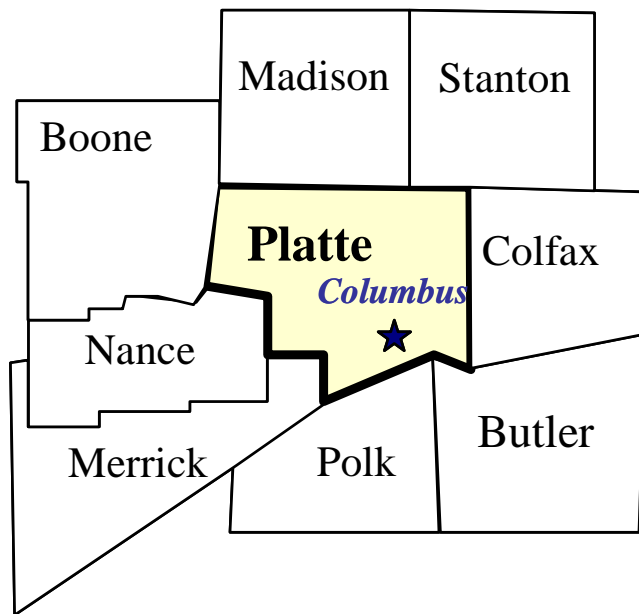


Labor Supply Factors and Labor Availability for the Columbus (Platte County) Labor Area



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Executive Summary

The information provided in this report indicates that a prospective new employer providing job opportunities with competitive wages and benefits and offering career opportunities would be a welcome addition to the employment base in Columbus and Platte County. The response to such employment opportunities would be substantial, and as this report shows, there is a sizeable labor force and population base living within the Columbus Labor Area. Some of the pertinent findings of the report include:

- Population in the Columbus Labor Area (Platte County plus the eight contiguous counties) totaled 115,362 people in 2005, with the Platte County population totaling 31,262. Population in Platte County fell 1.3 percent from 2000 through 2005, compared to a population decline of 1.1 percent for the nine-county Columbus Labor Area as a whole.
- The labor force for the Columbus Labor Area totaled 65,287 in 2005, with 62,907 local residents employed in jobs either within or outside the area. A total of 54,524 persons were employed in non-farm wage and salary jobs located within the area. These data suggest that a substantial number of residents of the Columbus Labor Area were commuting out of the area for employment.
- The number of people who lived in Platte County that were employed totaled 16,686 in 2005, and there were 17,065 persons employed in non-farm wage and salary jobs within the county. This indicates residents of surrounding counties are commuting into Platte County.
- Average annual wages for all non-farm wage and salary employees in the Columbus Labor Area were \$5,188 less than the Nebraska average in 2005, with Platte County average annual salaries \$3,631 less than the state average.

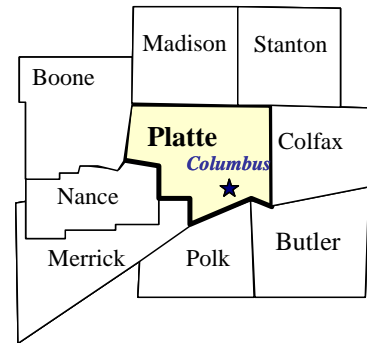
The basic conclusion of this report, which follows from the data and analysis presented, is that the Columbus Labor Area and Platte County would be able to provide a significant number of dedicated and skilled workers to meet the needs of additional employers offering competitive wages and benefits. While this report has not estimated a precise number of people that may be available for a prospective new employer in the Columbus area, it is anticipated that if attractive working conditions with competitive wages and employee benefits were offered, a prospective new employer would be able to select their workforce from a substantial pool of applicants.

Labor Supply Factors and Labor Availability for the Columbus (Platte County) Labor Area

This report presents selected labor-related and demographic data that provide insights into the labor supply situation in Columbus (Platte County) and the surrounding area.

In reviewing the data presented in this report, it will be evident that the Columbus Labor Area has a sizeable pool of workers to provide for the labor requirements of additional employers paying competitive wages in the area, both in the near term and over the long run. Data presented in this report includes tables on labor force, employment, and population for Platte County and for the surrounding counties that make up the potential laborshed area for Columbus. Figure One includes a map outlining the geographic area which has been defined as the Columbus Labor Area.

