more important than their discomfort with the City's economic development role.

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## Conviction That, in the Long Run, You Have To Do It Yourself, Yet Be Willing to Get and Use Outside Help

Brush has been through hard times. It has survived those hard times and made substantial progress in strengthening its prospects for the future — through its own efforts and its determination. As councilwoman Betty Herbst said, *"This town is 10 times better than it was 40 years ago. It gets knocked down, but it won't stay down. It's just like that old worst outfit you know that you should throw away, but you just hang on to it because it's so danged comfortable; it's a part of you, and you don't give any part of it up or throw any of it away."*

*"Agricultural people know that life is tough and that you need to roll with the punches and work hard."*

LEI's Bob Walker thinks that the resiliency of the town, its realistic approach to its future and its focus on current assets and existing strengths comes from its agricultural roots: *"Agricultural people know that life is tough and that you need to roll with the punches and work hard."*

This conviction that you have to do it yourself has a long history in Brush. The Brush Development Corporation, not EDA, developed the industrial park. Brush started the Housing Authority in 1971, with no instigation by HUD or the state Department of Local Affairs. That history is carried on by a city government that is committed to the future and is interested in playing a civic leadership role as well as a government role; by a rejuvenated chamber that is trying to play a real service and leadership role in strengthening the business economy of the community; by the two foundations which continue to support and assist community improvement; by "newcomers" like Barb Bradshaw and Craig Aasved; by returnees like Larry Giauque, willing to volunteer for community projects, and Linda Grippin who led The Carroll renovation project; by retired businesswoman Pat Herbst who serves on the city council; and by entrepreneurs like Harry Mohrlang, Chick Ruhl, Rueben Ewert and Darrell Wangelin.

This conviction, however, is also tempered by the realization that everyone needs help, and when you need it, you ought to get it. Brush has not been bashful in seeking outside assistance. It has used federal and state grants, and maintains close relations with the state Department of Local Affairs' local field representative. The banks use SBA loan guarantees. The community gets help in a variety of ways from Morgan Community College and Public Service Company of Colorado. The City even obtained help from Ducks Unlimited to create a Waterfowl Wildlife Habitat.

But in the final analysis, Brush knows it has to rely first on Brush. As one pundit put it, *"The attitude of the people determines if they make lemonade out of lemons."*



## Vulnerability Themes

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Brush still has economic problems and weaknesses. Many of these are pressures that other rural communities inevitably face, such as diminishing political power compared to larger towns and urban centers in an era of increasing regulation; retail pressures from regional malls; and a lack of redundancy in vital skills and services. Others flow from the particular situation in Brush.

### Housing Shortage

Although some disagree, most people perceive that there is a significant housing shortage encompassing low, middle and upper income housing. Both public and private leaders recognize the problem and the need for action. They also recognize that a large part of the problem is a result of the economic transition that the community has undergone and the difficult and ambiguous investment climate created by that transition. Some, though not most, also recognize that the problem is a regional one and that a regional perspective can provide new opportunities and new solutions.

### Too Few High Wage, High Opportunity Jobs

Brush has been very successful at diversifying its economic base while retaining and building upon its strong agricultural sector. Still, major concerns about the pattern of development persist. For example, many of the new businesses and biggest employers both in Brush and the region have a high percentage of low paying, low opportunity jobs. There is a need for more high wage, high opportunity jobs, both to improve the economy and maintain and improve the talent pool of the community.

### Need to Plug the Leaks

There is some concern about the economic multiplier of the new businesses. While most of the large employers do try to buy locally, that is often limited to some specialty items. Many of their needs require large quantities, and it is difficult for local businesses to compete. A few people recognize that small local *"retail is going down, and it won't come back."* *"The economy is changing,"* explained downtown businessman Rueben Ewert, *"but people and businesses are adapting. If you're going to survive in a small town, you have to diversify. Local businesses are diversifying what they carry, and there is greater emphasis on providing services."*

Most people, however, admit to *"shopping Brush for convenience,"* elsewhere for price and selection. They say many items aren't available in town. Others say that prices are higher in Brush *"because volume is lower."* Townspeople also cite inconvenient hours for both shopping and services.

One entrepreneur, perceiving the niche markets of health care and hospital-ity industries, is working to develop a commercial laundry to meet a need. But there is little evidence that others see the human service industries as a niche market opportunity.

