

Arkansas Retiree In-Migration: A Regional Analysis

Wayne Miller
Professor and Extension
Economist

Katy Elliott
Extension Associate -
Community and
Economic Development

By looking at which regions of Arkansas welcomed the most retirees over the past decade, communities assessing their potential to draw retirement-aged people may wish to make comparisons between their community and those communities that have proven attractive to the retirement-aged population.

regions comprise nearly three-fourths of the total net in-migration of people aged 60 and older in Arkansas. The Ouachita Highlands also attracted people in this age group with a net in-migration of 8,418 during this period. However, the Coastal Plains region experienced only a slight net in-migration, while the Delta region experienced net out-migration between 1990 and 2000 (Figure 2).

Regional Comparison

Historically, the regions of Arkansas that are known for mountainous scenery, lakes, rivers, streams and diverse recreational opportunities have attracted the highest number of retirees, whether from within Arkansas or out of state. Between 1990 and 2000, the Ozark Highlands experienced a net in-migration of 18,170 people aged 60 and older, while Northwest Arkansas' net in-migration was 11,966 in this age group. Combined, these two

Figure 1. Arkansas Geographic Regions

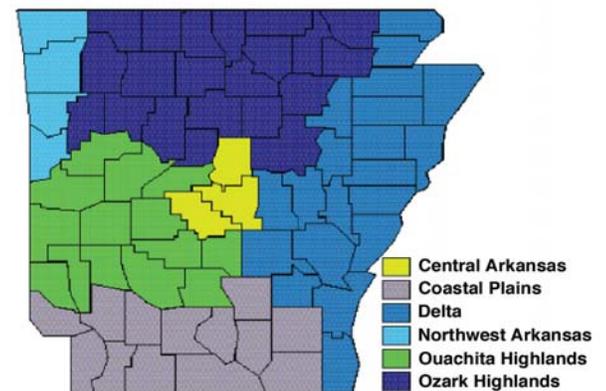
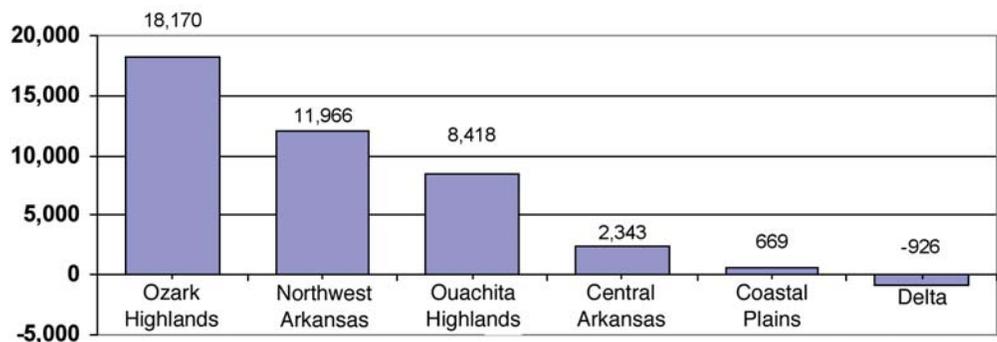


Figure 2. Net In-Migration by Region, Ages 60+ (1990 to 2000)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

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County Comparison

While looking at Arkansas' regional migration is insightful, examining net in-migration by county yields even more useful information to prospective retirement communities. The following charts and map provide a county-by-county look at Arkansas' net in-migration. Net in-migration numbers by county were calculated utilizing population by age data from the U.S. Census Bureau and deaths by age from the Arkansas Department of Health.

Benton, Garland, Baxter and Saline counties received the largest net in-migration of retirement-aged people between 1990 and 2000, while Pulaski, Crittenden, Jefferson and Mississippi counties experienced the greatest net out-migration of retirement-aged population during this same period. All four counties with the largest net in-migration of people aged 60 and older market their communities as attractive places to live (Figure 3, Figure 4).

