

DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION: CASE STUDIES FROM ILLINOIS, IOWA AND WISCONSIN



Kate Ferrer

University of Illinois
Urbana-Champaign

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introduction

Small and rural communities are increasingly beset with problems related to loss of industry, declining or aging populations and an inability to compete with urban amenities. Over the past several decades, these communities have been forced to rethink their priorities and their markets – who visits and lives in these communities? What do small communities offer that urban areas don't have? These questions are especially relevant to communities that are attempting to preserve their cultural heritage; in an increasingly "franchised" world, small communities are attempting to maintain the structural integrity of their original downtowns while attracting businesses and shoppers.

The most successful communities are employing outcome-based decision making; their vision captures predictions about conditions 5, 10 and 20 years in the future. However, vision alone is not actionable. The most successful communities have organized themselves around being constantly ready to take action, should the opportunity arise. The most successful communities know that incrementalism is important but so is community morale; the best projects are high impact, highly visible and well-publicized because investment isn't going to attract itself.

This report covers four communities in the Midwest across Illinois, Iowa and Wisconsin. These communities are often largely homogenous populations with aging residents. Their capabilities vary according to their size and good fortune in location and natural amenities. They vary in how far they have come; Ripon, Wisconsin began its revitalization journey as a Main Street community more than 20 years ago and Mount Vernon, Iowa began this journey just three years ago. However, all of these communities have faced similar economic struggles: loss of staple industries, population loss and prior decades' disinvestment in small town America.

The new hope for small towns lies in embracing heritage and returning to service and retail markets that serve a local population. It means embracing the "creative class" industries of knowledge, art and culture. It means creating public buy-in, asking for volunteers and asking private industry to pave the way for new investment dollars. Craig Tebon, Executive Director for the Ripon Main Street program, said it best: "Redevelopment starts with just **one** building and reaching for the low hanging fruit."

galesburg, illinois



Click map to open in Google Maps

County: Knox County

Population: 31,000¹

Educational Institutions: Knox College (four year, private liberal arts college with approximately 1,400 undergraduate students)

Economic/community development organizations: [Galesburg Chamber of Commerce](#), [Galesburg Regional Economic Development Association](#), [Galesburg Downtown Council](#), [Galesburg Area Convention & Visitors Bureau](#)

demographics and industry

Galesburg is predominantly white but is approximately 10 percent African American. The population is concentrated around those in their middle age but the presence of Knox College adds substantially to young 20-somethings (see Appendices A and B). Galesburg is trending the nation in educational attainment (see Appendix C). College students no doubt inflate the number of low income households (see Appendix D) with a substantial number of households living on less than \$20,000.

Galesburg is a regional employment center due to several institutions (Knox College, Carl Sandburg Community College), rail, and manufacturing. Galesburg's major employers include the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway (1,115 employees), the OSF St. Mary Medical Center (973 employees) and Galesburg Cottage Hospital (500 employees).² Galesburg is able to offer a range of specialized medical services not located in other communities of smaller size, including a Level II Trauma center, cancer treatment and mental health facilities.²

¹ Demographic data for this analysis was taken from the 2005-2009 American Community Survey and, where available, the 2010 Census.

² Community Profile, GREDA Region, Western Illinois, 2010.

<<http://www.greda.org/media/2010/03/GREDA-CommunityProfile2010.pdf>>

assets

Rail hub/Amtrak: Galesburg has an Amtrak station that connects it to major state centers like Chicago. Half of Galesburg's Amtrak trains are federally funded, giving it access to a wider market for employers and employees.

Institutional presence: Galesburg is the home of both Knox College and the Henry C. Hill Correctional Center, which combined provide jobs for 700 residents. Galesburg is also the county seat for Knox County which gives it the advantage of housing a multitude of government services.

Quality of life: Galesburg has the population density to support a multitude of entertainment venues, specialized services and major franchise retail such as Wal-Mart and Menards. It has the competitive advantage of being a regional superstar, drawing its residents from a two county area.

strategy

Seminary Street: Seminary Street is the culmination of decades of Main Street programming and private-led investment. A handful of entrepreneurs banded together to acquire most of the buildings on the street in order to reinvent the district. Historic preservation has been the order of business for years and the return on investment is obvious: Seminary Street is famous for its quaint, well-preserved architectural and cultural heritage as well as its award-winning restaurants and businesses.

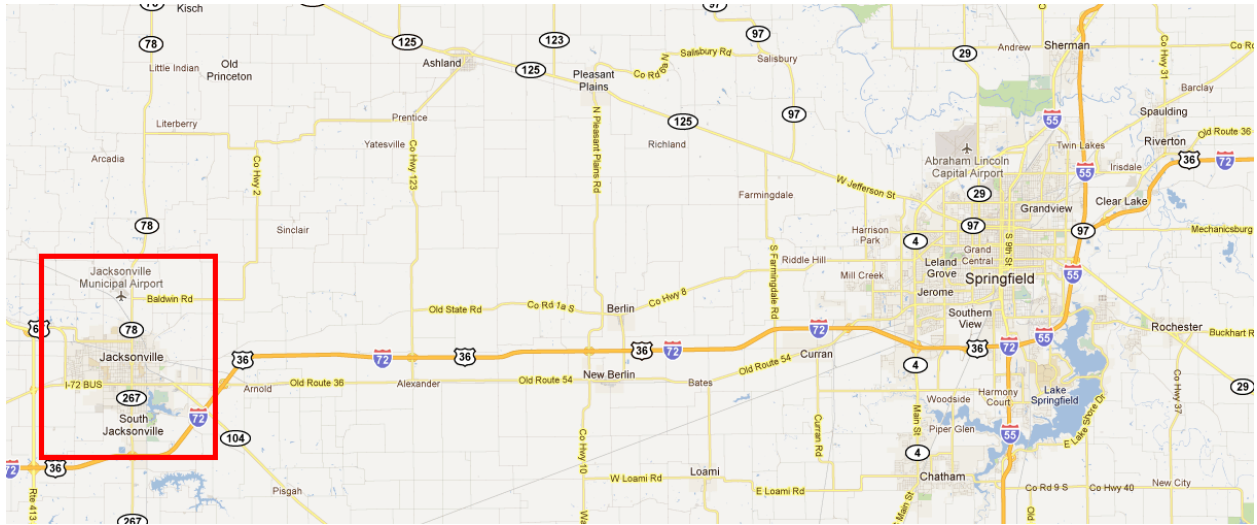
Special Service Area (SSA): In addition to multiple TIF districts, Galesburg has a Special Service Area (SSA) which covers a small six-block area of the downtown. A SSA operates similarly to a Business Improvement District (BID) in that it is voted in by participating business owners within the designated area and the funds generated can be used to provide a 'special service' to only that district. The SSA currently has \$400,000 in reserves and produces annual revenues of approximately \$80,000.

Upper floor commercial: Downtown Galesburg is unique in that many of its upper floors are occupied by businesses instead of residences. Most of these businesses are legal and professional services that complement the services provided by a county seat. The exception is the residential units – about 5 units – owned by Jay Matson. These [high-end lofts](#) cater to a niche market looking for luxury housing in a historic district; these lofts have architectural features found in much larger cities, but at an affordable cost of living below the average for the state and the nation.

Subsidies to non-building owners: Galesburg offers a matching program for businesses interested in locating inside their Special Service Area. The Downtown Council offers \$3,000 in rent funds whenever a property owner agrees to offer free rent to a tenant.³

³ Galesburg Downtown Council Financial Program.

jacksonville, illinois



Click map to open in Google Maps

County: Morgan County

Population: 20,000¹

Educational Institutions: Illinois College (private, four year liberal arts college of approximately 1,000 students); MacMurray College (private, four year liberal arts college of approximately 550 students); Illinois School for the Deaf; Illinois School for the Visually Impaired.

Economic/community development organizations: [Jacksonville Regional Economic Development Corporation](#), [Jacksonville Area Convention & Visitors Bureau](#), [Jacksonville Main Street](#)

demographics and industry

Jacksonville is predominantly white, with a proportionally higher number of people in their early 20s and in their mid-40s to 50s (see Appendices A and B). These populations have markedly different household incomes; students at the undergraduate colleges tend to have lower incomes while the population of older adults likely accounts for Jacksonville's wealthier residents (see Appendices C and D).

Jacksonville is a regional employment center; nearly 40 percent of Morgan County residents work in Jacksonville but live elsewhere.² The largest employers in Jacksonville are the Passavant Area Hospital (925 employees), Pactiv (800 employees), Perma-Bound (500 employees), Jacksonville Correctional Facility (490 employees) and Jacksonville Developmental Center (450 employees). Subsidiary industries located in Jacksonville also provide major sources of employment, such as Blue Cross Blue Shield (300 employees) and Perma-Bound (425 employees).³

¹ Demographic data for this analysis was taken from the 2005-2009 American Community Survey and, where available, the 2010 Census.

² US Census Bureau. 2009 Commuting patterns data. Taken from the Jacksonville Regional Economic Development Corporation. Accessed 29 August 2011. <http://www.jredc.org/resources/Workforce_Commuting_Patterns.pdf>

³ Jacksonville Regional Economic Development Corporation. Accessed 29 August 2011. <<http://www.jredc.org/employers.html>>

assets

Innovative business leaders: Two business leaders in the Jacksonville community have paved the way for much of its downtown revitalization by investing in their own businesses; between them, these business leaders own four establishments in the downtown. Mark Shierl owns and operates three restaurants – Mugsy’s, The Brick House and Mulligans – and Joe Racey owns the Three Legged Dog Café.

Institutions: Though Jacksonville has only 20,000 residents, it is home to two private liberal arts colleges and four state-run institutions – the School for the Visually Impaired, the School for the Deaf, Jacksonville Correctional Facility and the Jacksonville Developmental Center. These institutions represent a ‘pull’ factor for Jacksonville by providing jobs and needed social services for a regional market.

Regional development coordination: Jacksonville is at the center of a major regional effort to strengthen employment opportunities and fiscal health in Morgan County. According to Judy Tighe, Director of the Jacksonville Main Street Program, Jacksonville’s successful revitalization has been largely attributed to a collaboration between several for-profit and non-profit organizations, including the City of Jacksonville, Jacksonville Area Chamber of Commerce, Jacksonville Area Conventions and Visitors Bureau, Jacksonville Regional Economic Development Corporation, Imagine Foundation, Morgan County, Illinois Main Street, Illinois Historic Preservation Agency, Landmarks Illinois, National Main Street, and the National Trust for Historic Preservation.⁴

strategy

Historic preservation initiatives: The Jacksonville Main Street program has successfully protected and renovated many buildings in the downtown area. Jacksonville is a Certified Local Government (CLG) which makes it qualified for state and federal funding to renovate and preserve historically significant buildings. Part of this project was funded using a \$580,000 loan to be repaid over the decade using TIF funds. An additional \$3.2 million in federal funding was received and secured through contact with state representative and senators. Jacksonville has many [financial incentives](#) that underpin this initiative.

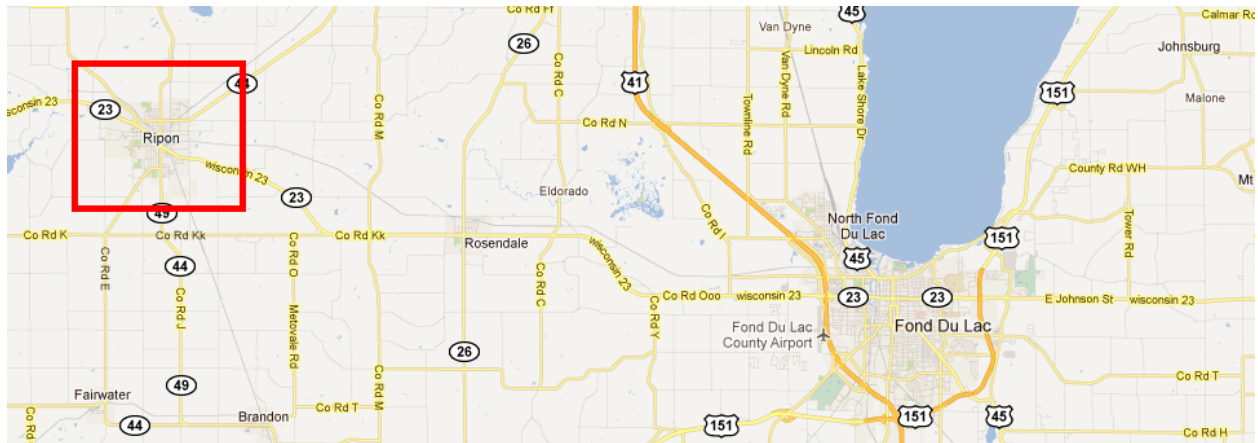
The arts: Jacksonville has hosted the [Walldogs](#), an artist collective that paints murals to help beautify cities; more than a dozen murals were painted in Jacksonville through an artist-in-residence grant. Additionally, Jacksonville Regional Economic Development Corporation is exploring the possibility of installing an arts incubator.