Figure 1
Columbus Labor Area



An important resource for new or expanding businesses is a readily available supply of workers. Whether an employer requires 5 or 500 workers, they need to have confidence there will be a sufficient number of workers available to meet their labor requirements. This report is provided as a key analytical tool to identify and quantify the number and selected characteristics of workers available in the Columbus Labor Area.

Available labor supply is defined as the number of persons who would potentially apply for employment when a job becomes available. Potential workers are categorized into two groups; those currently employed who would consider other employment opportunities and those who do not currently have a job.

One factor contributing to the available supply of workers is the willingness of workers already employed to change jobs. Factors influencing this decision are related to wages, fringe benefits, hours, and working conditions. Generally, workers are more inclined to change jobs when the wages and benefits for the potential new job are better and/or when they are optimistic about the economy.

Factors contributing to the available supply of people without jobs include the unemployment rate, labor force participation and migration. To be classified as unemployed, an individual must have been actively looking for work in the last four weeks, unless they were expecting recall from a layoff or waiting to start a job within 30 days.

There are also potential workers that are classified as not presently in the labor force. These individuals may not be participating in the labor force as employed or unemployed workers for various reasons. They may be unable to work because of school or family

responsibilities or they may have an illness that has prevented them from becoming part of the labor force. There may also be workers who have not been able to find employment in the past and have become discouraged or are no longer actively seeking employment because they perceive there are not attractive job opportunities available in the area. Retired persons are also classified as not in the labor force, although this population group often can provide substantial labor resources for selected business operations. Despite the fact that some of the people not currently in the labor force are not now actively seeking employment, many of these individuals would take a job if one became available.

Population migration is another factor that affects the available labor supply of potential workers who are not presently employed (and may not be seeking work within the local labor market). Persons without jobs and who perceive that there are not job opportunities available locally are the most likely to leave (migrate out) the area for employment opportunities elsewhere.

Labor Force and Employment

Table One provides data showing labor force and employment trends for the Columbus Labor Area and for Platte County for selected years 2001 to 2005. The data in Table One (Part A and Part B) provide two alternate measures of employment for two distinct areas. Data presented in Part A of Table One include labor force, unemployment, employment, and non-farm wage and salary employment data for the entire Columbus Labor Area (see Figure 1). As these data indicate, both the total labor force and total employment for the laborshed area as a whole have increased, with the area labor force growing by 2.8 percent between 2001 and 2005 and total employment growing by 2.4 percent during the same period.

Table One
Labor Force and Employment, Columbus Labor Area
2001-2005

Part A
Labor Force and Employment
Columbus Labor Area^(a), 2001-2005

(Place of Resid.)	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	% Chg. 2001-2005
Labor Force^(b)	63,525	63,629	65,546	65,635	65,287	2.8
Unemployment (##)	2,067	2,452	2,690	2,575	2,380	15.1
Unemployment Rate	3.3	3.9	4.1	3.9	3.6	(N/A)
Employment	61,458	61,177	62,856	63,060	62,907	2.4
(Place of Work)						
Nonfarm Employment^(c)	53,344	52,937	54,127	54,086	54,524	2.2

Table One -- Continued
Part B
Labor Force and Employment by Industry
Platte County

(Place of Resid.)	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	% Chg. 2001-2005
Labor Force^(b)	17,558	17,331	17,165	17,199	17,336	-1.3
Unemployment (##)	621	765	830	751	650	4.7
Unemployment Rate	3.5	4.4	4.8	4.4	3.7	(N/A)
Employment	16,937	16,566	16,335	16,448	16,686	-1.5
(Place of Work)						
Nonfarm Employment^(c)	17,619	17,083	16,572	16,588	17,065	-3.1
Manufacturing	6,002	5,605	5,096	4,984	5,171	-13.8
Durable Goods	4,948	4,599	4,285	4,125	4,017	-18.8
Non-Durable Goods	1,055	1,006	812	860	1,154	9.4
Mining & Construction	947	975	942	912	908	-4.1
Total Trade	2,611	2,509	2,419	2,494	2,646	1.3
Wholesale Trade	570	554	507	569	539	-5.4
Retail Trade	2,041	1,954	1,912	1,926	2,107	3.2
Trans., Warehousing & Utilities	578	526	467	473	423	-26.8
Information	194	210	196	183	180	-7.2
Financial Activities	607	633	690	700	706	16.3
Prof. & Business Services	884	914	965	975	1,172	32.6
Education & Health Services	1,247	1,302	1,398	1,447	1,521	22.0
Leisure and Hospitality	1,323	1,251	1,273	1,277	1,237	-6.5
Other Services, except Public	683	615	618	624	626	-8.3
Total Government	2,543	2,543	2,508	2,519	2,475	-2.7
Federal Government	133	131	127	118	119	-10.5
State Government	114	113	114	115	119	4.4
Local Government	2,296	2,300	2,267	2,287	2,237	-2.6

^(a) The Columbus labor area includes Platte County and the contiguous counties (Boone, Butler, Colfax, Madison, Merrick, Nance, Polk, and Stanton).