*"The economy is changing, but people and businesses are adapting. If you're going to survive in a small town, you have to diversify."*

There is also some concern about absentee ownership. But while absentee ownership is strong, its impacts are substantially mitigated by some local ownership and by the number and diversity of relatively large employers.

### Leadership

*Many believe that both public and private sector economic development activities in Brush are imbalanced, saying that both the City and business groups place too much emphasis on recruitment rather than on retention and expansion of existing businesses. . . . "It's like the farmer who gets so interested in his new horse that he forgets to feed the old ones."*

Some small communities suffer because the leadership group is too small and overburdened, and "burnout" becomes a severe problem. Brush seems to have avoided that problem. There are concerns, however, that the town's pragmatic system may be a little too diverse and too "project oriented." Some believe that a vision should be articulated and broad strategies should be agreed upon. Very few want a formalized strategic planning process, much less only one channel for developmental activities; but it is clear that many people believe more formal communication and coordination are needed.

Many lament the less active role of Brush Cares and believe that this is one sign that there is less concern for the town's future than there once was. "There's no core group of business people since Brush Cares floundered," said one business manager. Others cite lack of cooperation among private sector interests, noting, for example, that the many service clubs don't work together.

Many believe that both public and private sector economic development activities in Brush are imbalanced, saying that both the City and business groups place too much emphasis on recruitment rather than on retention and expansion of existing businesses. Although most give economic development efforts high marks for "bringing in new business," many — including both business people and elected officials — express concern that the approach is "big-hit oriented." One local leader said that "city government needs to get more involved with the small businessman, to be more supportive." And from a businessman: "The business community has a bad attitude toward development; they break their necks to get a new industry in town."

An elected official summarized the problem: "Our focus on recruitment is not a good thing. The City is more inclined to bring in industry than to help start-ups. Both the City and the business community need to recognize everybody in business." Councilman Laws, referring to local innovator Harry Mohrlang, said, "Mohrlang scratched it out the hard way and has contributed a lot to this community. In the excitement of attracting new businesses, we need to acknowledge the Mohrlangs of Brush." A local farmer used a familiar analogy to make the point: "It's like the farmer who gets so interested in his new horse that he forgets to feed the old ones."

Brush and Fort Morgan, if not all of Morgan County, are a *de facto* economic region of interdependence. Cooperation provides an opportunity to significantly strengthen both communities. There are strong traditional obstacles to cooperation and only minimal and tentative steps to building strong cooperation. The need for cooperation in the abstract is well recognized, but there seems to be little commitment on the part of the public, community or business leadership to pursue cooperation as a key element of any strategic approach to development.

## OBSERVATIONS

The Brush case study describes the successful transition of a Great Plains community that faced serious economic adversity and is making successful adjustments. Combined with other cases, Brush provides evidence and insights that should be examined by those who want to understand the dynamics of what is happening in the Great Plains and by those in specific communities who want to be successful in meeting the challenges of the current economic environment:

1. Most community assessments are focused almost exclusively on poverty, shortcomings, problems, liabilities. We need to promote "asset thinking" in considering the future of a community. In business analysis terms, we need to develop a *balance sheet approach* — one that looks at assets *and* liabilities that impact the future, not just at trends that measure change from past baselines. An investor doesn't think about how to deploy liabilities; she thinks about deploying assets — sometimes to overcome liabilities.
2. Moreover, assessments of community viability need to include different assets, including: *people assets* like talent, tenacity, adaptability; *leadership assets* like adaptive planning and cohesion building; *technology assets* like levels of technology use and intensity — especially information and telecommunications technologies; and *wealth and well-being assets* like home ownership.
3. While small towns lack *economies of scale*, they enjoy *economies of scope* — i.e., fewer people do more things and know more about what is going on. Result: Action is less constrained by institutional fragmentation and functional differentiation. This means that small communities can make speedy decisions — the fundamental requirement of success in the New Economy.
4. *Prevalent assumptions* — that proximity to market is an economic necessity or that "rural" means isolation or lack of sophistication — need to be seriously challenged.
5. The value of a *dominant economic base*, supplemented and hedged by diversity, needs to be better understood.

*Brush provides evidence and insights that should be examined by those who want to understand the dynamics of what is happening in the Great Plains.*



Young people  
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towns. But new  
individuals and  
families move in.

Telecomputing  
technologies  
open up entirely  
new economic  
development  
strategies for  
small towns.

