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# Small town triage: a rural settlement policy for the American Midwest

Thomas L. Daniels ... Mark B. Lapping

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## Abstract

The American Midwest of the 1980s has suffered from a depressed farm economy which has led to rural depopulation. Small towns of fewer than 2500 people have been especially hard hit, and state and federal government spending cuts will tend to accelerate the decline of these towns. The State of Iowa has a multitude of small towns struggling for survival. Iowa faces the choice of spreading public resources among many towns or concentrating those resources on a relative few. In fact, a key settlement policy may be emerging as a means to create growth centers in rural areas and thus limit depopulation and promote economic diversification. Potential growth centers and investment strategies need to be further identified so that state economic development funds can be targeted spent in the most cost-effective manner. This will require considerable regional and state planning and coordination in implementation.



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