^(b) The labor force data are measured based on the county of residence, irrespective of the county of employment.

^(c) The Non Agricultural Employment data are for wage and salary employment and are based on the place (county) where the individual is employed, irrespective of the county of residence.

Source: Nebraska Department of Labor, Labor Market Information, (<ftp://ftp.dol.state.ne.us/lmi/lfwf/>).

The second employment measure presented for the Columbus Labor Area, non-farm wage and salary employment, increased from 53,344 in 2001 to 54,524 in 2005, an increase of 2.2 percent. In the case of the labor force data (labor force, unemployment and employment), the respective measures are based on the county of residence. The non-farm wage and salary employment data measures are based on the county of employment, irrespective of the place of residence of the workers.

The labor force and employment measures presented for Platte County (Part B of Table One) indicate the total labor force in the county declined by 1.3 percent between 2001 and 2005, with total employment (people residing in Platte County, irrespective of their county of employment) declining by 1.5 percent during this period. It is also of interest to note that unemployment increased by 4.7 percent, from 621 in 2001 to 650 in 2005, recording an unemployment rate of 3.7 percent in 2005.

As previously noted, the second employment measure presented for Platte County, non-farm wage and salary employment, is based on the county where the person is employed irrespective of their county of residence. Non-farm wage and salary employment in Platte County decreased by 3.1 percent between 2001 and 2005. The data presented in Table One show that the largest declines in non-farm wage and salary employment in Platte County occurred between 2001 and 2003 in the manufacturing (decline of 906 or 15.1 percent), trade (decline of 192 or 7.4 percent) and transportation, warehousing and utilities (decline of 111 or 19.2 percent) sectors.

The data presented in Table One also show that the fastest growing employment sector in Platte County during the 2001-2005 review period was the Professional and Business Services Sector, recording a 32.6 percent increase between 2001 and 2005. Other economic sectors experiencing significant growth in employment between 2001 and 2005 include the Education and Health Services (22.0 percent) and Financial Activities sectors (16.3 percent). In the case of the government sector, employment in the State Government sector grew by 4.4 percent while local government employment declined by 2.6 percent and Federal Government employment declined by 10.5 percent.

Further review of the employment data reported for the Columbus Labor Area (Part A of Table One) and for Platte County (Part B of Table One) indicates that for both areas there were differences between the non-farm wage and salary employment reported in the areas and the total employment of persons living in the respective areas. In the case of the entire Columbus Labor Area, non-farm wage and salary employment was reported to be 54,524 in 2005, which was significantly less (8,383) than the reported total employment of persons living within the nine-county Columbus labor area. Recalling that non-farm wage and salary employment is based on the county of employment while the total employment data is based on the county of residence helps explain how this can occur. It is obvious that a number of people living within the nine-county Columbus Labor Area work outside of the area and commute to other areas for employment.

In the case of Platte County, the reverse situation is evident. Total employment of persons living in Platte County (irrespective of their county of employment) was 16,686 in 2005, which was 379 less than the 17,065 non-farm wage and salary jobs within the county. These data suggest a number of workers are commuting into Platte County for employment on a regular basis. Also, the total number of reported employed people living in Platte County includes those who are self employed as well as those employed in agriculture (not including farm proprietors). This means the difference between total employment and non-farm wage and salary jobs (379) likely understates the number of workers commuting into Platte County.

Included in Table Two are additional employment data for 2005, showing the deviations between total employment and non-farm wage and salary employment for the Columbus Labor Area as a whole and for each county within the area. For the Columbus Labor Area as a whole, the total employment of area residents (62,907), irrespective of their place of employment, is 8,383 greater than the non-farm wage and salary employment

working within the area. It appears that much of this difference may be accounted for by business and farm operators (proprietors), the farm employment shown in the table shows that 7,092 people were employed in agriculture in 2004, the last year that agricultural employment data were available. It is important to note, however, that for Nebraska as a whole, approximately 32 percent of farm operators also have a full-time job off the farm and 49 percent work off the farm, either in full or part-time employment. Therefore, it is likely that a significant number of people are commuting out of the area for employment.