6. *Community and economic development are strongly related and require mixed development strategies that use a wide range of tactics: business recruitment, business retention and expansion, new business start-ups, strengthening both the physical and social service infrastructure.*
7. The crucial role of *local civic leadership* — which includes government, community and business — and the ability of that leadership to identify and use outside resources need to be recognized and encouraged.
8. Churning, a major source of creativity in the economy, has a demographic equivalent. Young people move out of small towns. But new individuals and families move in; they have proven skills; they are self-sufficient; they develop roots in the community and make lasting contributions. Thus, *immigration may be as important as outmigration*. Factors such as population, age and gender count, but skills and experience, new thinking, adaptability and dedication to the community's quality of life may be the key. Churning in society and demography are as important to progress as churning in the economy.
9. Some of the same "tests" we apply to small towns need to be applied to metro areas. In many cases, we are likely to find the same behavior. Go to any metro high school, for example, and ask a random selection of students if they intend to remain in the area after graduation. A very large number will reply with a disdainful, "No way!" What we would learn from this type of exercise is that *many of the "problems" of small towns are not pathologies of rural America but are characteristics of human nature* (or at least characteristics of human behavior in American culture).
10. *Telecomputing technologies* open up entirely new economic development strategies for small towns. Examples include: the availability of high quality telecommunications services (including enhanced services such as call waiting, call forwarding and others that require digital switches); Federal Express, UPS and other 24-hour express mail services; an airport with scheduled commercial services within 60-90 minutes; good K-12 education; availability of *The Wall Street Journal* and *The New York Times*; five to ten movie screens within 60 minutes.
11. Small towns may gain more by recruiting highly skilled *knowledge workers* than by recruiting companies. Knowledge workers, including telecommuters, will bring contracts with them. They will be committed to the community. They will not require tax subsidies or other give-aways that many corporations require.



## Great Plains Special Studies and Papers

The following reports and working papers are available upon request from the Center for the New West:

- | #      | Title of Topic  |
|--------|---|
| 91-701 | Murphy, Colleen. <i>Survey of Successful Communities</i> . Denver: Center for the New West, January 1991.   |
| 91-702 | Quantic, Cathy. <i>The Great Plains, Canada and Mexico: Policy Issues in Rural Development and the Free Trade Agreement</i> . Denver: Center for the New West, August 1991.   |
| 91-703 | Shepard, John C. <i>Leadership Through Partnerships: The National Trust's Main Street Program as a Community Economic Development Tool</i> . Denver: Center for the New West, November 1991, and in <i>Urban Design and Preservation Quarterly</i> , Spring 1992. |
| 91-704 | Heartland Center for Leadership Development. <i>A Case Study of Superior, Nebraska</i> . Denver: Center for the New West, November 1991.  |
| 91-705 | Giannetti, Claudia. <i>The New Role of Librarians and Libraries in Economic Development</i> . Denver: Center for the New West, December 1991. <i>The Burlington Record</i> , January 30, 1992, and <i>The Fort Morgan Times</i> , January 27, 1992.               |
| 91-706 | Murphy, Colleen, Louis D. Higgs and John C. Shepard. <i>Roundtable on the Future of the Great Plains</i> . Denver: Center for the New West, December 1991.  |
| 92-707 | Murphy, Colleen. <i>Survey of the Future of the Plains</i> . Denver: Center for the New West, January 1992.   |
| 92-708 | Murphy, Colleen, John C. Shepard, and Louis D. Higgs. <i>A Case Study of Brush, Colorado</i> . Denver: Center for the New West, May 1992.   |
| 92-709 | Drapenstott, Mark and Tim R. Smith. <i>The Changing Great Plains Economy: New Directions for Economic Policy</i> . Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City, March 20, 1992.   |
| 92-710 | Shepard, John C., Colleen Boggs Murphy, Louis D. Higgs and Philip M. Burgess. <i>Overview of Change in America's New Economy: A report to The Ford Foundation and the Aspen Institute</i> . March 1992.   |
| 92-711 | Higgs, Louis D. and Claudia Giannetti. <i>The Economic Development Strategies of the Great Plains States</i> . Denver: Center for the New West, Forthcoming Summer 1992.  |
| 92-712 | Shepard, John C. <i>Redefining "Place": Community and Viability in the New Economy</i> . Denver: Center for the New West, Forthcoming Summer 1992. (Master's Thesis, University of Colorado at Denver).   |

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**A New Vision of the Heartland**  
**THE GREAT PLAINS  
IN TRANSITION**

# *A Case Study of Brush, Colorado*

## *Part Two*

*Prepared by the  
Center for the New West  
Denver, Colorado*

*Center Report 92-708  
May 1992*

*Center for the New West*

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Principal Authors:

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This report was funded in part by the State Rural Policy Program of the Aspen Institute and The Ford Foundation, the Denver Regional office of the US Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration and the Center for the New West.