Zoning: Jacksonville revised both its land-use map and zoning ordinances to create a unified vision for the downtown. The downtown area is predominantly zoned as B-1 (neighborhood business district) and B-2 (central business district); all zoning definitions are clearly defined with a [list of acceptable land uses](#) and those uses that will only be permitted with a variance or special use permit.⁵

⁴ Interview with Judy Tighe, Director of the Jacksonville Main Street Program. Interview conducted by Kathleen Brown, Extension Educator, University of Illinois Extension Program. 9 August 2011.

⁵ Jacksonville, Illinois zoning ordinances. Article 4, page 4-34. Accessed 29 August 2011.
<<http://www.jacksonvilleil.com/vertical/Sites/%7BDB68511E-E929-445F-86EA-BF8BABF6AE06%7D/uploads/%7B0CBFA5EE-58C5-47AB-BB4C-5AC9EE6B85DF%7D.PDF>>

ripon, wisconsin



Click map to open in Google Maps

County: Fond du Lac County

Population: 7,400¹

Educational institutions: Ripon College is a private, four year liberal arts college with approximately 1,000 students.

Economic/community development organizations: [Ripon Main Street](#), [Ripon Chamber of Commerce](#)

Fond du Lac County is adjacent to Green Lake County, which is a popular Wisconsin tourist destination. Ripon has capitalized on its proximity to the lake and offers tourists an opportunity to enjoy a small town experience while they vacation on the lake.

demographics and industry

Ripon's population is predominantly white (see Appendix A) and with a high number of households with incomes over \$50,000 (see Appendix D). The presence of Ripon College increase the proportion of 20-24-year-olds within the City but much of the population is also older, predominantly between 40 and 60 years old (see Appendix B). For the most part Ripon follows national trends in education levels; however, it has an increased number of people with higher degrees due to the presence of Ripon College (see Appendix C).

As with much of Wisconsin, Ripon is still heavily influenced by the manufacturing industry; Alliance Laundry Systems, Bremner-Ripon Foods and Smuckers are all major employers within Ripon.²

assets

Vision: Ripon is guided by a strong vision for how the city and the downtown will evolve in the coming decades. In 2007, the City of Ripon formulated “[Go Ripon](#),” a downtown strategic plan to maintain and

¹ Demographic data for this analysis was taken from the 2005-2009 American Community Survey and, where available, the 2010 Census.

² Ripon Downtown Strategic Plan, 2007.

expand Ripon's vibrant and award-winning downtown district. Craig Tebon, Executive Director of the Ripon Main Street program, articulated a pragmatic and honest vision for downtown Ripon: quality construction, buildings rehabilitated to their original construction instead of showy "theme-park" buildings and a commitment to sound business practices.³

Financial planning: According to Tebon, Ripon employs sound financial planning techniques to achieve successful outcomes in the downtown. For instance, it is often necessary to consult individually with businesses that are considering taking on additional loans for business improvements in order to ensure that they understand how interest rates and uncertain demand can affect the ability to repay loans. Part of this element is also what Tebon referred to as "picking the low-hanging fruit" by encouraging private investment where it is most obtainable.

strategy

Division of labor: For a small town of only about 8,000 residents, Ripon has created an elaborate hierarchy to support its economic and community development strategies. In order to unify its multiple organizations, Ripon created the Ripon Economic Action and Development Implementation (READI) team to manage implementation of projects from concept to completion.

Project priorities: Ripon has created a list of many action items that would all contribute to its vision of a better downtown. However, it succeeds by organizing these initiatives by level of impact and visibility. Projects that are "high visibility" are seen as a way to bolster community support; high impact projects can favorably change the market to encourage more development. Limited cost or zero political resistance projects are small and guaranteed successful projects that can be accomplished quickly and without obstacles. Ripon focuses on projects that have noticeable payoffs in order to create a "snowball" effect of additional development and interest.

Engaging businesses: Ripon empowers its downtown businesses through a Business Improvement District (BID) which assesses an additional annual tax – based on property value – on each business inside the district; revenues from this tax, when combined with funds from the city's TIF district, can be used to make downtown improvements that benefit all businesses, such as street signage or landscaping.

Targeting college alumni: Part of the strategic plan for downtown Ripon involves creating housing for the alumni of Ripon College, empty nesters and retirees. Ripon has an older population that, as they begin to retire, may seek opportunities to divest themselves of large properties and move to smaller housing that suits an active adult lifestyle. Ripon was named one of the "Coolest Small Towns in America" by Budget Travel Magazine, solidifying its appeal as a small town with the right amount of charms and amenities.

Town-gown relations: In 2009, the Princeton Review ranked Ripon 3rd for community relationships with Ripon College. The city and College have mutually agreed to seek ways to connect students to the downtown physically and culturally. The College expressed an increased desire for venues that students could frequent and both parties are interested in creating a visual corridor that connects the city and the College and creates a pedestrian path between both.

³ Interview with Craig Tebon of Ripon Main Street via telephone. 11 July 2011.

mount vernon, iowa



Click map to open in Google Maps

County: Linn County

Population: 4,100¹

Educational Institutions: Cornell College is a private undergraduate liberal arts college with approximately 1,100 students.

Economic/community development organizations: [Mount Vernon-Lisbon Community Development Group](#)

demographics and industry

Mount Vernon has some pronounced demographic trends due to its small size. The population of the city is predominantly white (see Appendix A) and there is a large proportion of people aged 15 to 24, presumably because of the impact of Cornell College (see Appendix B); the second largest demographic is people in their late 50s. Additionally, Mount Vernon is an affluent community with many households making more than \$60,000 per year (see Appendix D).

assets

Community Development Group: Mount Vernon has an extremely capable community development group that coordinates community events, advertises the community and supports businesses. The group is funded primarily through the city on an annual budget of approximately \$45,000 from the city plus approximately \$35,000 in private investment. The [2009-2010 Annual Report](#) gives an indication of the massive amount of work being put forth, largely by volunteers.

Volunteer labor force: Joe Jennison, Executive Director of the Mount Vernon-Lisbon Community Development Group², estimates the volunteer labor force he oversees to be around 350 people. The

¹ Demographic data for this analysis was taken from the 2005-2009 American Community Survey and, where available, the 2010 Census.

community regularly advertises for volunteers for committees and events through its blog and has a [volunteer portal](#) where people can sign up to put their skills to use.

Advertising and marketing: The CDG manages to outsource some of its advertising to local community members by offering [design guidelines](#) so that anyone can reproduce the logo for Mount Vernon-Lisbon. Additionally, the CDG manages a [bustling website](#) with information on all [local events](#) and all [local businesses](#). Mount Vernon was recently selected by Budget Travel magazine as one of the Coolest Small Towns in America.

strategy

Arts and culture: Mount Vernon exemplifies a community that is focused on art, artists and one-of-a-kind products. The community has several resident artists and it has generated a niche market for antiques and vintage goods. This summer, the 4th of July Antiques Extravaganza attracted 10,000 visitors to Mount Vernon, more than doubling the native population of the city.³ As a certified local government (CLG), Mount Vernon has also established a historic preservation commission that oversees design guidelines and changes to existing historic structures; this is a large part of how Mount Vernon is maintaining its 'quaint' appeal.

Streetscaping: Mount Vernon is currently working with a private company on improved [streetscape design](#) through public workshops. These designs are intended to improve public spaces by providing additional parking where needed, installing street furniture and creating an inviting atmosphere for pedestrian travel.

Lincoln Highway initiatives: Mount Vernon is part of the Iowa Chapter of the Lincoln Highway Association, which sponsors advertising and networking for communities along the Lincoln Highway in multiple states. Several of the annual events for Mount Vernon are part of this network, which has put Mount Vernon on the map as a regional destination, nestled as it is between Iowa City and Iowa City.

Technical business assistance: Mount Vernon provides local businesses with many valuable resources. Mr. Jennison indicated that there are business networking events approximately 6 times per year which allow business owners to meet and mingle. Additionally, the city has put on workshops on topics such as how to build a website, website optimization, statistics and market data and historic preservation initiatives. These events have been led by a mixture of professionals and high school or Cornell College students. The CDG has also made efforts to collect business and consumer data for distribution to business owners in order to help them make more realistic assumptions about their business models.

² Interview with Joe Jennison, Executive Director of the Mount Vernon-Lisbon Community Development Group. 06 July 2011.

³ City Council Meeting Minutes, Mount Vernon, Iowa. 15 August 2011.

key learning

Community resilience can be measured across many dimensions which together create a composite image of the community that either invites or detracts investors, where investors collectively represent developers, business owners, residents and consumers. Downtown, the traditional heart of the city, should reflect community values and ideally reflects the healthy economic diversity and entrepreneurialism that drives cities. Below are findings that define community successes and challenges in pursuit of revitalizing downtown districts.

incentives

The best incentives are the ones businesses know about.

All of the communities interviewed have implemented grant programs for business owners, low-interest loans or revolving loan funds and façade repair or maintenance programs.

However, not all business owners are financial wizards and not all communities advertise the resources available for business owners looking to invest in themselves. Communities need to advertise financial resources to businesses and, additionally, explain them in terms that business owners can understand. Jacksonville Main Street provides an impressive [financial incentives document](#) explaining their financial incentives for property and business owners.¹ Craig Tebon, Executive Director for the Ripon Main Street Program, expressed a belief that business owners need to understand the financial implications of taking on additional loans – even very low interest loans – in terms of what kind of additional business they will need to generate in order to successfully repay loans. He uses pro formas to guide business owners through the exercise of determining if a loan or grant is suitable for their investment, as well as [offering free design services](#) to help them make the best use of incentive financing.

Incentives from the municipality can also be paired with private incentives, such as the Ameren Illinois [Act on Energy program](#), which helps businesses upgrade their equipment sustainably and at reduced cost.

Small, incremental projects can enhance and unify the appearance of downtown.

Grants and loans are also an opportunity to connect community goals with business goals. Mount Vernon, Iowa established an annual [Business Improvement Grant \(BIG\)](#) which offers businesses funding in specific categories, such as awnings, façade lighting or hanging signage. These categories rotate on an annual basis, allowing the city to focus on specific exterior building elements that can enhance the appearance and functionality of the downtown.

zoning & design guidelines

Antiquated zoning ordinances will prevent physical change from catching up to cultural change.

¹ Jacksonville Main Street Financial Incentives.

Communities can prevent the deterioration of the downtown by ensuring that their zoning is consistent with the language of their vision in the Comprehensive Plan or other strategic documents. Most cities interviewed have adopted the International Property Maintenance Code, International Residential Code for One and Two Family Dwellings and the International Mechanical Code from 2006 or later. Cities such as Mount Vernon have adopted language specifying the [definition of unsafe of dilapidating buildings](#) and creating protocol to bring them up to code at the owner's expense.

Those communities which have established Historic Preservation Commissions have [adopted zoning language](#)² to reflect the importance of preserving historic buildings – most often including the establishment of a commission, protocols for the designation of landmark buildings and restrictions on the alteration of such buildings. As Main Street communities, they have also adopted the Secretary of the Interior's [Standards for Rehabilitation](#) which provides guiding principles for the rehabilitation of historically significant structures. Some communities have chosen to incentivize the preservation or maintenance of historically significant buildings by tying their available grant or loan money to design guidelines.

upper-floor residential

Residential space in the downtown is a cash cow.

Steady rental incomes can provide building owners with supplemental income when business is slow. In three communities interviewed, upper floor residential was privately owned and was primarily directed at young professionals or empty-nesters; these populations are capable of affording above-market rents and are more likely to see the benefit of living near downtown amenities such as coffee shops or restaurants. One community, Mount Vernon, targets college students from Cornell College to live in the second-story apartments and has been very successful – 26 residential units now exist downtown, 8 of which were renovated since 2008 and all have a constant wait-list for occupancy.³

saving at-risk structures

Pulling at-risk buildings off the market.

Craig Tebon explained that Ripon Main Street is capable of purchasing at-risk buildings in order to renovate them.⁴ Ripon Main Street acts as a 'project manager' that improves buildings before returning them to the private market for re-sale. Other municipalities indicated their ability to purchase buildings but cited a lack of capital as a reason that they do not often purchase at-risk buildings.

social networking

The cost of marketing and advertising can be high, but nearly all forms of social media are free.