Table Two
Labor Force, Employment and Non-Farm Wage and Salary Employment,
Columbus Labor Area, 2005

	Labor Force (2005) ^(a)	Total Employment (2005) ^(a)	Non-Farm Wage & Salary Employment (2005) ^(b)	Total Employment Minus NF W&S Employment	Agricultural Employment (2004) ^(c)
Platte County	17,336	16,686	17,065	-379	1,185
Boone County	3,238	3,128	1,789	1,339	887
Butler County	4,758	4,587	2,283	2,304	832
Colfax County	5,993	5,825	4,886	939	783
Madison County	20,673	19,845	22,818	-2,973	865
Merrick County	4,349	4,190	2,149	2,041	706
Nance County	2,051	1,971	849	1,122	539
Polk County	3,118	3,019	1,365	1,654	648
Stanton County	3,771	3,656	1,320	2,336	647
Columbus Labor Area	65,287	62,907	54,524	8,383	7,092

(a) Labor force and employment data are measured based on the county of residence.

(b) Non Agricultural Employment data are for wage and salary employment and are based on the place (county) where the individual is employed, irrespective of the the county of residence.

(c) Agricultural employment data are for 2004.

Source: Labor Data - Nebraska Department of Labor, Labor Market Information, (<ftp://dol.state.ne.us/lmi/lfwf/>).

Farm Employment Data - U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, Regional Accounts Data WEB Site (bea.doc.gov/bea/regional/data.htm).

Further review of the data presented in Table Two provides an indication of the commuting patterns for the counties within the Columbus Labor Area. It is evident that persons from other counties are commuting into both Madison and Platte counties for employment. For the other counties within the area, however, a significant percentage of the employed people are commuting out of the counties for employment. In the case of Stanton County, for example, the number of employed persons living in the county is 2,336 greater than total non-farm wage and salary employment within the county. It is most likely that a significant number of people commuting out of Stanton County for employment are traveling to Madison County (Norfolk) to work. Other counties where there are indications of significant commuting out of the county for employment include, Boone, Butler, Colfax, Merrick, Nance, and Polk counties. The data presented in Table Two suggest that the creation of additional jobs within the Columbus Labor Area and Platte County would provide opportunities for area residents to work closer to their places of residences instead of having to commute to other areas for employment.

The number of non-farm wage and salary workers in the Columbus Labor Area is shown by major industry sector and by county in Table Three. The reader is reminded that non-farm wage and salary workers are counted in the county where they are employed. Individuals with more than one job are counted at each establishment (and in each county) where they work. Table Three provides information about the number of workers in the labor area, by county and major industry category.

Table Three
Non-Farm Wage and Salary Employment, by Industry Sector
Columbus Labor Area, by County, 2005

County	Contr. & Mining		Trans.	Trade	Financial		Govt.	Total NF
	Manufact.	Mining	Whr. & Ut.		Activities	Services		W. & S. Emp
Platte County	5,171	908	423	2,646	706	4,736	2,475	17,065
Boone County	83*	31	60	464	96	446*	609	1,789
Butler County	543	68	71*	377*	97	503	623	2,282
Colfax County	2,153*	92	238	685	142	910*	666	4,886
Madison County	4,708	912	717	4,577	850	7,276	3,778	22,818
Merrick County	236*	186	74	415	113	530*	594	2,148
Nance County	7*	17	23*	119*	53	249*	381	849
Polk County	18*	92	47*	245*	78	391*	494	1,365
Stanton County	413*	96	32*	166*	40	253*	320	1,320
Total Labor Area	13,332	2,402	1,685	9,694	2,175	15,294	9,940	54,522
Nebraska	101,514	47,535	52,323	147,712	64,533	360,967	161,267	935,851

	Percent of Total NonFarm Wage & Salary Employment							
	Manufact.	Contr. & Mining	Trans.	Whr. & Ut.	Trade	Financial	Services	Govt.
Total Labor Area	24.5	4.4	3.1	17.8	4.0	28.1	18.2	100.0
Nebraska	10.8	5.1	5.6	15.8	6.9	38.6	17.2	100.0

*Note: Employment estimated for county sectors where data have been withheld. Estimates noted with *.