A publication of the Center for the New West  
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Additional copies of this report, Great Plains Project special studies, and other Center publications are available at the above address.

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*Endpiece: Great Plains Special Studies and Papers*

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**Appendix A**

**Case Study Plan**





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October 4, 1991

James C. Collard  
City Administrator  
City of Brush!  
P.O. Box 363  
Brush!, Colorado 80723

Dear Jim:

As you know, the Center for the New West is conducting a major study of the economic vitality of the Great Plains, with a focus on small communities in the region. A centerpiece of this study will be *community case studies*, in-depth looks at economic transition and local leadership in selected communities.

In August 1991 we spent two days in Superior, Nebraska, conducting field interviews with more than 30 people in this town of about 2,300. Superior, which is approximately a 90-minute drive southeast of Grand Island and just a few miles from the Kansas border, is in one of the Plains counties which Frank and Deborah Popper believe should be turned into a "Buffalo Commons." In spite of this reported decline, it appeared to us that Superior is doing pretty well and would offer useful examples of a rural community transitioning from the "old economy" to the "new economy."

We would like our next community case study to be of Brush!. Considering that Morgan County is not a Popper "distressed" county, that Brush's population is almost twice that of Superior and that Brush! seems to have effected its own economic transformation over the past three years -- we think that a case study of Brush! would provide not only useful new information but also interesting contrasts with the Superior case study.

We would like to spend Thursday and Friday, November 7 and 8, conducting field interviews in Brush!. Six staff from the Center for the New West would be involved in the interviews: Andy Bane, director, special projects; Edie Dulacki, director, sponsored programs; Claudia Giannetti, research intern; Lou Higgs, senior fellow; Colleen Murphy, senior fellow; and John Shepard, senior associate.

James C. Collard  
October 4, 1991  
Page Two

The rest of the process would involve:

1. **Preparing a statistical and factual profile of Brush!** (including some Morgan County data). (See "Community Case Study Template," attached.)

Our lead for the profile would be John Shepard. Obviously, we would need considerable help from the city and county in gathering this information, and I hope that you could assign someone from the city to work with Shepard.

The data listed on the attachment are the *ideal*. We are interested in trends and as complete a picture as possible. We understand that not all the data sets will be available, and we do not want to create a lot of work for you. In other words, we'll take what can be easily assembled.

Our goal is to have the profile written by October 25.

2. **Setting up interviews with local people.** We would like to interview at least 30 people between about 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. on Thursday and 9 a.m. and 12 noon on Friday. I would like to come up and work out the scheduling details with you on October 14 or 15.
3. **Conducting the interviews.** We will arrive in Brush! around 2 p.m. on the 6th. As we discussed, it would be excellent background for the team if you could arrange a driving tour of the town, including the prison, the co-gen plant, the city farm, etc.

We will stay in Brush! the nights of the 6th and 7th and will make our own arrangements. (I would, however, appreciate your recommendation on a motel.)

It would also be very helpful if you could arrange for space downtown which we could use as our operations base -- an office (or conference room) where we could have team meetings, reflect on the interviews and, if necessary, conduct interviews. Ideally this space would be close to your office so that we could consult with you as needed.

4. **Writing the case study report.** Information from interviewees will be used in a way that will protect anonymity. If we want to use a quote from a particular individual, we will obtain that person's permission or attribute the quote to some generic category (e.g., "community leader").

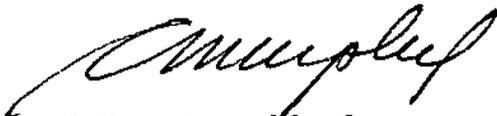
During the writing process, we may need to check back with you and with other people we interviewed to clarify and check the accuracy of information. We will also ask you to review the final draft for accuracy.

James C. Collard  
October 4, 1991  
Page Three

5. **Use of the case study report.** The Brush! case study will be an objective document that chronicles and analyzes the town's economic transition and local leadership. The case study will be part of our body of research on the Great Plains region and will be referenced in our published studies and reports. We may also publish a stand-alone summary of the case study. Center publications are widely disseminated to decision makers and opinion shapers nationwide.