² City of Jacksonville, IL Municipal Code. Via Municode.com. Accessed 09 August 2011.

³ Interview with Joe Jennison, Executive Director of the Mount Vernon-Lisbon Community Development Group. 6 July 2011.

⁴ Interview with Craig Tebon, Executive Director of Ripon Main Street. 11 July 2011.

Communities are increasingly turning to social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter to connect to residents and consumers. While all four case study communities currently utilize Facebook, they varied in their capacity as “networkers.” The [Jacksonville Main Street Facebook page](#) is linked to the Facebook page of dozens of area businesses that list their location, hours of operation and website. Ripon, Wisconsin is similarly connected to local businesses and posts nearly every day with news of upcoming events and photography from around the city.

regionalism

No city is an island.

Collaboration between municipalities can promote greater regional tourism and attraction with greater economies of scale for labor, marketing and materials provision. The [Lincoln Highway Association](#) (LHA) is an excellent example of a multi-state program that supports tourism along a single, contiguous roadway. Mount Vernon, Iowa participates in several annual events as part of the Iowa chapter of the LHA, including an antiques festival and an arts festival.

town-gown relationships

City-college relationships are not taking full advantage of potential opportunities.

Despite their prominence in the community – both physically and culturally – few of the colleges in the communities interviewed have made motions to invest in the downtown. The colleges primarily collect contiguous land parcels near the main campus or land at the urban fringe. Many campuses provide services internally that are also found in the community, such as fast food restaurants, bookstores and entertainment venues. Insular institutions do a disservice to students by separating them from community opportunities. The disconnect is caused by the intersection of many factors: lack of adequate transportation options, little to do in the downtown,

Students’ needs often overlap those of community members. Downtown shops are capable of serving dual markets, especially when college campuses are often less than one mile from the center of town. Students are attracted to downtown centers for bars, restaurants, coffee houses and – in limited cases – housing. Craig Tebon indicated that students seem increasingly interested in stores that promote fair trade and organic products which already existed to serve the local market.

overcoming redundancy

Smaller communities must avoid duplicating effort.

While multiple economic /community development businesses may be appropriate for larger municipalities, it may be important to pare down multiple organizations in small communities. Mount Vernon, Iowa collapsed its Chamber of Commerce, Visitors Bureau and economic development corporation into a single entity – the [Mount Vernon-Lisbon Community Development Group](#) -- which now only employs one full-time staff member (the Executive Director); the remaining positions are held by board members and the labor is provided by a volunteer workforce. This strategy reduces overhead costs by eliminating extra salaries and streamlining decision making processes.

volunteerism

A good measure of public buy-in is the number of people recruited to volunteer their time.

Volunteers are a largely untapped resource in small communities. The Main Street Program encourages cities to utilize formal or informal committees to tackle large projects and to task citizens with jobs that help improve the downtown. This process can be simplified by providing volunteers with guidelines that reduce uncertainty in outcomes. For example, Mount Vernon provides a [Design Standards Manual](#) so that businesses and laypeople can advertise under the banner of the Mount Vernon-Lisbon Community Development Group.

Students are a valuable community resource that is underutilized in communities where town-gown relationships are sub-optimal. As part of their education and to promote civic responsibility, students can be tasked with promoting events or sharing their educational skills with residents; this is bargain labor since often students can be provided with course credit in lieu of financial compensation.

know your market

Business owners need help identifying and analyzing market data.

The best information comes from data collection on the ground. Market analysis based on Census data or privately collected data pools is a great starting point for communities to identify where they might develop niche markets. However, businesses and communities can also do their own reconnaissance to find out who customers are and where they come from. Mr. Jennison explained that Mount Vernon has hired surveyors in the past to attend local events and discover who travels to Mount Vernon, why and how much money they spend while they're there. This information is then communicated to business owners in an attempt to show them their strongest market segments.

Business owners benefit from regular technical assistance

Mount Vernon offers businesses a variety of teaching seminars on topics such as website design, website optimization, statistics or data analysis and historic preservation/green building design. In many cases, these seminars were taught by students from the local Cornell College, the local high school or local professionals. Six times per year, Mount Vernon hosts a business networking event where all local businesses are invited to network and share ideas; the Community Development Group (CDG) also hosts events specifically for Main Street businesses to discuss issues related to the historic downtown.

going forward

Revitalization can be a frustrating task because “the first step” is never clear – business owners want to see adequate infrastructure before they renovate, but municipalities need higher property taxes to provide better infrastructure. A truly collaborative effort requires mutual respect between business owners and municipalities because it asks them to pool their collective resources for a mutually beneficial outcome, with neither party given absolute assurance that the outcome will be perfect. Municipalities need to begin with information dissemination and follow it with guidelines and incremental goals with measurable outcomes. The following are topics that allow municipalities to work with property owners toward creating aesthetically pleasing and functional downtowns.

form based codes

Form based codes can eliminate hurdles to mixed use and changes in use.

[Form based codes](#) (FBCs) offer municipalities a chance to create sustainable, mixed-use areas that are walkable and sustainable. Form based codes ensure that private property [complements and adds to the public realm](#) of streets and sidewalks. Form based codes can be used in tandem with or in lieu of existing zoning ordinances and can still carry the full force of binding regulations. For example, Arlington, Virginia implemented an optional form based code for its [Columbia Pike](#) commercial center system that offers incentives such as expedited review and approvals to encourage use; this code illustrates the wide variety of goals that can be accomplished (providing adequate parking, bicycle rack design, designation of allowable primary and secondary retail uses) within a single, unified code provision.

upper floor renovation guidebook

Creating a meeting of the minds between property owners and municipalities to generate quality downtown residential dwellings.

Structures with vacant upper floors often get that way because of the prohibitive cost to renovate the space. Building owners may not fully understand what needs to be done to bring a building up to compliance in terms of fire safety, disabled accessibility and other standards of safety and health. Some owners acquired buildings without a firm understanding of the level of renovation that would be required or the cost of renovations. Technical assistance and targeted funding can be used to help owners make the decision to renovate or sell their building. Pittsburgh offers [financing specifically for the renovation of upper floors](#) to property owners that meet specific parameters. The Pittsburgh Upstairs Fund is a three phase project spanning nearly a decade of research on the adaptive reuse of upper floors; the first phase involved determining which buildings could be renovated for housing and the second phase involved providing free schematic consultations for owners interested in renovating.

sustainability and walkable urbanism

Human-scale storefronts need pedestrian access that invites tourism and leisure.

Downtowns in small communities were originally designed for human-scale interaction; they are meant to be walked and many of them have limited parking as a result of this original design. While vehicular traffic is important to many downtowns with regional visitors, the ability for pedestrians to move through the downtown without feeling hindered by traffic is an important part of “place-making.”

Aspects of creating walkable urbanism might include:

- Creating shared roadways for bicycles
- Providing amenities such as benches, bike racks and trash cans
- Creating crosswalks that prioritize pedestrian traffic

Walkable urbanism is good for everyone, but it is especially beneficial for aging populations, who prefer to stay in homes they already own but are often unable to commute to commercial districts far from home. Though the ADA forces municipalities to consider if each building is handicap accessible, few communities have considered whether the urban landscape *outside of buildings* is handicap-accessible; so-called ‘ageless’ communities have amenities that serve all segments of the population equitably. The Partners for Livable Communities have created a [technical manual and report card](#) outlining qualities of ageless communities.

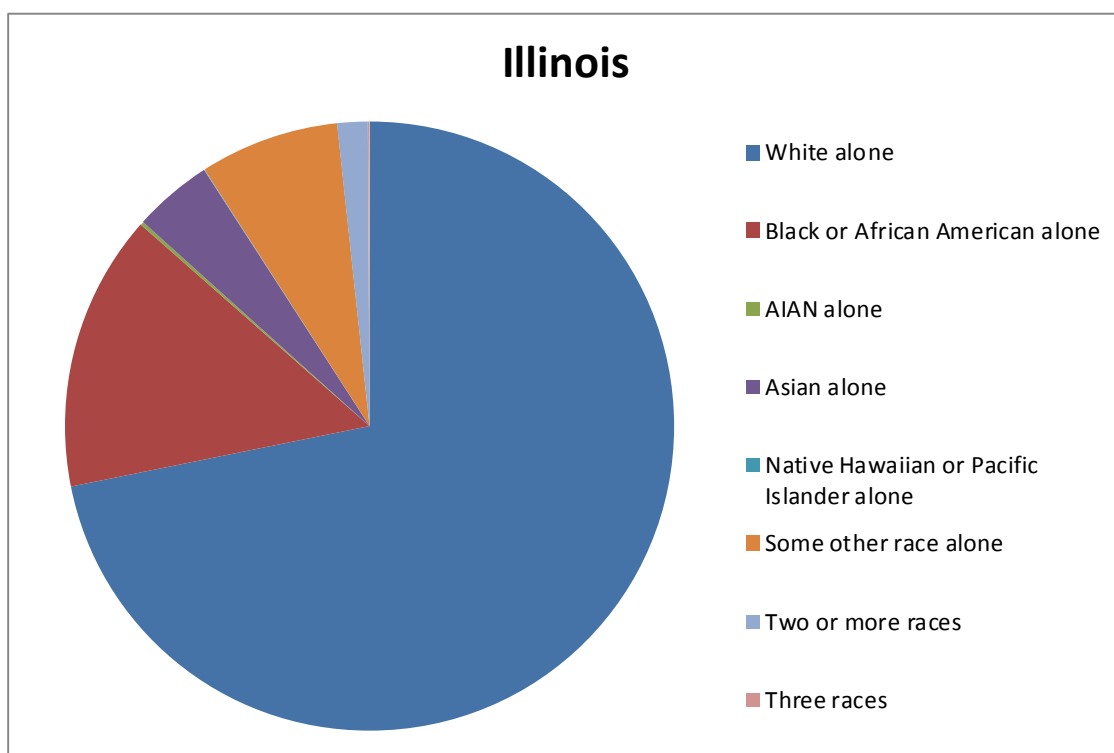
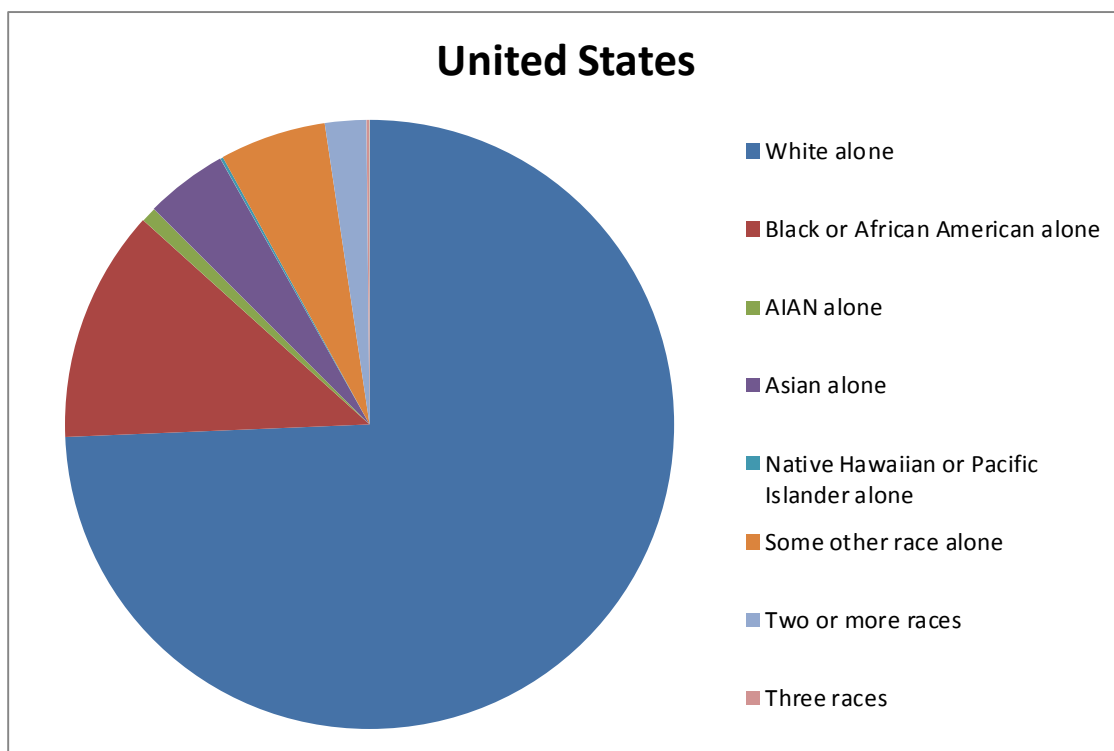
Funding exists for communities to pursue more a more walkable layout. Initial stages involve taking an inventory of existing street and sidewalk conditions and considering routes that would be of greatest service to certain populations such as the elderly or children; this is an opportunity to connect parts of the community such as schools, parks and the downtown. [The National Center for Safe Routes to School](#) offers funding to support infrastructure development that connects residential neighborhoods to schools and community centers.

