



# PPRC IN THE NEWS

## CONCENTRATION ON CITY LOSS OBSCURES A REGIONAL PROBLEM

By: **Mark Tranel**, associate director of the Public Policy Research Center at UM-St. Louis

This commentary was originally published in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch on Sept. 22, 2000.

**Everyone will share in the burden of finding tax and personal dollars to maintain a pattern of development that is inefficient and may be unsustainable.**



8001 Natural Bridge Road  
St. Louis, Missouri 63121-4499

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

(314) 516.5273 **TEL**  
(314) 516.5268 **FAX**

pprc@umsl.edu **EMAIL**

Once again the City of St. Louis has been made the whipping boy for the St. Louis region. A Sept. 14 front-page story, quickly picked up by the broadcast media, said the city lost about 16 percent of its population in the 1990s. The problem is everybody then wags their finger at the city and says, "If you'd just straighten up your act ..." The truth is the St. Louis region as a whole is not in much better shape.

For the same time period reported in the article on the city, the entire St. Louis region experienced an outmigration of more than 71,000 people. That means 71,000 more people moved out of the St. Louis area than moved in during the 1990s. Compare that to Kansas City. Our sister city to the west was able to attract about 36,000 more people to move in than moved out. And the numbers are worse if you compare St. Louis to other cities, even those not in Sunbelt hot spots. Minneapolis, for example, had a net immigration of about 66,000 people in the past decade.

Now it is true that the overall population of the St. Louis region did increase by an anemic 77,000 during the 1990s.

But that is only because there were more births than deaths. We lost big time in the category of people who make voluntary choices. Here again, in comparison to the other big city in Missouri, we don't look so good. Kansas City's population increased by about 169,000 people over the past 10 years. St. Louis is the 18th-largest metropolitan area in the United States, but of the top 20, St. Louis ranked only above Philadelphia for the smallest population change. Here again it's not just warm climate areas that grew significantly in population. Minneapolis started the year 2000 with 333,333 more people than it had in 1990. Chicago's population increased by nearly 600,000 people during those same 10 years.

For more than 30 years it has not been news that St. Louis has fewer people when the population counts are given at the start of a decade. What is still news to most of the populace here though is that just because double-digit population increases are reported for outlying counties, that doesn't mean the St. Louis area is as growing and vibrant as other cities not too far away in the Midwest.