We look forward to our forthcoming visit to Brush! and the opportunity to meet and visit with you and other members of the community.

Sincerely,



Colleen Boggs Murphy  
Senior Fellow, Policy Studies

enclosures

## COMMUNITY CASE STUDY TEMPLATE

### COMMUNITY PROFILE

#### 1. Community Profile: Factual Information.

*Activity: Gather statistical and factual information using traditional and nontraditional indicators.*

##### A. Geographic and Historic Background

##### B. Demographics (1970, 1980, 1985, 1990)

- (1) population, with components of change and percent of change
- (2) age
- (3) race/ethnicity
- (4) migration patterns and out-migration

##### C. Economics (1970, 1980, 1985, 1990)

- (1) employment and average annual unemployment
  - a. by sector and/or type of business/industry
  - b. underemployment
- (2) Income
  - a. personal income, per capita
  - b. family income
  - c. by sector and/or type of business/industry
- (3) residential, commercial, public new construction since 1987
- (4) town retail pull factor
- (5) net taxable sales by business/industry
- (6) total number of businesses by type
- (7) total number new businesses since 1987 by type; growth rate
- (8) total number business expansions since 1987 by type
- (9) historic and current economic base
- (10) average selling price of family homes/average rental

Case Study Template  
Page Two

D. Location

- (1) distance to interstate, rail lines, airports, universities, other towns, MSAs
- (2) market area for local businesses and service providers
- (3) commuting patterns

E. Infrastructure

- (1) housing stock, incl. availability for purchase and rental
- (2) public housing
- (3) telecommunications infrastructure (fiber optics, digital switching)
- (4) telecommunications use/applications (# of fax machines, cellular, etc)
- (5) cable t.v.
- (6) local radio, t.v. stations
- (7) local newspaper: publication frequency, circulation
- (8) other newspapers available locally
- (9) number local video stores
- (10) computer use and computer retail support
- (11) local information resources, incl. library and library use
- (12) health care facilities and services, incl. # doctors, dentists, etc.
- (13) public safety (police, fire, EMS)
- (14) schools/education (public, private, K-12, post-secondary)
- (15) water, sewer and solid waste

F. Assistance Resources

- (1) business management resources
- (2) small business assistance
- (3) business incubators
- (4) federal, state or other financial and technical assistance programs

G. Community Organization and Leadership

- (1) economic development organizations
  - a. public? private? other?
  - b. level of citizen participation
  - c. programs and priority activities?
- (2) service organizations
  - a. community programs
  - b. target groups (aged, youth)
- (3) other civic and/or leadership organizations

Case Study Template  
Page Three

- (4) city, county, state and federal elected and appointed officials
  - a. functions
  - b. leadership role
  - c. economic development role

**2. Community Profile: Survey Information**

*Activity: Gather factual and subjective information from field interviews*

**A. Business Information**

- (1) capital availability
- (2) local investment
- (3) local business financing
- (4) new markets; niche markets; regional, national and international markets
- (5) entrepreneurship
- (6) innovation: product, market, institutional arrangements
- (7) # and type of home-based businesses
- (8) business use of technology, esp. information technology
- (9) technology-driven businesses

**B. Quality of Life Information**

- (1) social stability and change
- (2) quality of facilities and services, incl.
  - a. health care
  - b. educational
  - c. community
  - d. city and county

**C. Community Organization and Leadership**

- (1) internal and areawide cooperation, networks, shared services
- (2) leadership
- (3) citizen participation
- (4) use of outside help
- (5) planning for the future
- (6) role of elected officials
- (7) role of substate regional organizations

**3. Community Profile: Illustrative Sources of Information**

- maps
- census data

Case Study Template  
Page Four

- regional planning district or assoc. of governments
- state department of labor
- state demographer
- state office of economic development
- state office of local government
- state department of education
- state or local historical society
- state library
- state universities
- state and/or local business directories
- city/county government
- local/area chamber of commerce
- local realtors
- county business patterns report
- telephone directories
- retail pull reports
- radio, t.v. and newspaper directories
- bank directories
- state statistical handbook

<b>FIELD INTERVIEWS</b>
-------------------------

**1. Field Interviews: Illustrative Sources of Information**

- editor or publisher
- local radio or t.v. manager
- school administrator
- school board member
- chamber of commerce president or director
- economic development association officer or director
- mayor or city council member
- city manager
- county commissioner
- librarian
- local planner or planning commissioner
- banker
- hospital administrator
- nursing home administrator
- librarian
- small business owners and managers
- farmer
- rancher
- cattle feeder