business improvement district (BID)

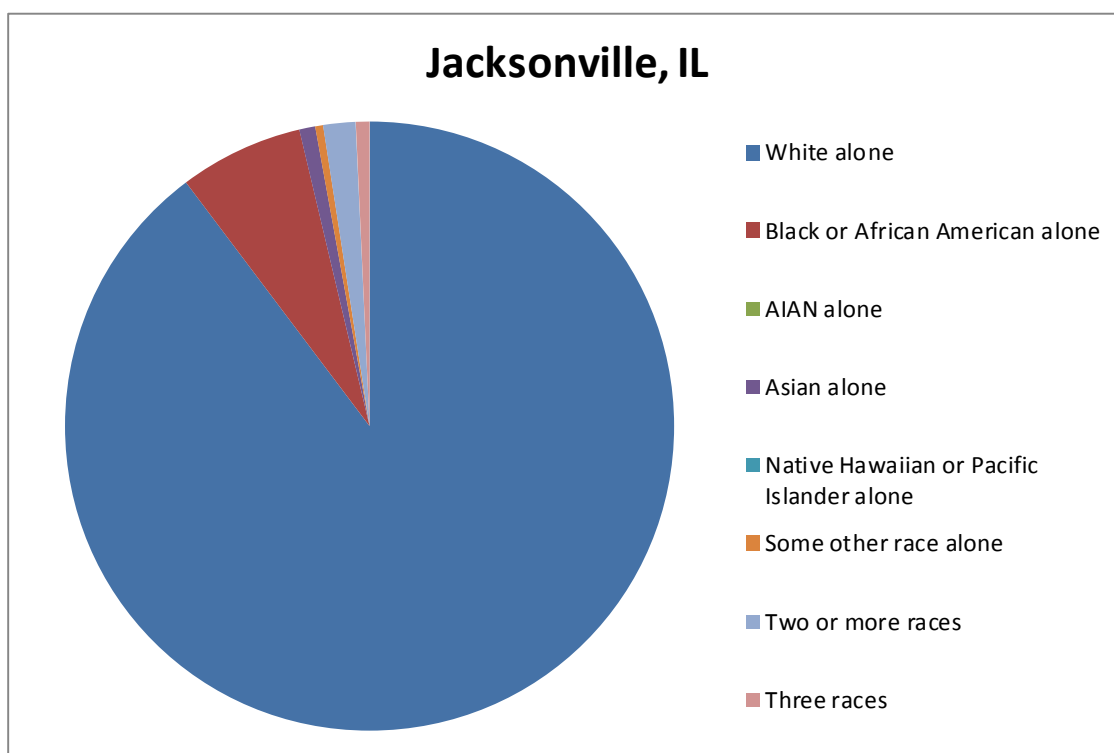
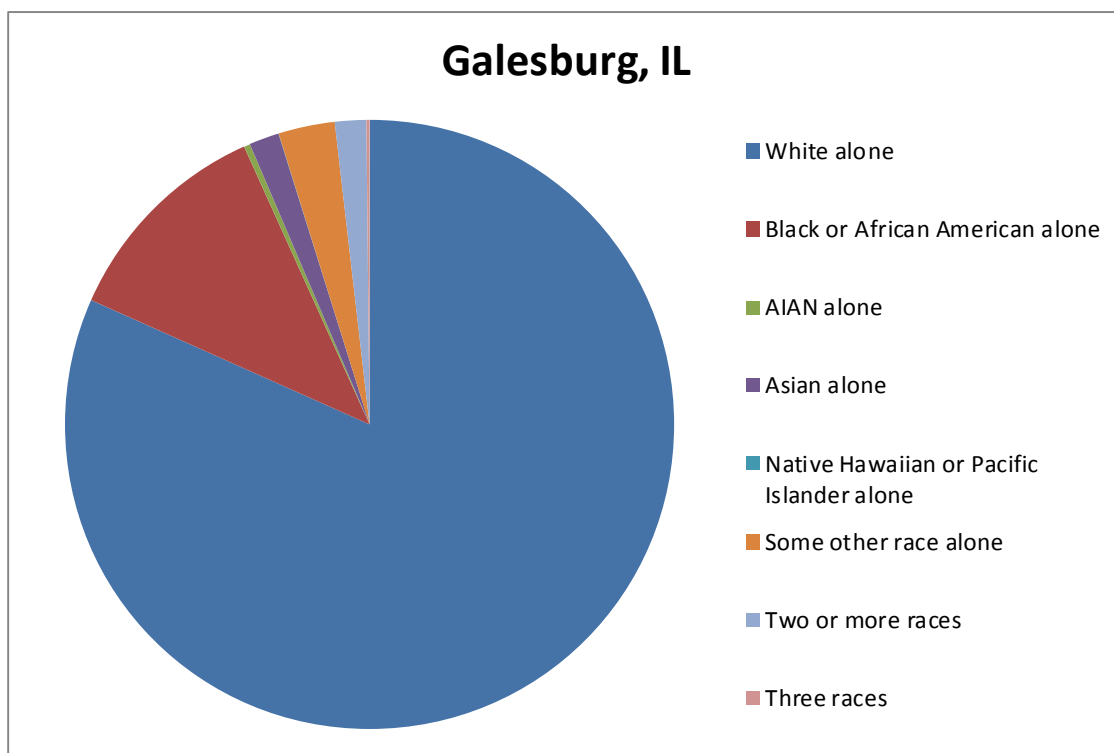
BIDs offer business leaders a chance to dictate how funds are spent on downtown revitalization.

Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) level an additional special assessment on properties that fall into a pre-defined district; the assessment is usually between 1-3 percent of assessed property value and is taxed annually on top of property taxes. Enabling legislation allows cities to establish BIDs for the purpose of revitalizing deteriorating areas. Typically, a BID must be voted on by participating property owners and must pass by a majority vote; they are typically reauthorized every 1-3 years. For a building with an assessed value of \$60,000, this generates an additional tax burden of \$1,800 annually at a 3 percent tax rate; 15 buildings yield an additional \$27,000 that can be used by property owners collectively. Property owners can vote on how BID funds are spent; generally, these funds can be used to improve streetscaping or jointly used features like bike racks, parking, street banners, trash cans or lamp poles.

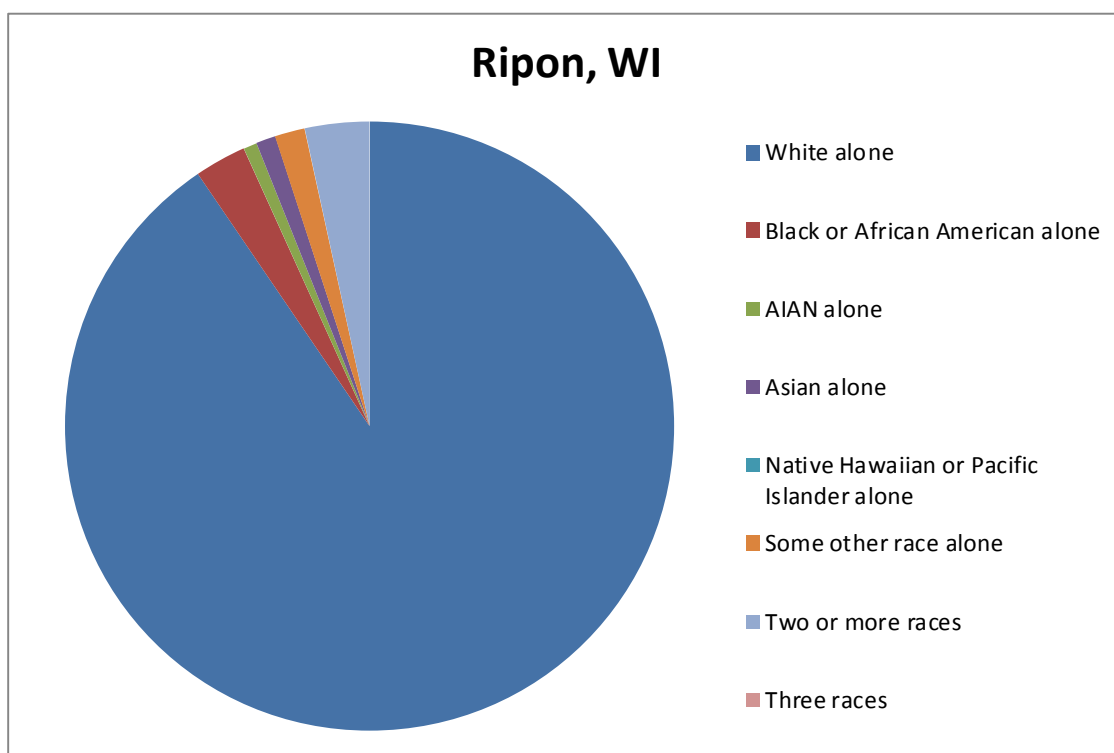
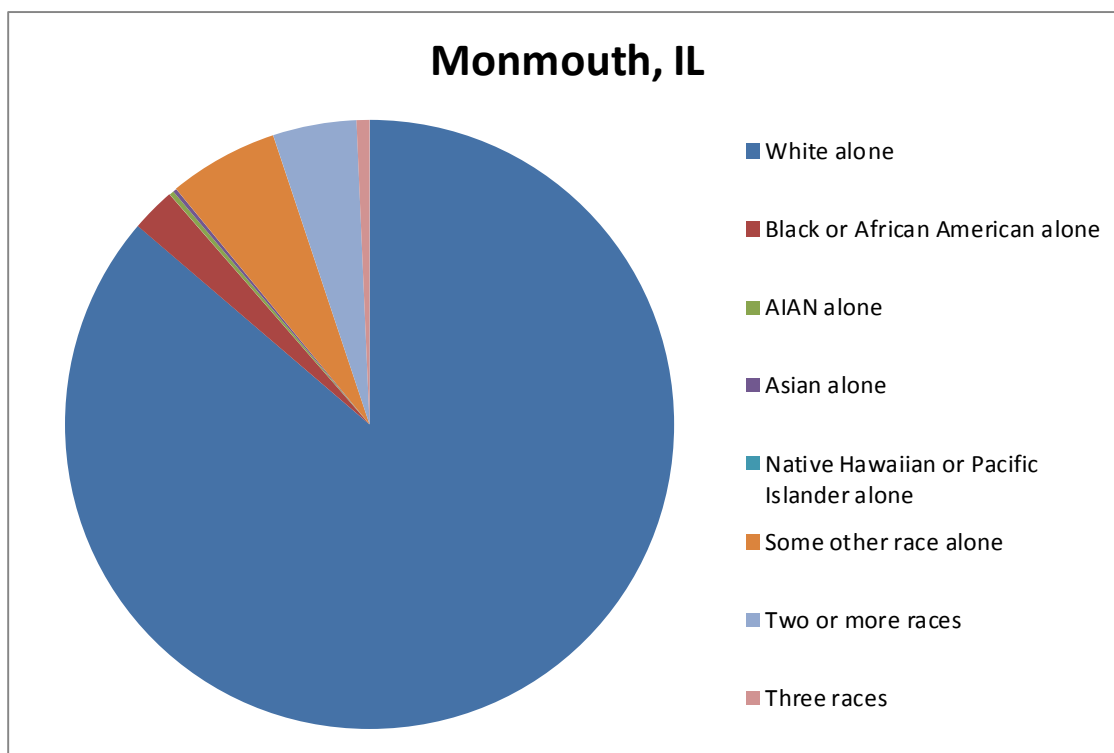
Appendix A: Racial Composition