Those counties with the largest net in-migration also have some of the highest net in-migration rates, or net in-migration as a percent of the population in this age group. All counties along the Missouri border, except Randolph and Clay, have extremely high net in-migration rates. In addition to these counties, Garland, Saline, Cleburne and Stone counties also have net in-migration rates of 17 percent or higher.

Some counties in the Delta, like Crittenden, Lee and Phillips, have the highest net out-migration rates. Pulaski County, which accounts for about 35 percent of the net out-migration in the state, has a net out-migration rate of less than 5 percent. The low rate is because of its large population base. Some counties with a smaller population base have a larger percentage of their retirement-aged people leaving the county, especially in the Delta. For example, Lee County had a net out-migration of only 273 people aged 60 and older but a net out-migration rate of over 12 percent (Figure 5).

Figure 3. Net In-Migration by County, Ages 60 and Older

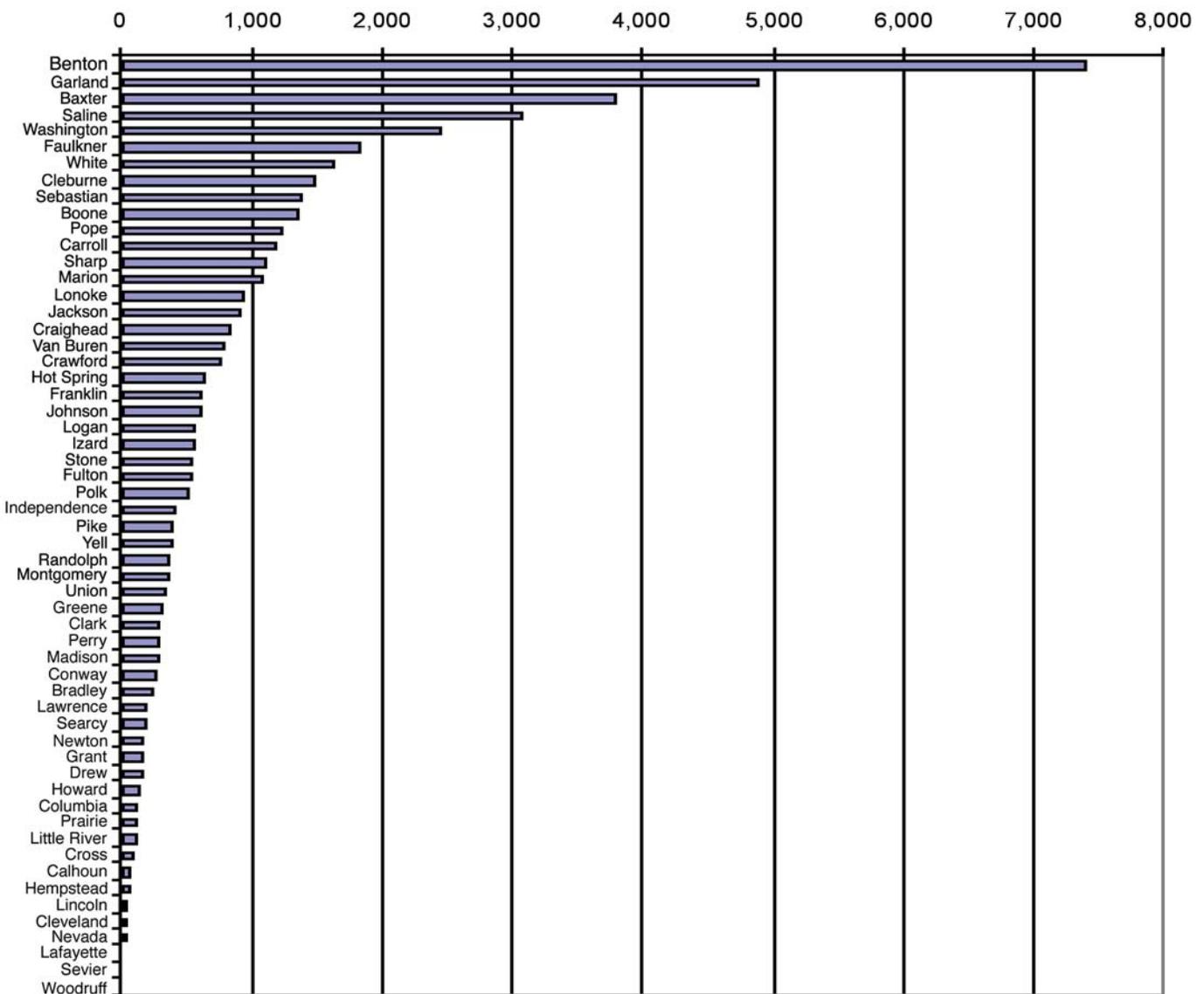


Figure 4. Net In-Migration by County, Ages 60 and Older

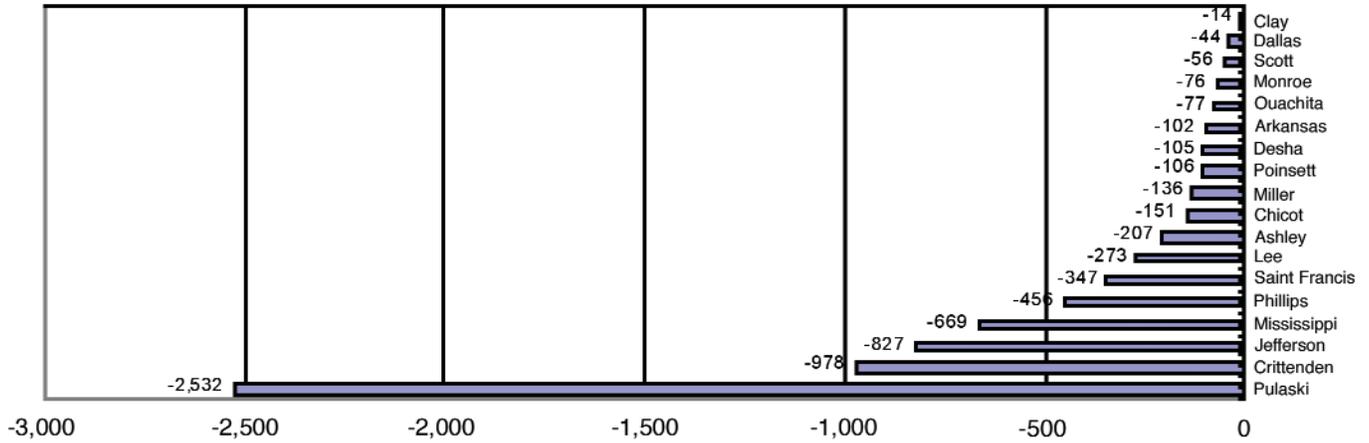
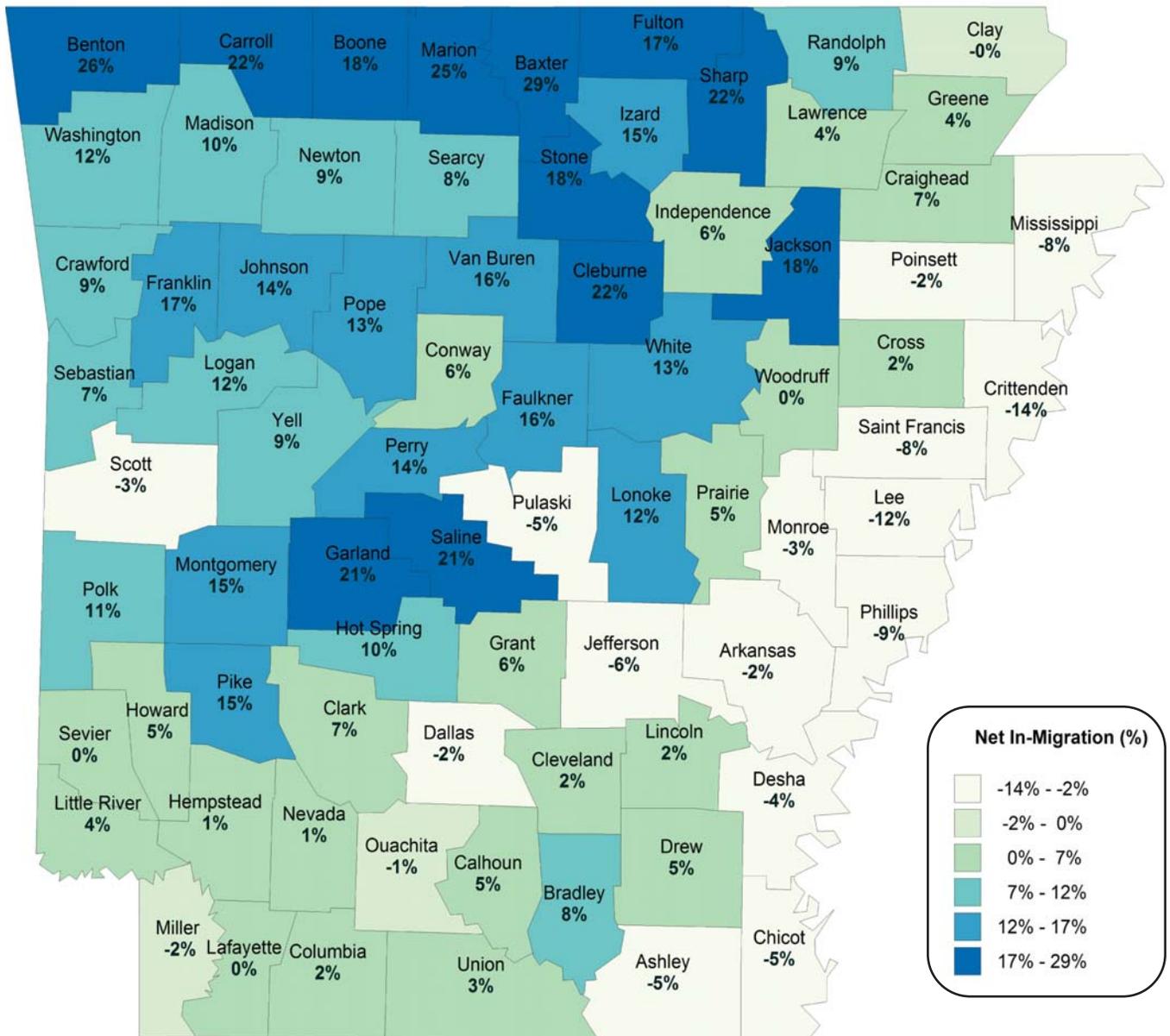


Figure 5. Net In-Migration, Ages 60 and Older



Age of Elderly Migrants

All regions experienced the largest net in-migration of persons aged 60 to 69 and substantially lower net in-migration for people aged 75 and older. The charts below provide an in-depth look at this variation in terms of age (Figure 6).

- The Delta region experienced a net out-migration of people aged 60 and older. However, this region experienced a slight net in-migration of people between ages 60 and 69 and ages 85 and older (Figure 7).
- The Ozark Highlands region net in-migration consisted primarily of persons aged 60 to 69 and to a lesser extent people aged 70 to 74 (Figure 8).
- The Northwest Arkansas region was similar to the Ozark Highlands in that there was a large net in-migration of people aged 60 to 69. Additionally, the Northwest Arkansas region net in-migration included more people between the ages of 75 and 84 (Figure 9).
- The Ouachita Highlands region net in-migration consisted of very few people aged 80 and older and many people aged 60 to 69 (Figure 10).
- The Coastal Plain region net in-migration was highest for ages 60 to 69. This region experienced a net out-migration of ages 75 and older (Figure 11).
- The Central Arkansas region experienced a net in-migration primarily of people aged 60 to 74. However, this region also experienced a relatively high net in-migration of people aged 80 and older (Figure 12).