Case Study Template  
Page Five

- co-op manager
- minister
- plant manager
- police chief
- county sheriff

2. **Field Interviews: Format:** Each interview should be scheduled for **45-60 minutes** with **at least 60 minutes between interviews** to allow time for documentation, reflection and travel.
3. **Field Interviews: Sample Questionnaire:** Attached
4. **Field Interviews: Debriefing:** After all interviews are completed, interviewers will meet for 1-2 hours to compare notes, flag key issues and identify areas requiring follow-up.

<b>CASE STUDY REPORT</b>
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This process will include plugging holes in statistical and interview data, reviewing and analyzing field journals and writing up the case study in a manner similar to that outlined in Lou Higgs September 25, 1991 memorandum to the Heartland Center for Leadership Development.

**Appendix B**

**Field Study Interview Schedule**



Brush Case Study: Field Interviews - COMPLETED

INTERVIEWERS

		Bane	Dulacki	Giannetti	Higgs	Murphy	Shepard
<b>Thursday, November 7, 1991</b>							
07:30 AM	08:30 AM	Name 1 Harry Rieger Tourism board City council Empire Motel Location 1408 Edison Phone 842-2878	2 Craig Aarved Administrator EMC Hosp. 2400 Edison 842-5151	3 Larry Worth NECOG 231 Main St, #211 FORT MORGAN 867-9409	4 Steve Rhode Power Plant 14940 Cty Rd 24 842-5068	5 Ray Larson Eden Ezer Nursing Home 122 Hospital Rd 842-2881	6 Stan Olsen Const. Co. 1701 Edison 842-2873
09:30 AM	10:30 AM	Name 7 Darrell Wangelin Tastee Freeze 906 Edison 842-2933	8 Barb Bradehaw Sunset Manor Nursing Home 2200 W. Edison 842-2825	9 Jo Redmond Principal Elem. School 422 Ray 842-5139	10 Joe Medina PSCCo 300 Clayton 842-2816	11 Larry Mills Teacher High School 400 West St. 842-5171	12 Darlene Doane News Tribune Newspaper 109 Clayton 842-5518
11:30 AM	12:30 PM	Name 13 Frank Landis Co-Gen Plant 1500 S. Clayton 842-5131	14 Judy Gunnon Chairman Hoep. Board THE CARROLL 842-4884	15 Linda Grippin Exec Dir Housing Auth 418 Edison 842-5048	16 Bob Walker Livestock auction Feedlot 28601 Hwy 34 842-5115	17 Bill Laws City Council THE CARROLL 842-2348	18 Helen Watrous Philanthropist Joella-Needham Foundation THE CARROLL 842-2447
01:30 PM	02:30 PM	Name 19 Jerry Bills B&B Appliance 417 Edison 842-4145	20 Betty Herbst City Council THE CARROLL 842-2588	21 Robyn Laws Artist 20477 Cty Rd 13 FORT MORGAN 867-9531	22 Jerry Cox Grain Co. 1104 Edison 842-5121	23 Janet Boxer Scotch 'N Steer N. Colo. Ave. 842-5191	24 Dave Barnett Pepsi Cola Co 423 Ind Park Rd 842-5577
03:30 PM	04:30 PM	Name 25 Dave Oakeson Banker 1st Security 301 Clayton 842-2844	26 Larry Glauque President School Board THE CARROLL 867-3081	27 Lawrence Coughlin Mayor and Vet. 1414 Edison 842-4564	28 Harry Mohrlang Mohrlang Mfg. 1110 N. Cameron 842-5181	29 Rueben Ewert Radio Shack THE CARROLL 842-3159	30 Bill Spencer Newspaper FL Morgan Times 329 Main FORT MORGAN 867-5651
05:30 PM	06:30 PM	Name 31 Randy Mikelson Car Wash THE CARROLL 386-2288	32 Pat Herbst City Council THE CARROLL 842-4807	33 Theresa Guzman Teacher's Aide THE CARROLL 842-4564	34 Mona Wahlert Superior Livestock 1155 N. Colo. 842-5568	35 Al Parrish Parrish Antiques 309 Edison 842-5719	36 Phil Mortensen Farmer THE CARROLL 842-2018
<b>Friday, November 8, 1991</b>							
07:30 AM	08:30 AM	Name 37 Mark Jensen Farmers State Bank 200 Clayton 842-5101	38 Jeff Bauer Health Care Consultant THE CARROLL 847-3725	39 Dalaine Gagen Cottage Boutique 221 Clayton 842-4687	40 Chick Fleule Auto Parts/Hardware 842- 842-5178	41 Doug Johnson Superintendent Brush Schools 527 Ind Park Rd 842-5178	42 Jim Collard City Mgr City of Brush 800 Edison 842-5001
09:30 AM	10:30 AM	Name 43 Dr. Knappenburger High Plains Y.C. 901 Ind Park Rd 842-5181	44 Kent Gumina St. Dept. Local Affairs FORT MORGAN 867-4845	45 Ruby Hensen Librarian 500 Clayton 842-4596	46 Verna Morgan Chamber of Commerce THE CARROLL 842-2668	47 Cindy Erker County Clerk Courthouse FORT MORGAN 867-8202	48 Hugh Robinson KKGZ Radio 1518 Mill 842-5005
11:30 AM	12:30 PM	Name 49 Al Riscoewsky Pastor Assembly Church 1012 Eaton 842-4879	50 Maggie Goodwin Dahl Morgan County Com. Coll. MCC-FORT MORGAN 867-3081	51 Don Heer Mortician C.D. Director 222 Cameron 842-2821	52 Rudy Lucatero CPP Greenhouse 1500 S. Clayton 842-5157	53 Glen Babcock Co-op 405 E. Edison 842-6059	