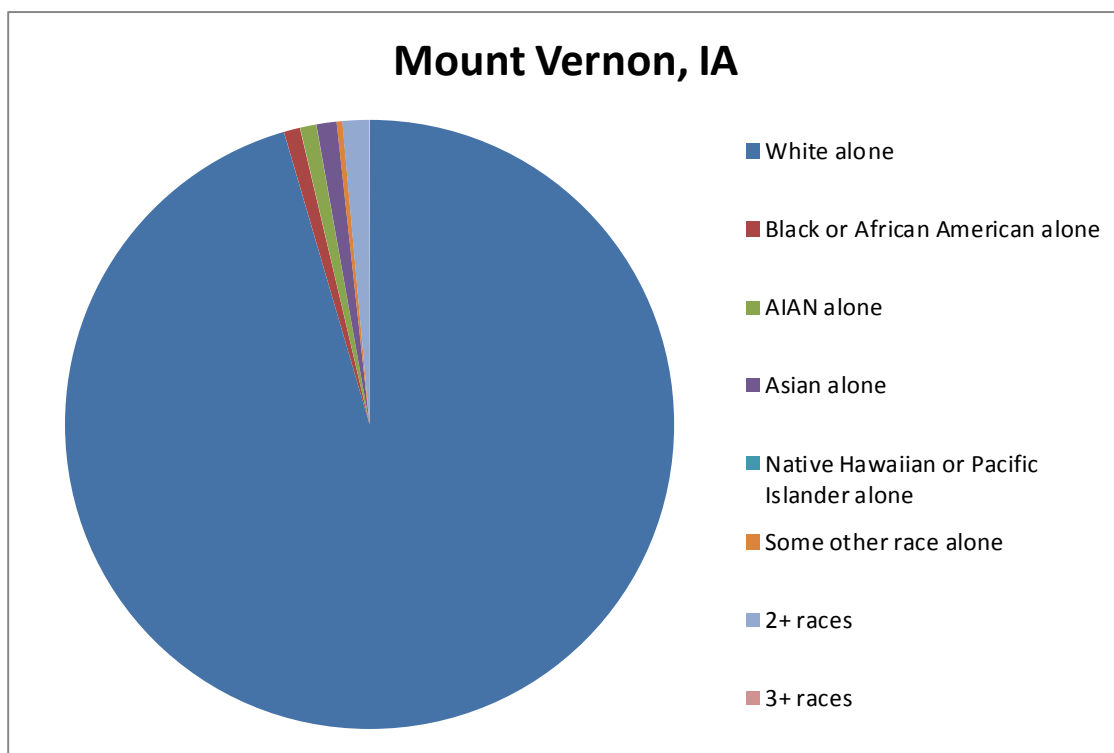
Appendix A: Racial Composition



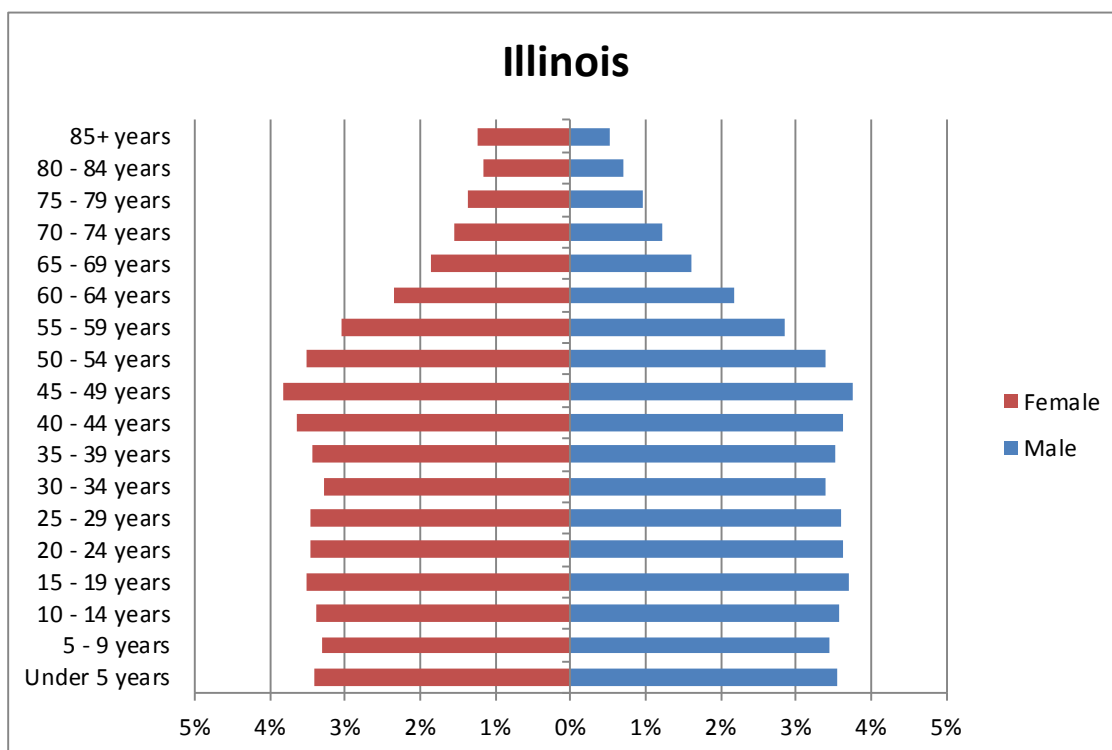
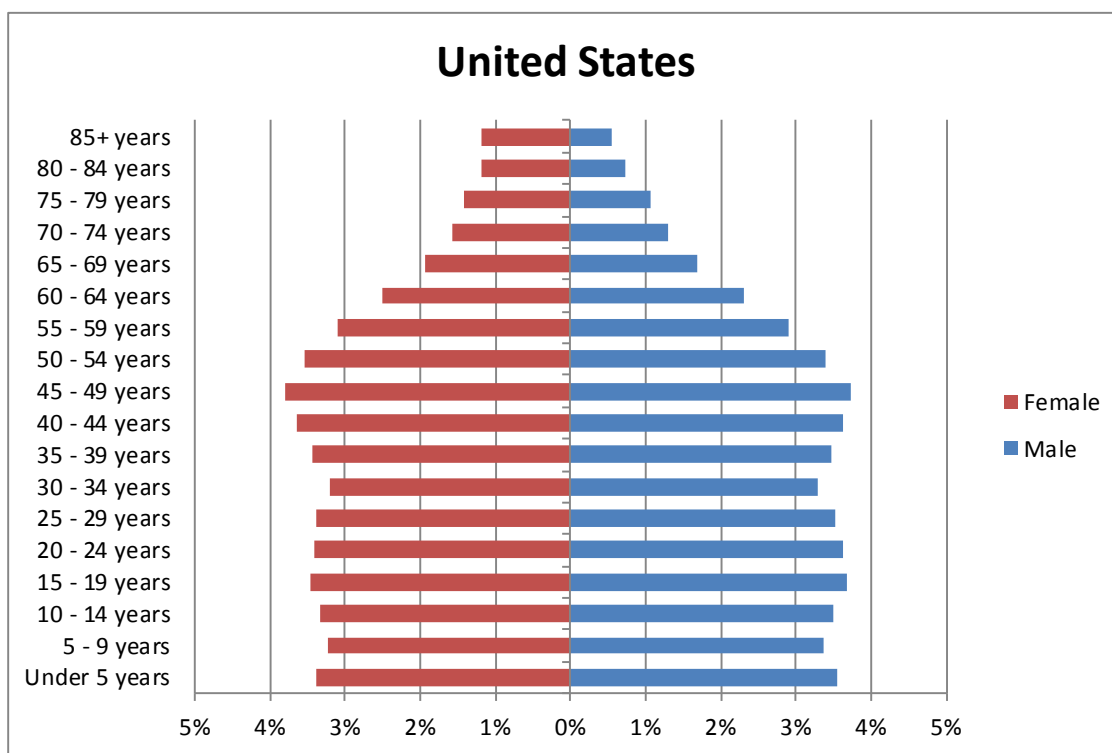
Appendix A: Racial Composition



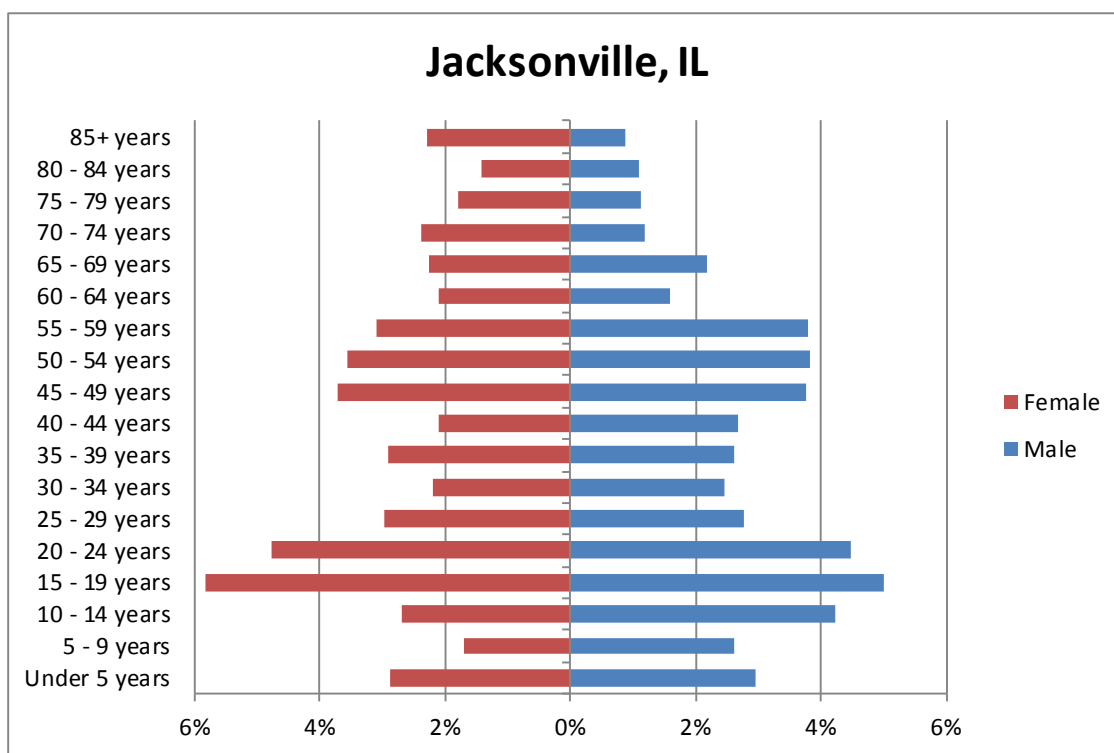
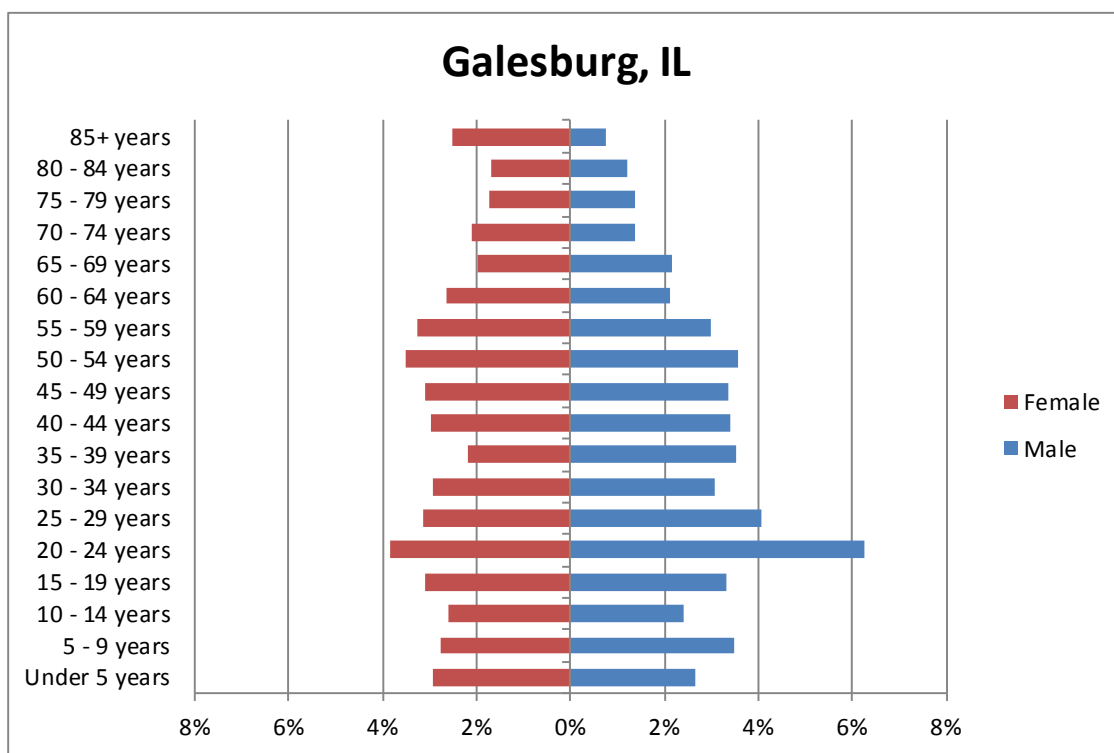
Appendix A: Racial Composition