Source: Nebraska Department of Labor, Labor Market Information, (ftp.dol.state.ne.us/lmi/lfwf/).

In addition to displaying the number of workers by major industry sector, Table Three also compares the percentage distribution of workers by industry in the Columbus Labor Area with the distribution for the State of Nebraska. As these data show, the industry distribution of employment for the Columbus Labor Area is significantly different than that for Nebraska as a whole.

The most significant deviations between Nebraska and the Columbus Labor Area occur in the Manufacturing sector employment, with 24.5 percent of non-farm wage and salary workers in the Columbus area employed in that sector, compared to 10.8 percent for Nebraska. In the case of the Services sector, only 28.1 percent of non-farm wage and salary workers in the Columbus Labor Area are employed, compared to 38.6 percent for Nebraska as a whole.

Table Four provides data showing labor cost comparisons, by county, for all wage and salary workers for the Columbus Labor Area. It is important to remember that the wage and salary employment is reported by county of employment, and does not provide an indication of the average weekly and annual wage for residents of the respective counties. Obviously, labor cost is an important consideration in any analysis of the labor availability in an area. Pay data for workers covered by unemployment insurance laws in Nebraska are the source of the labor cost information. Average annual pay is calculated by dividing the total payroll for wage and salary workers for 2005 by the number of employees.

A review of the data in Table Four (A) indicates that average annual salaries in Platte County (\$28,791 for all wage and salary employees for all industries) are slightly higher than for the Columbus Labor Area as a whole and most of the other counties that make up the area but are significantly less than the state average. Average annual salaries for the Columbus Labor Area (\$27,234) were \$5,188 (16.0 percent) less than the Nebraska average, with Platte County average annual salaries \$3,631 (11.2 percent) less. These data suggest, of course, there would be a positive labor supply response in Platte County to the creation of additional employment opportunities with competitive wages and benefits.

Table Four
Part A
Average Annual Pay and Average Weekly Wages of Wage and Salary Workers,
for All Industries, by County, and Nebraska, 2005

County	Average Employment	Average Weekly Wages	Average Annual Wages
Platte County	17,248	\$554	\$28,791
Boone County	1,968	\$437	\$22,729
Butler County	2,288	\$467	\$24,298
Colfax County	4,816	\$494	\$25,708
Madison County	22,681	\$520	\$27,017
Merrick County	2,073	\$469	\$24,409
Nance County	942	\$392	\$20,394
Polk County	1,393	\$463	\$24,078
Stanton County	1,319	\$782	\$40,687
Columbus Labor Area	54,728	\$522	\$27,234
Nebraska	892,397	\$624	\$32,422

Table Four -- Continued
Part B
Average Annual Pay of Wage and Salary Workers, by Industry Group
Columbus Labor Area, by County, and Nebraska, 2005

County	All Goods			All Service				
	Producing	Manf.	Oth Good-Prd	Providing	Trans & Util	Trade	Financ Acts	Oth Svc-Prv
Platte County	\$34,831	\$35,987	\$30,382	\$22,310	\$31,350	\$20,903	\$29,457	\$21,258
Boone County	\$26,840	\$30,190	\$25,797	\$19,300	\$26,380	\$21,345	\$29,167	\$13,482
Butler County	\$26,459	\$27,305	\$23,182	\$21,480	\$24,584	\$20,079	\$27,007	\$21,315
Colfax County	\$29,007	-D-	-D-	\$21,670	\$26,918	\$23,286	\$25,178	\$18,436
Madison County	\$32,116	\$33,635	\$25,959	\$23,862	\$34,295	\$24,381	\$28,804	\$21,752
Merrick County	\$30,720	\$28,663	\$32,550	\$22,068	\$31,334	\$22,716	\$24,895	\$18,752
Nance County	\$21,100	-D-	-D-	\$17,136	\$25,187	\$12,534	\$36,337	-D-
Polk County	\$28,601	\$14,596	\$29,874	\$22,856	\$33,425	\$28,165	\$23,810	-D-
Stanton County	\$64,711	-D-	-D-	\$21,746	\$25,205	\$27,969	\$34,908	-D-
Nebraska	\$35,478	\$36,569	\$33,575	\$31,050	\$35,959	\$26,423	\$44,102	\$29,048

Sources: US Department of Labor, Quarterly Census of Employment & Wages (<http://www.bls.gov/cew/>) and Nebraska Department of Labor, Labor Market Information (www.dol.state.ne.us).

