

*GUEST COMMENT*

## **Census coverage misses the mark**

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Local media certainly lost no time trumpeting the U.S. Census Bureau's recent deflating revelation that Philadelphia's rate of resident defection between 2000 and 2007 was second only to that of "hurricane-ravaged" New Orleans.

Creating one-dimensional, fatalistic hype around such arbitrary, intellectually shallow data serves only to fuel Philadelphians' insecurities and paranoia about their city's long-term prospects. What's sorely missing from this coverage is a rounded-out view of significant job and population losses afoot elsewhere in the U.S.:

- Tampa Bay lost 23,100 jobs from January to May 2008.
- New York City lost 2,000 financial services jobs in June 2008 alone.
- In California, 1.3 million more people left the state than relocated there from 1996-2005.

Philadelphia's "minuses" should be balanced with quantification of its growing pluses and their benefits for residents and businesses. Consider these examples:

- Philadelphians can skirt high gas prices by capitalizing on the city's bike-friendly travel routes and comprehensive public transportation.
- High airfares aren't required to access mountains, beaches, bike trails, cultural and historical resources, New York City and Washington, D.C.
- Incoming residents benefit from balanced, affordable metropolitan housing supply and demand.
- Philadelphia's job market is poised for long-term stability thanks to our diverse economic base.
- The substantive cultural change occurring in City Hall conveys commitment and credibility that stands to draw more businesses into town.

Philadelphia can capitalize on these strengths to lock in a long-term, 20-year-plus run at economic stability — and even growth — with the following:

- With more locals taking public transportation, let's apply road improvement funds to clean up the subway, trains and stations.
- As turmoil continues in New York and other financial market centers, Philadelphia can offer large financial players a lower-cost alternative in a geographically convenient region with talent.
- Philadelphia should aggressively market its conveniences for international travelers, including an international airport just 15 minutes from Center City, and quick access to New York City and Washington, D.C., airports via our Amtrak station.

In an economic downturn, companies that endure take a balanced look at competitive strengths and weaknesses, and prepare for the next upswing by consolidating market share and hiring the talent to grow when the opportunity arises. Here in Philadelphia, let's maintain a balanced view of our minuses and pluses, and prepare to rise from the current downturn by promoting our strengths globally and implementing policies to grow on locally.

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