**Appendix C**

**Critical Interview Topics**



Brush, Colorado, Case Study  
November 6-8, 1991

**TOPICS TO COVER IN INTERVIEWS**

**QUALITY OF LIFE**

**ECONOMY**

**NEW ECONOMY**

**LEADERSHIP/CITIZEN PARTICIPATION/VOLUNTEERISM**

**PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE**

**Appendix D**

**Field Study Interview Questions**

Brush, Colorado, Case Study  
November 6-8, 1991

**SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE**

**Quality of Life**

What do like about living here?

How is Brush different from others towns around here?

How do you think outsiders see Brush? How would they describe it to me?

If you think of your **community as a neighborhood** that extends beyond the Brush city limits, how would you describe that neighborhood? What are its boundaries?

What do you do for fun, recreation? Where do you go for which activities?

Tell me about the schools here. What's good about them? What's not so good?

What about other basic services and amenities? Are you satisfied with what's available here? Do you think the city's doing a good job? What about the county?

How would you rate the availability of health care here? How would you rate the quality?

Tell me about the housing in Brush. Are there plenty of units for sale? for rent? What's the range of housing quality?

What do you think are Brush's strong points? Weak points?

If you could change one thing about Brush, what would that be?

How has Brush changed in the past 10 years? Economically, socially, etc.

Brush, Colorado, Case Study  
November 6-8, 1991

**SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE**

**Economy**

How would you describe the economy here?

What kinds of changes have you noticed in the local economy in the past few years?

Is there a local economic development organization? What are its major activities? Are you involved? Why? (Why not?)

What kinds of economic development activities are people here involved in?

Does the community use outside resources (money, technical assistance) for development?

Has Brush been involved in any state, federal or other outside programs? E.g., Main Street, CDBG?

Where do people here shop for clothing? groceries? a car? Where do they go to the doctor?

Would it be easy to borrow money here to start a new business or expand one?

Is Brush a retail or service center for other towns around here? Which ones? For what products and services?

*[Tell me about your company? What does it do? What products and/or services do you offer? Are your markets changing? Do you have any marketing materials?]*

Brush, Colorado, Case Study  
November 6-8, 1991

## SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

### New Economy

Do a lot of people who live here commute to other places to work? Where? Why?

Do you know of any new businesses? What about expanding businesses? Are businesses here diversifying or changing the nature of their products or services? Are they changing their markets? Are they changing their marketing techniques?

What's the phone service like here? Do people use faxes? How many faxes in town?

Do people use computers here? The city? Schools? Businesses? Can you buy a computer here? What about computer supplies? Technical support? (If not, where?)

If you needed business assistance, where would you go for help? Are there people in town who could advise you or help you? Where would you go for help in conducting a marketing study?

What's the "information environment" here? Where do people get their news? Is it easy to find out about what's happening in the economy around the world? Do you hear about new business opportunities, etc?