-D-: Data withheld by U.S. Department of Labor.

Table Four (B) provides average annual wages, by county and by major industry sector, for the counties that make up the Columbus Labor Area. As these data indicate, the highest average annual wages in the area are for wage and salary workers employed in Stanton County. The average annual wages for all wage and salary workers (working) in Stanton County were \$40,687 in 2005 which was \$13,453 (49.4 percent) more than the average for the Columbus Labor Area as a whole, and \$8,265 (25.5 percent) greater than the Nebraska average. A review of the industry specific data for average annual wages for Stanton County indicates that the high average annual wage results from the extremely high average wage in the goods producing sector which includes the manufacturing, construction, and natural resource sectors. It is assumed that this high average wage results from the relatively high earning of workers at the NUCOR steel mill which is located in Stanton County.

Commuting Patterns

Table Five provides data from the 2000 Census of Population showing commuting patterns for workers living in the Columbus Labor Area. As the data in Table Five (Part A) indicate, a significant number (and percentage) of workers in the area commuted outside of their county of residence for employment. Data for Platte County indicate that 1,383, or 8.6 percent of the employed workers, commuted to other counties for employment. For all of the other counties in the Columbus Labor Area, the percentage of commuters was greater than for Platte County, and in most cases substantially greater. In the case of Stanton County, 2,060, or 62.6 percent of employed workers commuted out of their county of residence for employment. Other counties with a high percentage of employed workers commuting to other counties for employment include Merrick County (45.1 percent), Butler County (43.2 percent), Polk County (41.8 percent), Nance County (39.9 percent), and Colfax County, with 29.8 percent of employed workers commuting out of their county of residence for employment.

Table Five
Commuting Data for Workers in the Columbus Labor Area

Part A
Commuting Outside County

County	Worked Outside County	
	Number	Percent
Platte County	1,383	8.6
Boone County	631	21.4
Butler County	1,859	43.2
Colfax County	1,548	29.8
Madison County	1,599	9.1
Merrick County	1,790	45.1
Nance County	744	39.9
Polk County	1,151	41.8
Stanton County	2,060	62.6

Part B
Commuting Times of Workers

County	Less Than 10 Minutes		10 - 19 Minutes		20 - 29 Minutes		30 - 44 Minutes		45 + Minutes	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Platte County	5,477	36.4	6,459	42.9	1,606	10.7	845	5.6	672	4.5
Boone County	1,154	43.8	724	27.5	310	11.8	214	8.1	233	8.8
Butler County	1,154	29.3	896	22.8	734	18.7	566	14.4	585	14.9
Colfax County	1,821	37.9	1,411	29.4	681	14.2	432	9	459	9.6
Madison County	6,372	37.9	7,342	43.7	1,404	8.4	960	5.7	720	4.3
Merrick County	1,162	31.2	934	25.1	608	16.3	712	19.1	304	8.2
Nance County	546	32.2	362	21.3	277	16.3	281	16.6	231	13.6
Polk County	844	33.5	695	27.6	391	15.5	385	15.3	207	8.2
Stanton County	656	22.3	1,169	39.7	565	19.2	335	11.4	221	7.5
Columbus Labor Area	19,186	35.5	19,992	36.9	6,576	12.2	4,730	8.7	3,632	6.7
Nebraska	214,676	25.8	318,145	38.2	161,468	19.4	88,452	10.6	49,940	6.0

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Census of Population, 2000*.

Table Five (Part B) provides further data illustrating the willingness of workers in the area to travel for employment. For the Columbus Labor Area as a whole, there were 8,362 workers in 2000, or 15.5 percent of residents employed outside of their home, which traveled 30 or more minutes commuting to their place of employment. In the case of Nance County, 30.2 percent traveled 30 or more minutes to their place of employment, while for Butler County the workers traveling 30 or more minutes accounted for 29.3 percent. For Nebraska as a whole, the comparable percentage (traveling 30 or more minutes for employment) was 16.6 percent.

Population Trends

The data provided in Table Six show population trends for the Columbus Labor Area, by county, and for Nebraska for the 1950–2005 period. As these data indicate, the population of the Columbus Labor Area was 115,362 in 2005. The Columbus Labor Area population grew by 9.9 percent from 1950 to 2000 and declined slightly (1.1 percent) from 2000 to 2005. Population in Platte County totaled 31,262 in 2005, having grown by 59.0 percent from 1950 to 2000 before declining 1.3 percent between 2000 and 2005. During the latest Census decade (1990–2000), Platte County population increased by 6.2 percent, compared to the increase for the Columbus Labor Area as a whole of 5.0 percent and to the State rate of growth of 8.4 percent.