Figure 6. Net In-Migration by Age and Region, 1990 to 2000*

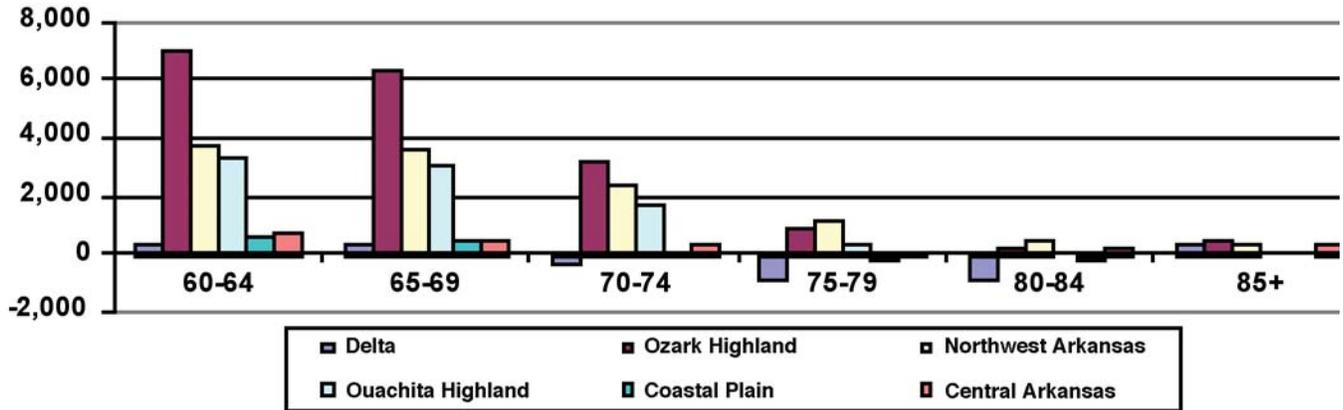


Figure 7. Delta Net In-Migration by Age* 1990 to 2000

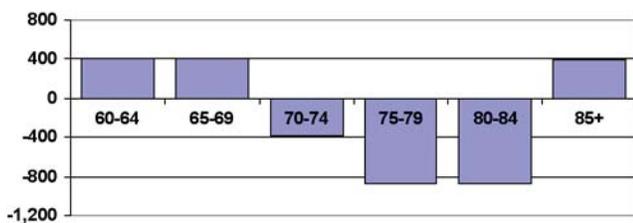


Figure 8. Ozark Highlands Net In-Migration by Age* 1990 to 2000

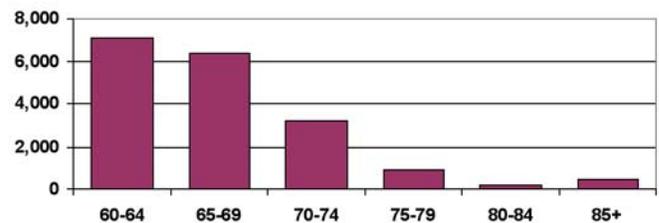


Figure 9. Northwest Arkansas Net In-Migration by Age* 1990 to 2000

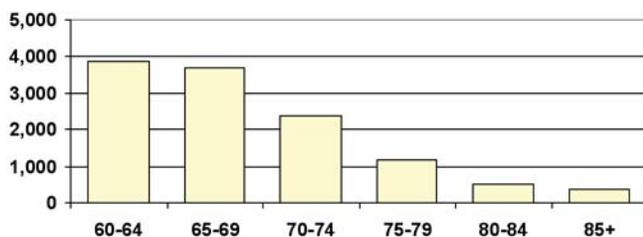


Figure 10. Ouachita Highlands Net In-Migration by Age* 1990 to 2000

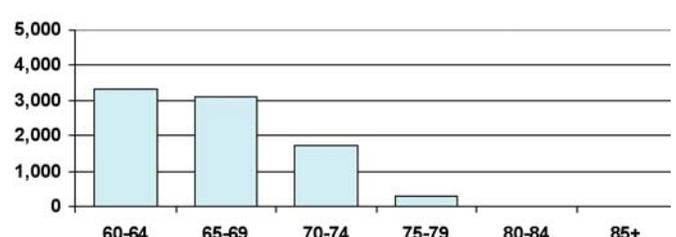


Figure 11. Coastal Plain Net In-Migration by Age* 1990 to 2000

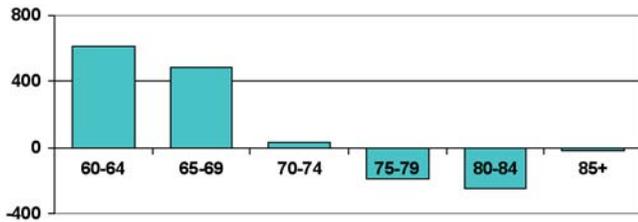
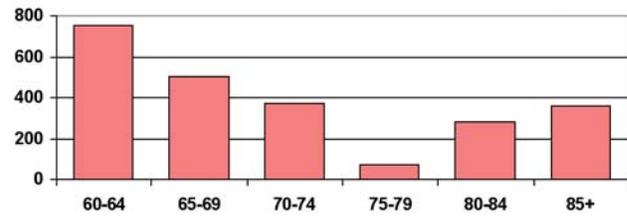


Figure 12. Central Arkansas Net In-Migration by Age* 1990 to 2000



*The above charts were derived from U.S. Census Bureau data.

Summary

The Ozark Highlands and Northwest Arkansas regions attract the most retirement-aged people to their communities. The Ouachita Highlands also attract people in this age group, especially to communities in Garland and Saline counties. However, the Coastal Plains had only a slight net in-migration of people in this age group, while the Delta had a net out-migration of people aged 60 and older.

Benton County attracts the most people in this age group followed by Garland, Baxter and Saline counties. These counties have planned retirement communities or community leaders who make a concerted effort to attract new retirement-aged residents through targeted marketing campaigns.

Arkansas' in-migrating retirement-aged population is younger than the population distribution in this age category. All regions of the state attract more people aged 60 to 69 and fewer people aged 75 and older. As a result, Arkansas' in-migrating retiree-aged population is younger and likely to be in better health and actively seek recreational opportunities.

According to a 1994 study on Retirement In-Migration published by the Southern Rural Development Center, a number of factors influence a retiree's decision to locate in a specific community. Factors affecting relocation decisions include not only scenic beauty but also recreational opportunity, climate, availability of quality medical care and close proximity of family. Other factors mentioned in the study, but having less impact on where a retiree locates, include low taxes, cost of living and availability of business opportunities.

When seeking to attract retirees to Arkansas communities, local leaders and planners should not only understand recent trends and the predominance of desirable and marketable community qualities in the state but also target their marketing to people who desire the amenities in the state and who will contribute to Arkansas' communities. For a more detailed description of in-migration for ages 60 and older to Arkansas, those interested may reference the fact sheet entitled *Arkansas' Retirement-Age Migration: A Statewide Overview*, available through the University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service at http://www.uaex.edu/Other_Areas/publications/PDF/FSCDM-2.pdf.

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DR. WAYNE MILLER is a professor and Extension economist and **KATY ELLIOTT** is Extension associate - community and economic development with the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture, Cooperative Extension Service, Little Rock.

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