Huerfano County

Senior Seminar Project Presentation
ECON 492-006
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Introduction

- Surrounded by Pueblo, Las Animas, Costilla, Alamosa, and Custer counties
- Economically-challenged: population challenges, job industry challenges, an unknown county to most people
- Younger Huerfano residents leaving; creating a large disparity between their working-class and their larger retiring population
- Research Goal: Focusing on the impacts of negative population growth, a large amount of retirees, and a lack of younger workers has on Huerfano’s economy
Introduction

- Population (2017): 6,662
- Median Age: 55
- Poverty Rate: 17.1%
- Major towns: Walsenburg, La Veta
- Interstate 25 (I-25) runs through the North and South
- County between major towns Pueblo and Trinidad
- San Isabel National Forest, Blanca Peak, and holds accessway to Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve
Median Personal Income

- Huerfano: $33,257 (+/- $3,275)
- Colorado: $62,520
- United States: $55,322

Median Personal Income by Industry

- Health: $23,643
- Retail: N/A
- Accommodation/Food: $14,496
- Agriculture: $21,953
- Government: N/A
Base Analysis

- Main job industries: health services, government, accommodation and food, retail trade, and agriculture

- Notable financial driver of the economy is 25.6% of the county income coming from retirees. Suggesting Huerfano’s retiree population has a significant impact on incoming funds for the county
Location Quotients

- \( LQ > 1 \): Exporting Jobs
- \( LQ < 1 \): Importing Jobs
- \( LQ = 1 \): Self Sufficient

- Exporting jobs in health services, government, retail trade and agriculture (bringing in money from these industries)
- Importing jobs in accommodation and food (leaking money to different counties for this industry)
- Exporting health care related services outside of the county, correlation between the high demand for healthcare services and an aging population
Age Composition

Current population of Huerfano is getting older and starting to retire in place; driving the number of current retirees.

Overall population change can be argued by the migration of working aged individuals moving to areas outside of the county.

Cannot expect a continued rise in retiree population, population for Huerfano residents who are 65 years-old and over decreases significantly in the forecast.
Age Composition
Employment & Ind. Job Change

- Overall employment rate, has been decreasing since the 2008 recession
- Inferred from aging population within the county; as individuals reach retirement age, the less likely they are to work
- Emigration of working aged individuals has greatly contributed to falling employment rate and is perhaps a more worrisome trend
Employment & Ind. Job Change

- Health industry, like the agriculture industry, relatively unaffected by 2008 recession with 9% increase. Coinciding with aging population is indicative of Huerfano’s current trajectory and its overhanging dilemma.

- Net decrease in population results in the loss of access to service-providing establishments, and this proves to be a trend that Huerfano has seen in its accommodation and food industry.
Cross-Borders Commuting

- Experiencing a significant loss of local employment opportunities for residents (35.3% working outside of the county)

- Las Animas and Pueblo border Huerfano and use use I-25 for their main use of transportation
Establishments

- 22% Decline in number of establishments as of 2017
Wage/Salary

Wage/Salary Income (2001 Index)

Wage/Salary Jobs (2001 Index)
Proprietors

Proprietor Income (2001 Index)

Number of Proprietors (2001 Index)
Government

Government Income (2001 Index)

Government Employment (2001 Index)
Retail

Retail Income (2001 Index)

Retail Employment (2001 Index)
Food Services

Food Service Income (2001 Index)

Food Service Jobs (2001 Index)
Main Point of Research, the Resiliency

- Once research was accomplished, shifted focus to help develop answers of resilience for Huerfano County
- Most beneficial route for Huerfano is to consider attracting a younger generation to the county
- The three main avenues for helping bring resilience to Huerfano is
  - Advertisement of affordable real estate
  - Advertisement of vast natural amenities
  - Potential to change Huerfano County into an attractive area for young adults
Affordable real estate, Resiliency

- Advantage of being financially affordable for many potential home buyers
- Median property value
  - Huerfano: $153,400 in 2016
  - Colorado: $264,600 in 2015
  - United States: $184,700 in 2016
- Tremendously lower median property values than Colorado and the United States
- Huerfano lies below major cities: Pueblo, Colorado Springs, Denver and has I-25 access
- Affordable real estate and relatively close and fast way to metropolitan areas is attractive to younger, working adults; especially families or couples looking to settle down
- Advertise and gain more public knowledge to younger people about the financial benefit of living in Huerfano County
Vast natural amenities, Resiliency

- Biggest amenity is the turnoff point off I-25 by Walsenburg towards Great Sand Dunes National Park & Preservative
- "A park by any other name: National Park designation as a natural experiment in signaling" by Stephan Weiler
  - Site designation power of renaming/designing monuments into parks sends signals to consumers who might have not had information about the site beforehand
  - In 2000, Great Sand Dunes re-designed from monument to park
- Take natural amenities and rework them by renaming and renovating the amenities towards something of a “National Park” status
  - Statewide recognition to a number of visitors
  - Visitors consume local goods, revitalizing the county’s accommodation sector
Change in local atmosphere, Resiliency

- “How Do Communities Attract Young Adults”, focuses on the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation ad campaign, studying how rural communities grow and maintain their younger populations
  - Younger people want high-end, professional employment opportunities, lots of local amenities, close to highway transportation and big cities is ideal, area with some form of access to outdoor activities
- Using Huerfano’s advantage in transportation and leverage on existing natural amenities, Huerfano can focus on the re-urbanization and development of local communities
- If this is completed with other resiliency recommendations, can rejuvenate local economy and population; providing Huerfano with long-term future economic prosperity
Conclusion

- Huerfano’s current economy almost entirely focused around its own elderly, retiring population (consumption of health care goods and money coming in from their retirement savings)
- Forecasted Huerfano’s elderly, retiring population will not continue to grow and sustain itself
  - Huerfano County needs to move forward in a different economic matter
- Need Huerfano County to refocus on younger, working class individuals and how to attract and retain them
- If resurgence of a younger, working class population, then Huerfano will have a greater chance at having a new source of financial income and economic prosperity