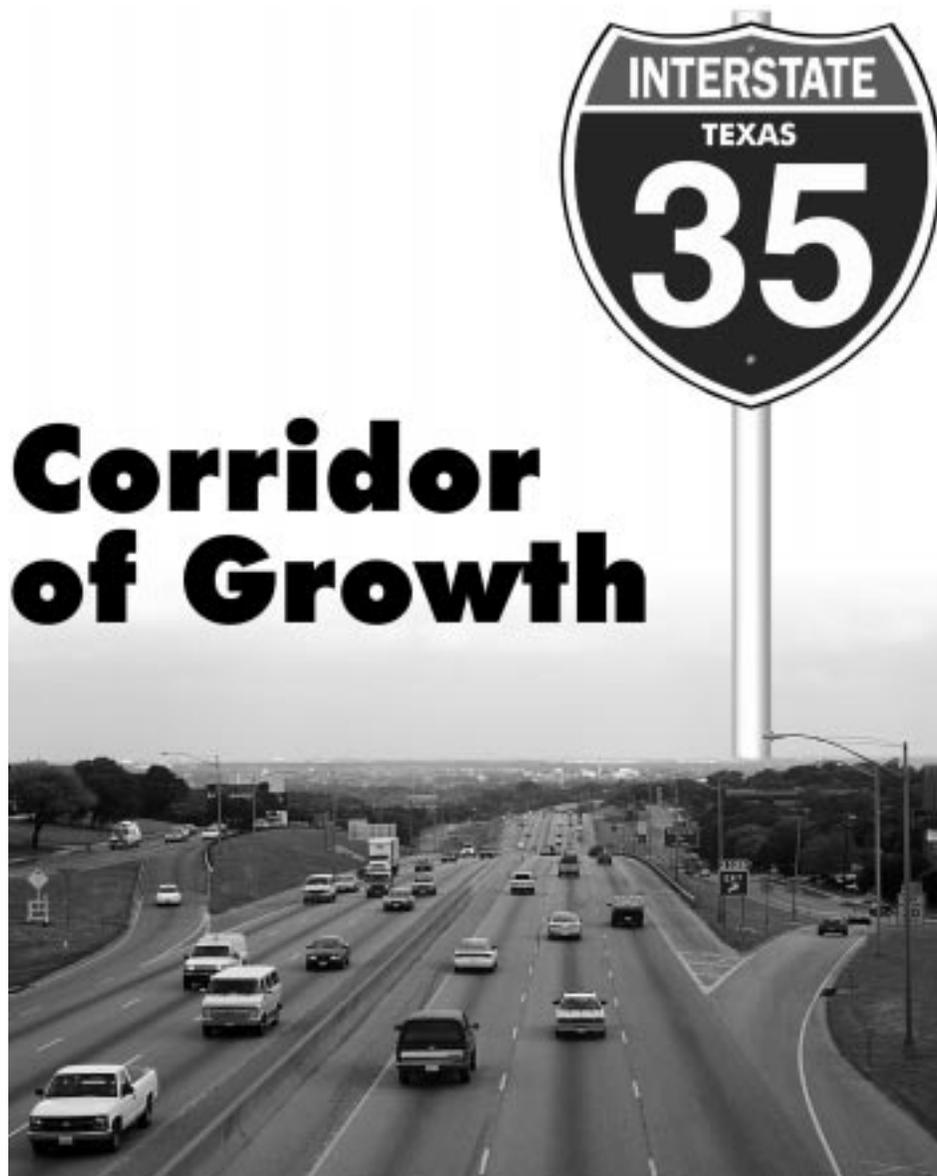


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## Corridor of Growth

By Steve H. Murdock

**T**he corridor between Austin and San Antonio has become one contiguous metropolitan area and is now the third fastest growing area in Texas. No group knows better than real estate agents about the area's population growth during the 1990s. Buying power of the new residents was substantial, and home sales reflected it.

In 1990-96, the five counties in the Austin-San Marcos MSA added more than 195,100 persons—bringing the area's total population to more than 1.04 million. Only Houston and Dallas added more during those six years.

Texas now has five metropolitan areas with more than a million people: Houston, Dallas, Fort Worth-Arlington, San Antonio and Austin-San Marcos. The Central Texas corridor also had the third largest percentage increase—23.1 percent—behind Laredo's 32.7 percent and McAllen-Edinburg-Mission's 29.2 percent.

The San Antonio Metropolitan Area was the fifth fastest growing metropolitan area in Texas in total numbers with an increase of almost 165,400. By 1996, total population in the four-county area was 1.49 million. The 12.5 percent growth rate was the state's tenth fastest.

Together the Austin-San Marcos and San Antonio Metropolitan Areas added

roughly the same number of people—371,700—as the Dallas Metropolitan Area (360,500). In fact, the area's total population increase was greater than the 1980 population of Austin (345,500).

The San Antonio and Austin-San Marcos metropolitan areas had a combined 1996 population of 2.5 million—13.2 percent of all Texans. As in other large Texas metropolitan areas, however, growth has been most rapid in the suburban counties.

Travis County, home to Austin, increased its population by 18.7 percent and accounted for 55.1 percent of the metropolitan area's 1990-96 growth. However, neighboring suburban counties

increased by 32.4 percent and accounted for 44.9 percent of the area's growth. Similarly, Bexar County where San Antonio is located, added 11.2 percent while surrounding suburban counties increased by 23.3 percent. Suburban counties in the Austin-San Antonio corridor were among the state's fastest growing.

**N**ear Austin, Williamson County had the region's biggest increase, adding 42.1 percent—fourth fastest growing county in Texas between 1990 and 1996. It was the fastest growing county among those with populations of 100,000 or more. Hays County increased 24.6 percent while Bastrop County added 22.4 percent—the 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> fastest growing Texas counties.

In the San Antonio area, Burnet County increased by 31.2 percent and Comal County added 30.6 percent—14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> overall.

Compared to Texas' other large metropolitan areas, the two that comprise the Austin-San Marcos-San Antonio

corridor have attracted considerable domestic immigration. In other words, many people from other states now call the area home.

Houston's growth included 8.1 percent domestic immigration; Dallas counted 21.2 percent. Twenty-seven percent of Fort Worth-Arlington's growth was attributed to immigration from other states. In contrast, however, 59.3 percent of Austin-San Marcos' growth and 30.3 percent of San Antonio's resulted from other state residents moving there.

Only 8.5 percent of Austin-San Marcos' growth and 14.6 percent of San Antonio's was from immigration, relocation from another nation. By comparison, 31.3 percent of Houston's and 23 percent and 17.1 percent of Dallas' and Fort Worth-Arlington's growth was international in origin.

Even the central city counties in the corridor showed relatively small proportions of immigration growth. Immigrants accounted for only 13.2 percent of Travis County's and 17.3 percent of

Bexar County's six-year growth. Meanwhile, 43.7 percent of Harris County's and 49.8 percent of Dallas County's population growth was from immigration. Tarrant County counted 20 percent.

Newcomers from other states usually have higher incomes than the local population. Therefore, the Austin-San Marcos and San Antonio areas benefited from an influx of purchasing power, much of which was reflected in the real estate market.

A seamless web of growth now crosses the center of Texas. If State Data Center projections are correct, the two metropolitan areas in this corridor will have a combined population of more than 2.7 million by the year 2000 and nearly 3.4 million by 2010. ☐

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