Do you think Brush is part of the so-called global economy? Why? What local businesses have national or international markets?

Do you consider anyone in town an *entrepreneur* or an *innovator*? Why?

Are there any local businesses that you'd consider "high tech"? Which ones? Why?

Do you do anything cooperatively with neighboring communities? Joint council meetings? economic development coalitions? tourism? retail promotions? etc.?

Brush, Colorado, Case Study  
November 6-8, 1991

**SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE**

**Leadership/Citizen Participation/Volunteerism**

How do people who live here invest in the town? Do they give money, their time, ideas?

Have there been any recent volunteer projects that you think are particularly noteworthy?

Have there been any recent community improvement projects? How did they happen? Who paid for the improvements?

Where do new ideas for community projects and activities come from?

Do people generally get involved in projects, activities, decisions? How?

If you wanted to get something done here, who would you need behind you?

Who's usually involved in community decisionmaking?

How do newcomers get involved in what's going on?

Are the service clubs here active? What kind of role do they play in this community?

Are your elected officials part of the leadership here?

Brush, Colorado, Case Study  
November 6-8, 1991

**SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE**

**Planning for the Future**

Where does Brush's future lie?

What do you think Brush will be like in 10 years?

What do you think Brush **should** be like in 10 years?

Is this vision of the future is shared by others in town?

Is anybody here thinking about, planning for the town's future? Who? What are they doing? How do they hope to accomplish these plan's?

Is there an economic development plan or strategy? Who's responsible for it? Who's making sure that it happens?

How do you see the state's role in this? What do you need from them?

What about the city's role? the county's role?



## Great Plains Special Studies and Papers

The following reports and working papers are available upon request from the Center for the New West:

- | #                  | <u>Title or Topic</u>  |
|--------------------|--|
| 91-701             | Murphy, Colleen. <i>Survey of Successful Communities</i> . Denver: Center for the New West. January 1991.  |
| 91-702             | Quantic, Cathy. <i>The Great Plains, Canada and Mexico: Policy Issues in Rural Development and the Free Trade Agreement</i> . Denver: Center for the New West. August 1991.  |
| 91-703             | Shepard, John C. <i>Leadership Through Partnerships: The National Trust's Main Street Program as a Community Economic Development Tool</i> . Denver: Center for the New West. November 1991; and in <i>Urban Design and Preservation Quarterly</i> , Spring 1992.                                |
| 91-704             | Heartland Center for Leadership Development. <i>A Case Study of Superior, Nebraska</i> . Denver: Center for the New West. November 1991.   |
| 91-705             | Giannetti, Claudia. <i>The New Role of Librarians and Libraries in Economic Development</i> . Denver: Center for the New West. December 1991; <i>The Burlington Record</i> , January 30, 1992; and <i>The Fort Morgan Times</i> , January 27, 1992.  |
| 91-706 &<br>92-707 | Murphy, Colleen, Louis D. Higgs and John C. Shepard. <i>Survey of the Future of the Plains</i> . Denver: Center for the New West. January 1992.  |
| 92-708             | Murphy, Colleen, John C. Shepard and Louis D. Higgs. <i>A Case Study of Brush, Colorado</i> . Denver: Center for the New West. May 1992.   |
| 92-709             | Drabcnstott, Mark and Tim R. Smith. <i>The Changing Great Plains Economy: New Directions for Economic Policy</i> . Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City. March 20, 1992.  |
| 92-710             | Shepard, John C., Colleen Boggs Murphy, Louis D. Higgs and Philip M. Burgess. <i>A New Vision of the Heartland: The Great Plains in Transition</i> , A report to The Ford Foundation and the Aspen Institute, Denver: Center for the New West, March 1992.                                       |
| 92-711             | Higgs, Louis D. and Claudia Giannetti. <i>The Economic Development Strategies of the Great Plains States</i> . Denver: Center for the New West. June 1992.   |
| 92-712             | Shepard, John C. <i>Redefining "Place": Community and Vitality in the New Economy</i> . Denver: Center for the New West. Forthcoming Summer 1992. (Master's Thesis, University of Colorado at Denver).   |
| 92-713             | Shepard, John C., Matthew Muehlbauer, Louis D. Higgs and Colleen Murphy. <i>Measuring Distress: Economic Indicators and the Great Plains</i> . A report to the Economic Development Administration of the U.S. Department of Commerce, Denver: Center for the New West, Forthcoming Summer 1992. |