Table Six
Population in the Columbus Labor Area, by County, and Nebraska
Selected Years, 1950 - 2005

COUNTY	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2005	% Chg. 1950-2000	% Chg. 2000-05
Nebraska	1,325,510	1,411,330	1,485,333	1,569,825	1,578,417	1,711,263	1,758,787	29.1	2.8
Platte County	19,910	23,992	26,508	28,852	29,820	31,662	31,262	59.0	-1.3
Boone County	10,721	9,134	8,190	7,391	6,667	6,259	5,772	-41.6	-7.8
Butler County	11,432	10,312	9,461	9,330	8,601	8,767	8,720	-23.3	-0.5
Colfax County	10,010	9,595	9,498	9,890	9,139	10,441	10,433	4.3	-0.1
Madison County	24,338	25,145	27,402	31,382	32,655	35,226	35,488	44.7	0.7
Merrick County	8,812	8,363	8,751	8,945	8,042	8,204	8,066	-6.9	-1.7
Nance County	6,512	5,635	5,142	4,740	4,275	4,038	3,666	-38.0	-9.2
Polk County	8,044	7,210	6,468	6,320	5,675	5,639	5,421	-29.9	-3.9
Stanton County	6,387	5,783	5,758	6,549	6,244	6,455	6,534	1.1	1.2
Columbus Area	106,166	105,169	107,178	113,399	111,118	116,691	115,362	9.9	-1.1

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Census of Population, 1950-2000* and Annual Population Estimates, 2005.

Table Seven shows the age distribution of the resident population. Obviously, the age distribution of the population is important when evaluating the potential labor supply in an area. A key variable is the number of people in the working age populations of the counties making up the Columbus Labor Area. In 2005, there were 16,098 people in Platte County between the ages of 25 and 64, which represented 51.5 percent of the total population, compared to 49.9 percent of the population for the Columbus Labor Area as a whole and 51.3 percent of the Nebraska population in this age range.

Table Seven
Age Characteristics of the Population, Columbus Labor Area,
by County, and Nebraska, 2005

COUNTY	0 - 14		15 - 24		25 - 44		45 - 64		65 - Older		Median Age
	Number	% ^(a)	Number	% ^(a)	Number	% ^(a)	Number	% ^(a)	Number	% ^(a)	
Platte County	6,722	21.5	4,386	14.0	7,976	25.5	8,122	26.0	4,056	13.0	37.6
Boone County	1,018	17.6	853	14.8	1,121	19.4	1,570	27.2	1,210	21.0	44.0
Butler County	1,663	19.1	1,154	13.2	2,040	23.4	2,334	26.8	1,529	17.5	41.5
Colfax County	2,379	22.8	1,455	13.9	2,402	23.0	2,425	23.2	1,772	17.0	37.9
Madison County	7,419	20.9	5,340	15.0	9,108	25.7	8,580	24.2	5,041	14.2	44.9
Merrick County	1,551	19.2	1,048	13.0	1,835	22.7	2,185	27.1	1,447	17.9	42.0
Nance County	681	18.6	493	13.4	748	20.4	1,017	27.7	727	19.8	43.4
Polk County	1,025	18.9	644	11.9	1,173	21.6	1,469	27.1	1,110	20.5	43.2
Stanton County	1,347	20.6	943	14.4	1,698	26.0	1,737	26.6	809	12.4	37.5
Columbus Area	23,805	20.6	16,316	14.1	28,101	24.4	29,439	25.5	17,701	15.3	41.2
Nebraska	355,732	20.2	266,513	15.2	473,399	26.9	429,593	24.4	233,550	13.3	36.2

^(a) Percent of total population for each respective area.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Population Estimates, by Age, 2005*.

Table Eight provides information showing population, the natural increase (births minus deaths) and net migration for the 1990-2000 period for Nebraska, for Platte County and for the Columbus Labor Area. As these data show, the Columbus Labor Area as a whole had a small rate of net in-migration during the Census decade of the 1990s, while Platte, Boone, Nance, and Stanton counties experienced net out-migration. As indicated in the table, net in-migration for the Columbus Labor Area as a whole accounted for population growth of 681 people during the decade, contributing a population increase equal to only 0.6 percent of the 1990 population. In the case of Platte County, net out-migration during the 1990s totaled 373 people, or 1.3 percent of the 1990 population.