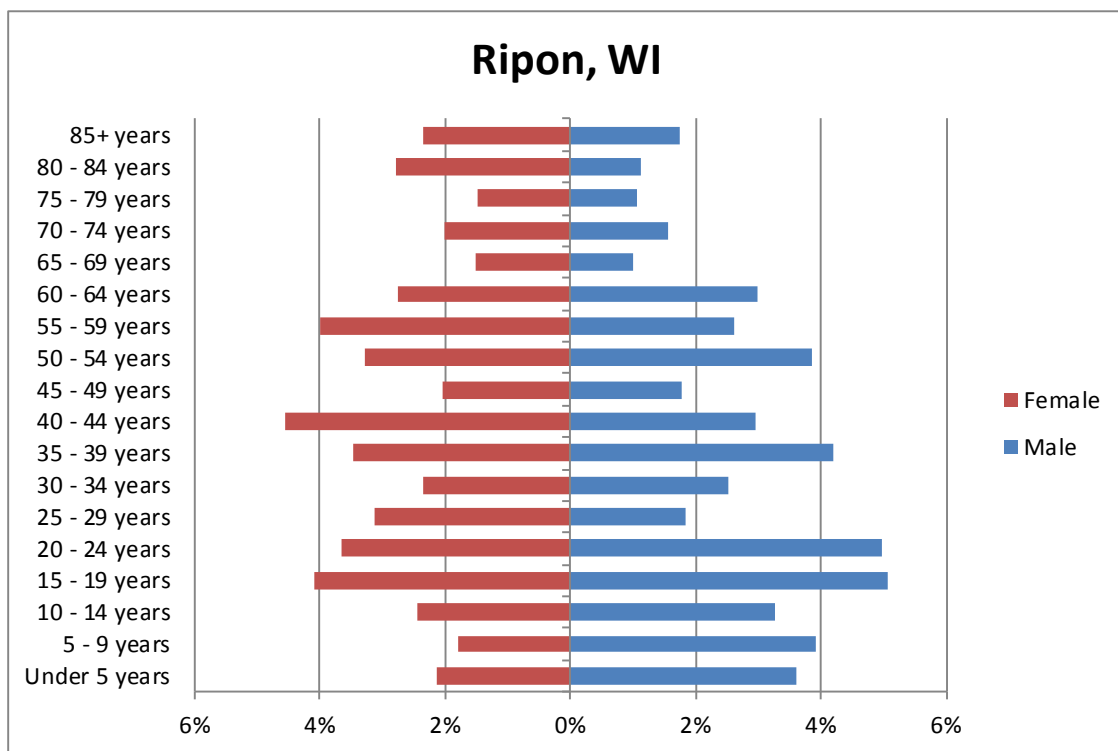
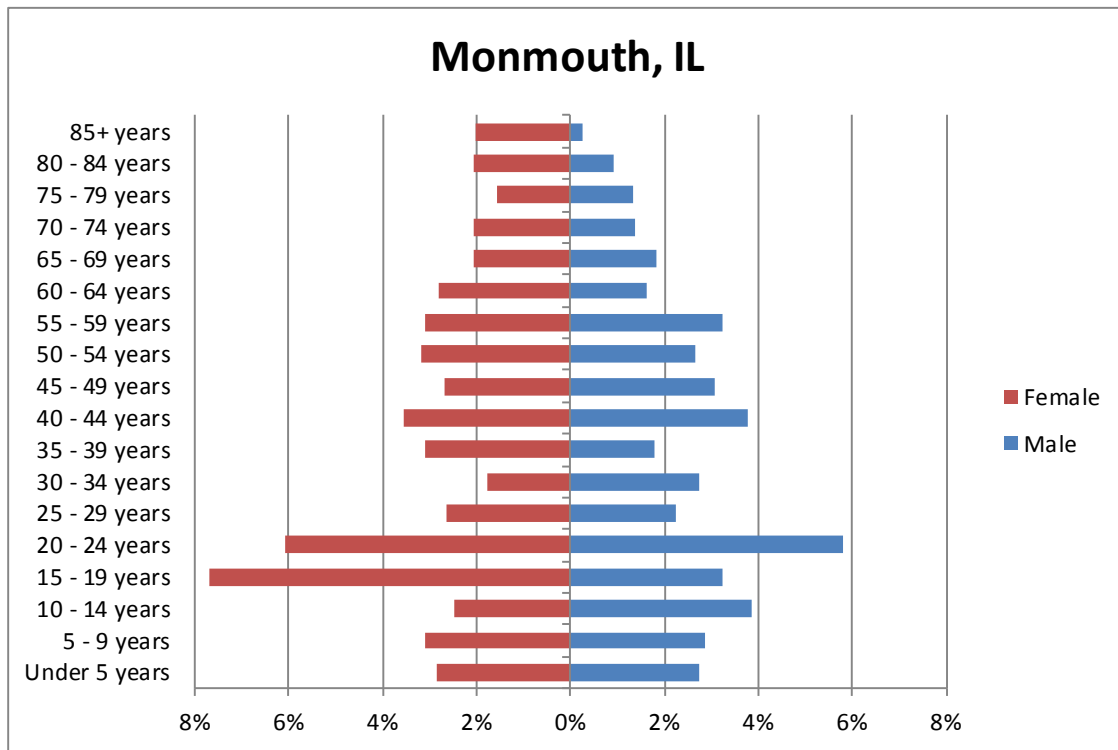
Appendix B: Age by Sex



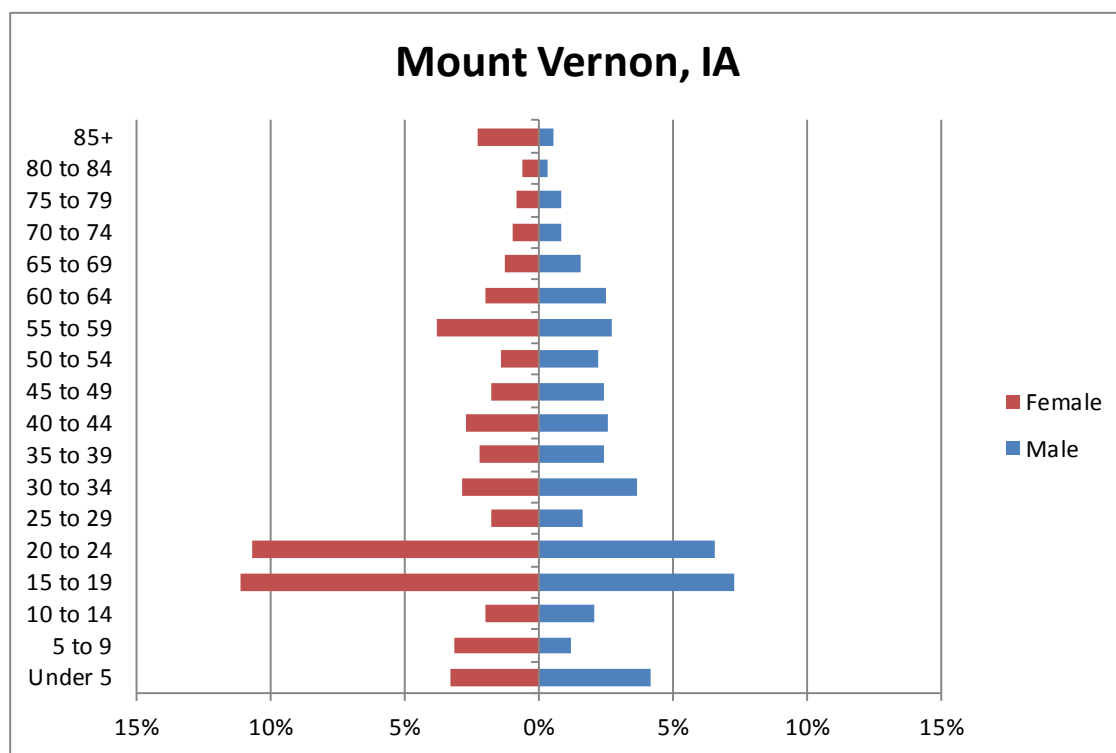
Appendix B: Age by Sex



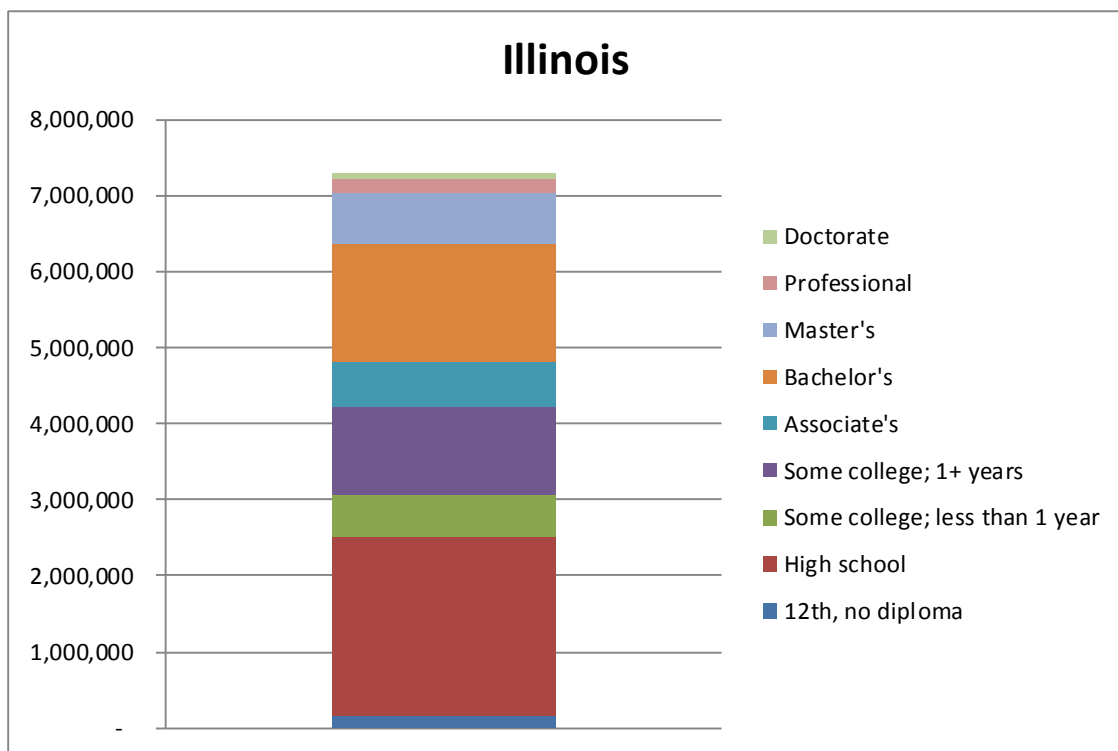
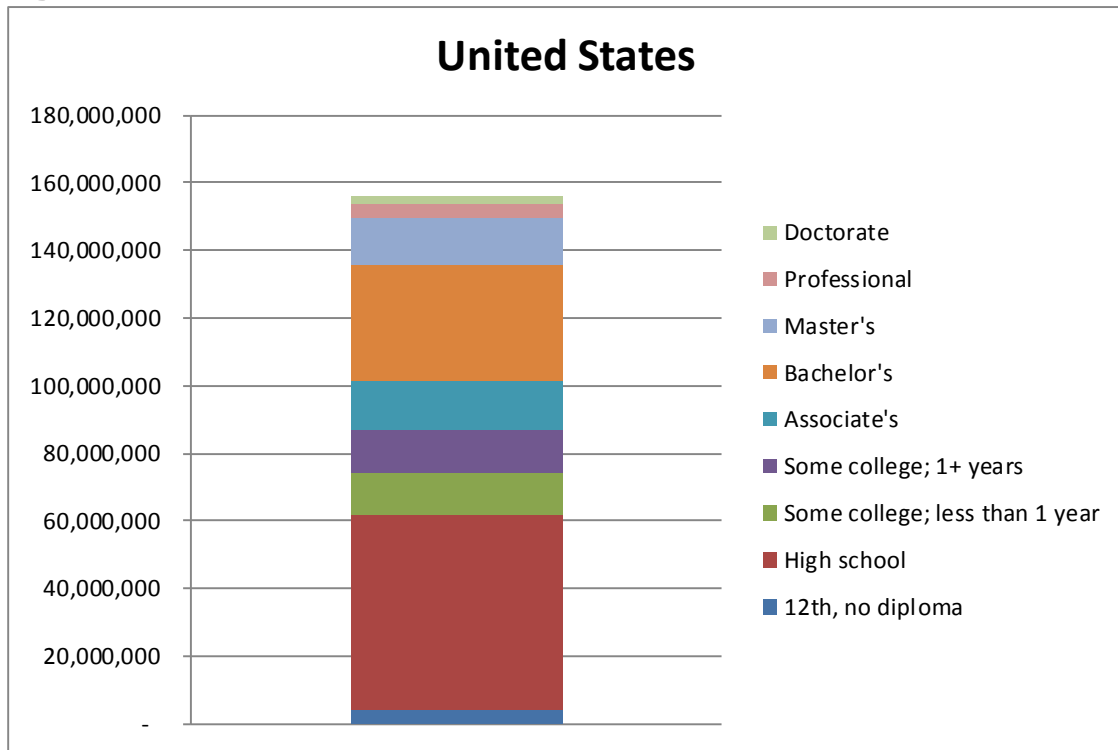
Appendix B: Age by Sex



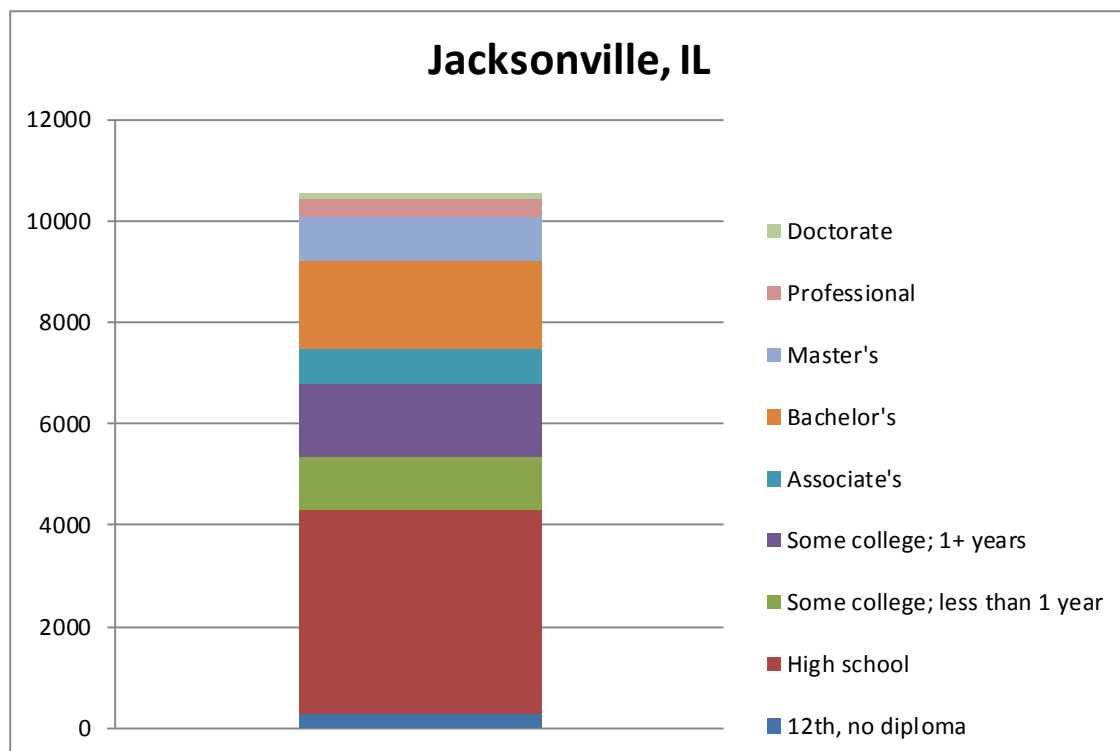
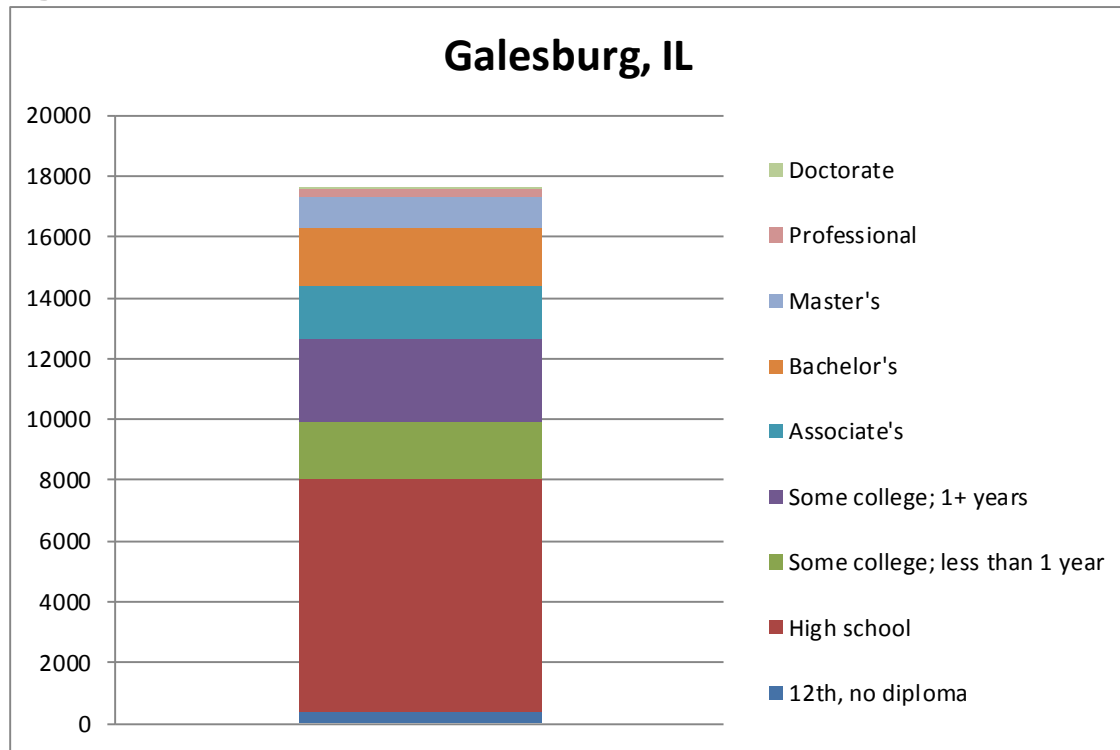
Appendix B: Age by Sex



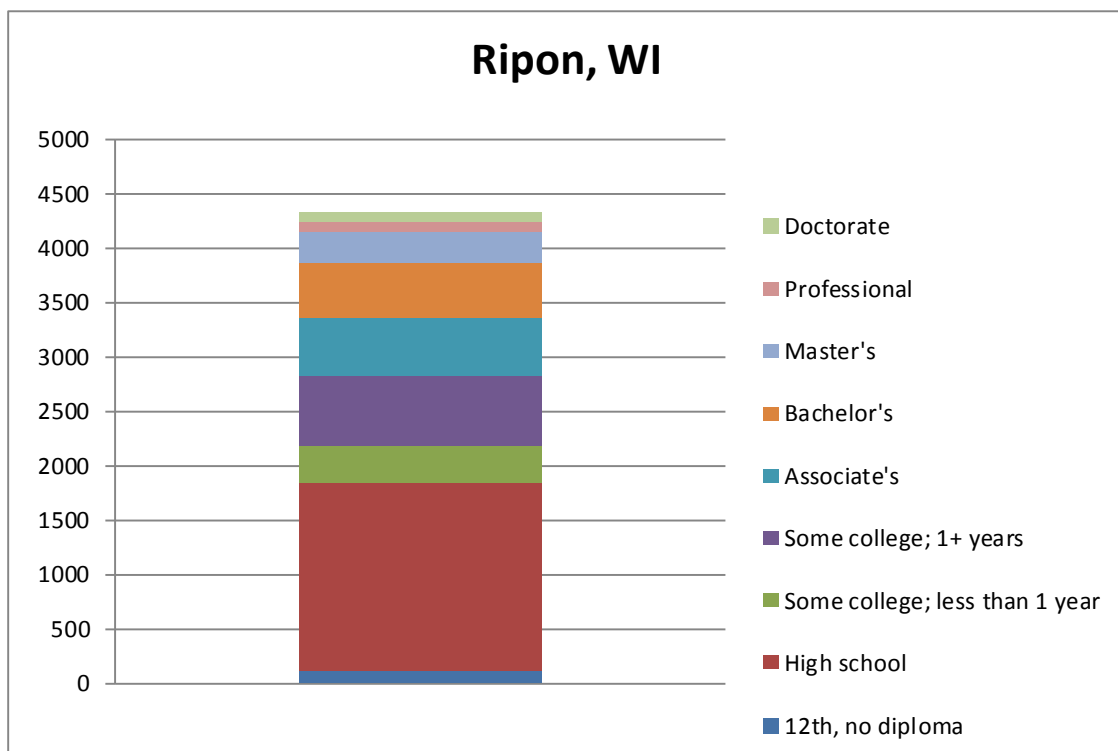
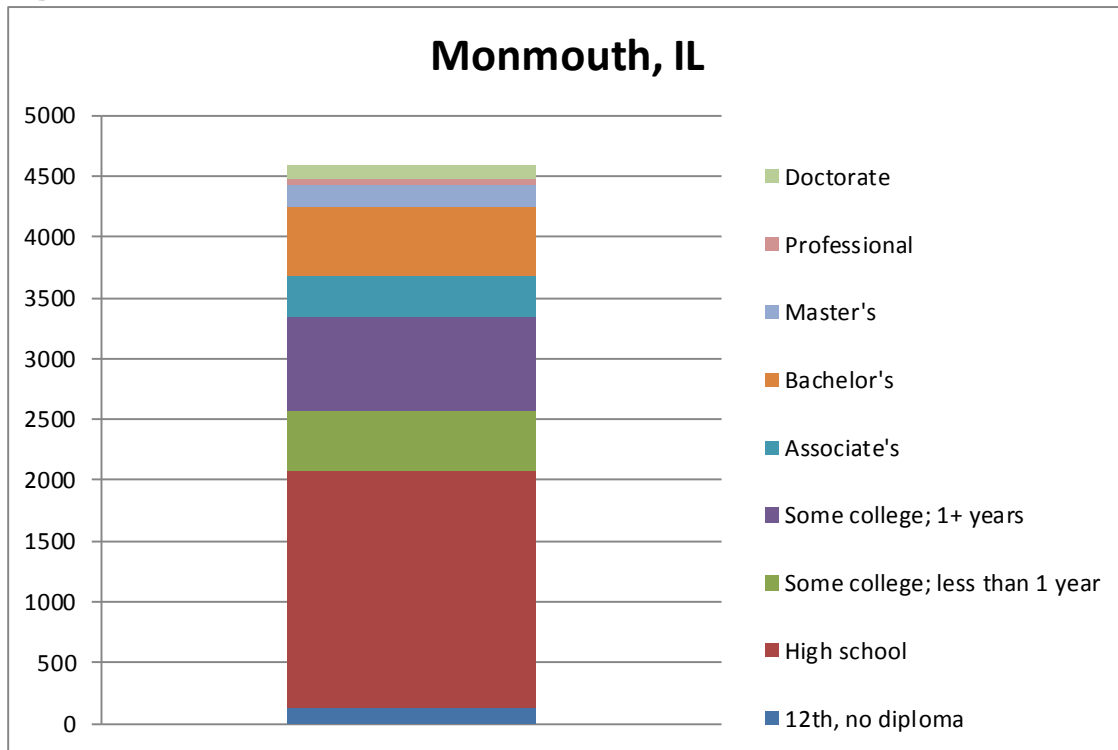
Appendix C: Educational Attainment for Population Over Age 25