Table Eight
Population, Births, Deaths and Migration, Columbus Labor Area,
by County, 1990-2000

County	Population		1990 - 1999			Net Migration, 1990 - 2000	
	1990	2000	Births	Deaths	Nat. Incr.	Number	% 1990 Pop.
Platte County	29,820	31,662	4,606	2,391	2,215	-373	-1.25
Boone County	6,667	6,259	784	759	25	-433	-6.49
Butler County	8,601	8,767	1,060	1,085	-25	191	2.22
Colfax County	9,139	10,441	1,449	1,092	357	945	10.34
Madison County	32,655	35,226	5,477	3,418	2,059	512	1.57
Merrick County	8,042	8,204	1,067	967	100	62	0.77
Nance County	4,275	4,038	501	549	-48	-189	-4.42
Polk County	5,675	5,639	653	799	-146	110	1.94
Stanton County	6,244	6,455	825	470	355	-144	-2.31
Columbus Labor Area	111,118	116,691	16,422	11,530	4,892	681	0.61
Nebraska	1,578,385	1,711,263	235,210	150,599	84,611	48,267	3.06

Sources: Population (1990, 2000) - U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census of Population, 1990, 2000;

Births, Deaths, Natural Increase - Nebraska Department of Health; Migration - computed using population and vital statistics data.

Table Nine provides information showing population, the natural increase (births minus deaths) and net migration for the 2000-2005 period. As these data show, the Columbus Labor Area experienced significant net out-migration during this more recent five-year period. As indicated in the table, out-migration for the Columbus Labor Area as a whole accounted for population decline of 3,917 during the 2000-2005 period, contributing to a population decrease equal to 3.4 percent of the 2000 population. In the case of Platte County, net out-migration during this five-year period was 1,326, or 4.2 percent of the 2000 population. These data suggest that, a portion of the local labor force viewed employment opportunities in other parts of the state or nation as relatively more favorable than in Platte County and the other counties that comprise the Columbus Labor Area.

Table Nine
Population, Births, Deaths and Migration, Columbus Labor Area,
by County, 2000-2005

County	Population		2000-2005			Net Migration, 2000-2005*	
	2000	2005	Births	Deaths	Nat. Incr.	Number	% 2000 Pop.
Platte County	31,662	31,262	2,258	1,332	926	-1,326	-4.2
Boone County	6,259	5,772	282	351	-69	-418	-6.7
Butler County	8,767	8,720	549	530	19	-66	-0.8
Colfax County	10,441	10,433	1,009	498	511	-519	-5.0
Madison County	35,226	35,488	2,924	1,831	1,093	-831	-2.4
Merrick County	8,204	8,066	486	432	54	-192	-2.3
Nance County	4,038	3,666	208	317	-109	-263	-6.5
Polk County	5,639	5,421	361	358	3	-221	-3.9
Stanton County	6,455	6,534	449	289	160	-81	-1.3
Columbus Labor Area	116,691	115,362	8,526	5,938	2,588	-3,917	-3.4
Nebraska	1,711,265	1,758,787	132,394	80,290	52,104	-4,582	-0.3

* Net Migration from the Bureau of the Census estimates, includes residual component not shown separately.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Population Estimates, 2005, and Components of Population Change, 2000-2005*.

Competitive Employment and Career Opportunities

An employer providing jobs with competitive wages and benefits and offering career opportunities would be a welcome addition to the employment base in the Columbus Labor Area and in Platte County. The expected response to such employment opportunities would be significant, and it is anticipated that there would be an adequate labor supply response for a prospective new employer offering competitive wages and benefits in the Columbus area. The labor force, employment, and demographic data presented in this report illustrate quite clearly that there is a sufficiently large labor force and population base living within the Columbus Labor Area, and that significant numbers of persons living in the area are commuting to other areas for employment.

In conclusion, the data and analysis presented in this report indicate that the Columbus Labor Area and Platte County would be able to provide a significant number of dedicated and skilled workers to meet the needs of additional employers in the area. While this report has not estimated a precise number of people that might be available to a prospective new employer in the Columbus area, it is anticipated that if attractive

working conditions with competitive wages and employee benefits were offered, a prospective new employer would be able to select their workforce from a sizeable pool of applicants.

Questions concerning this report and the supporting data should be addressed to:

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