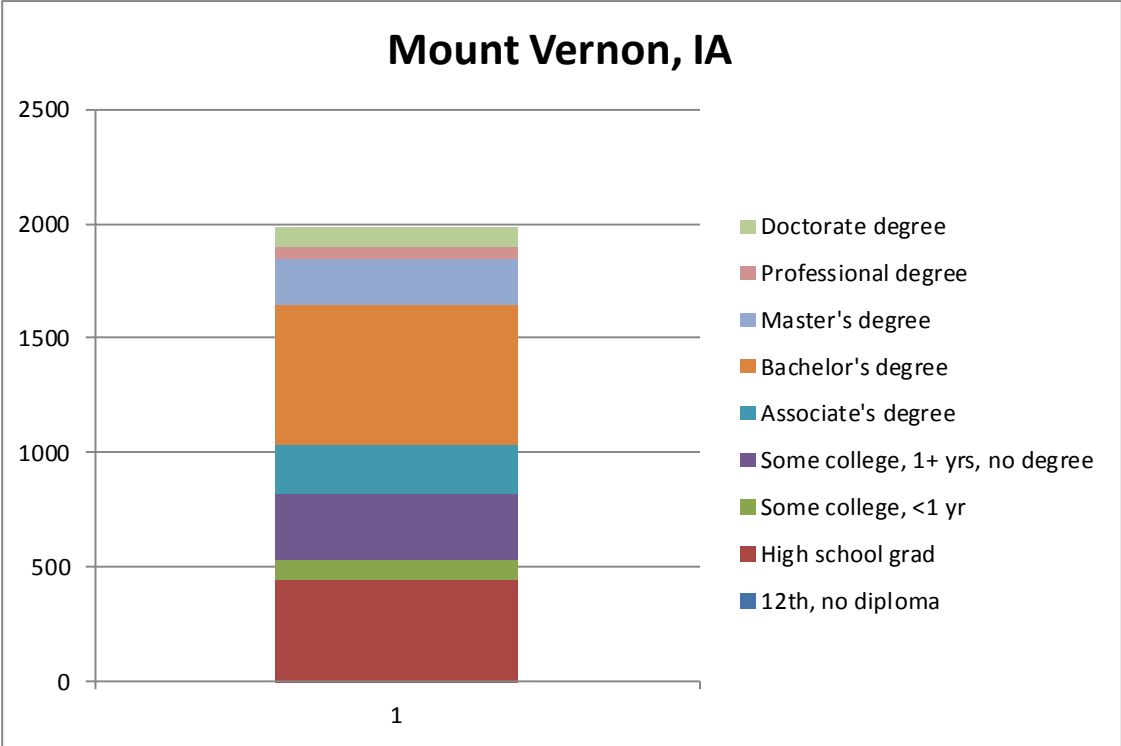
Appendix C: Educational Attainment for Population Over Age 25



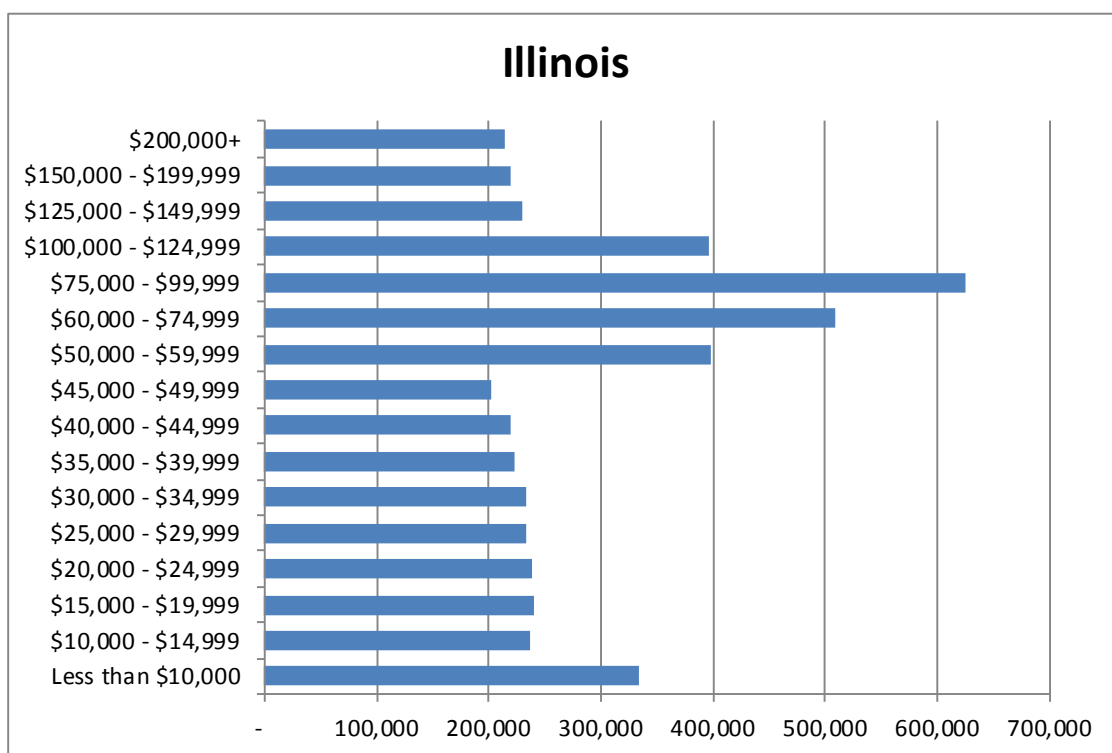
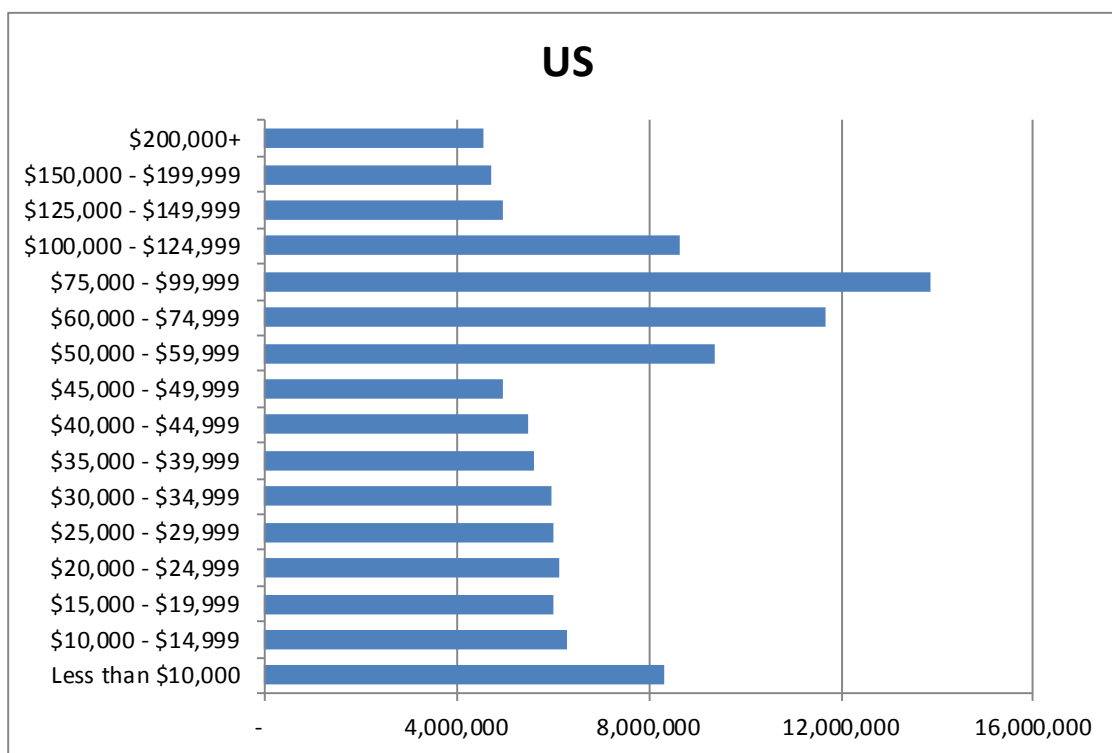
Appendix C: Educational Attainment for Population Over Age 25



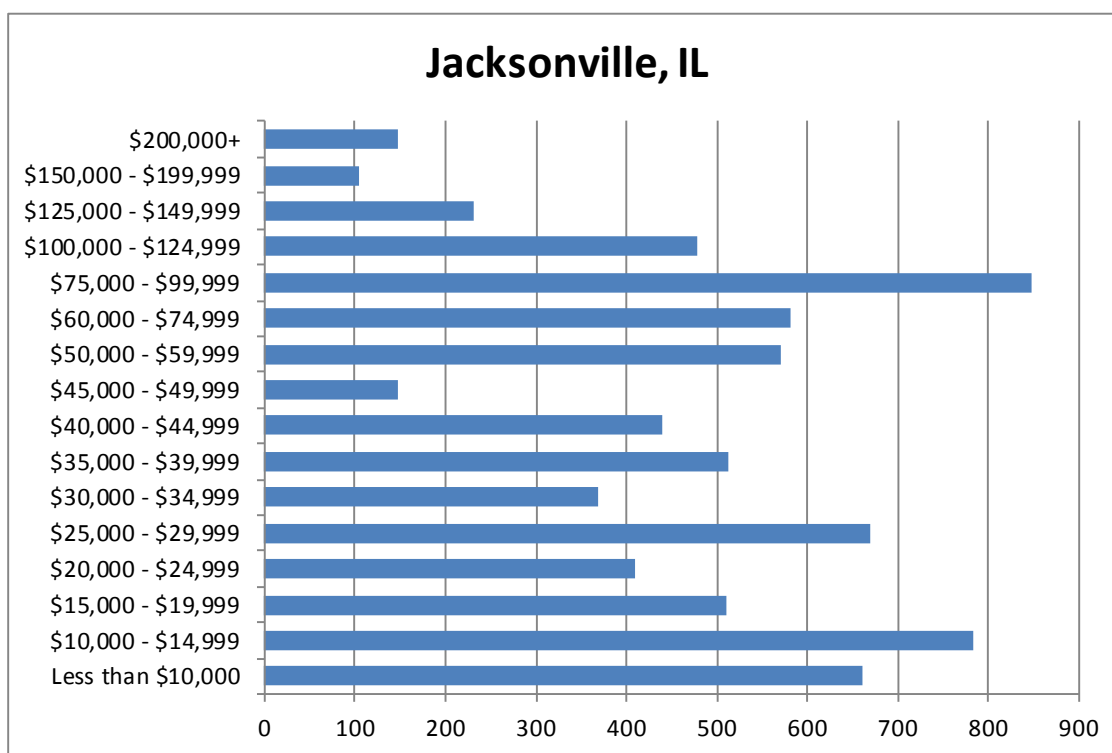
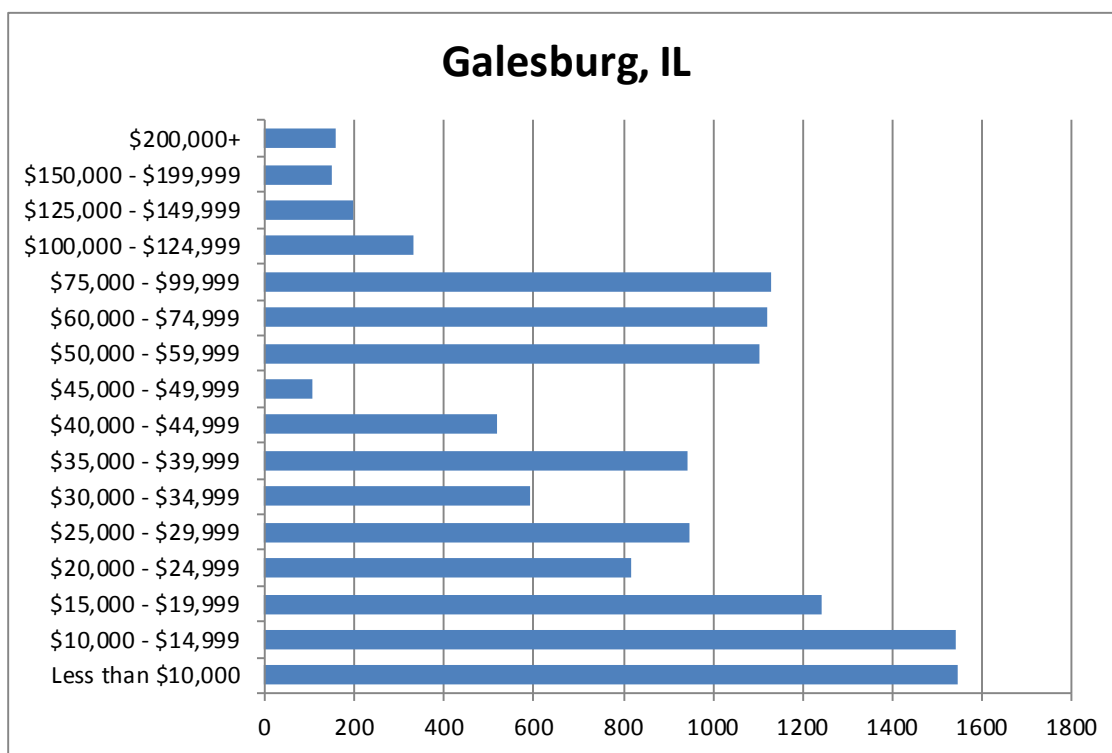
Appendix C: Educational Attainment for Population Over Age 25



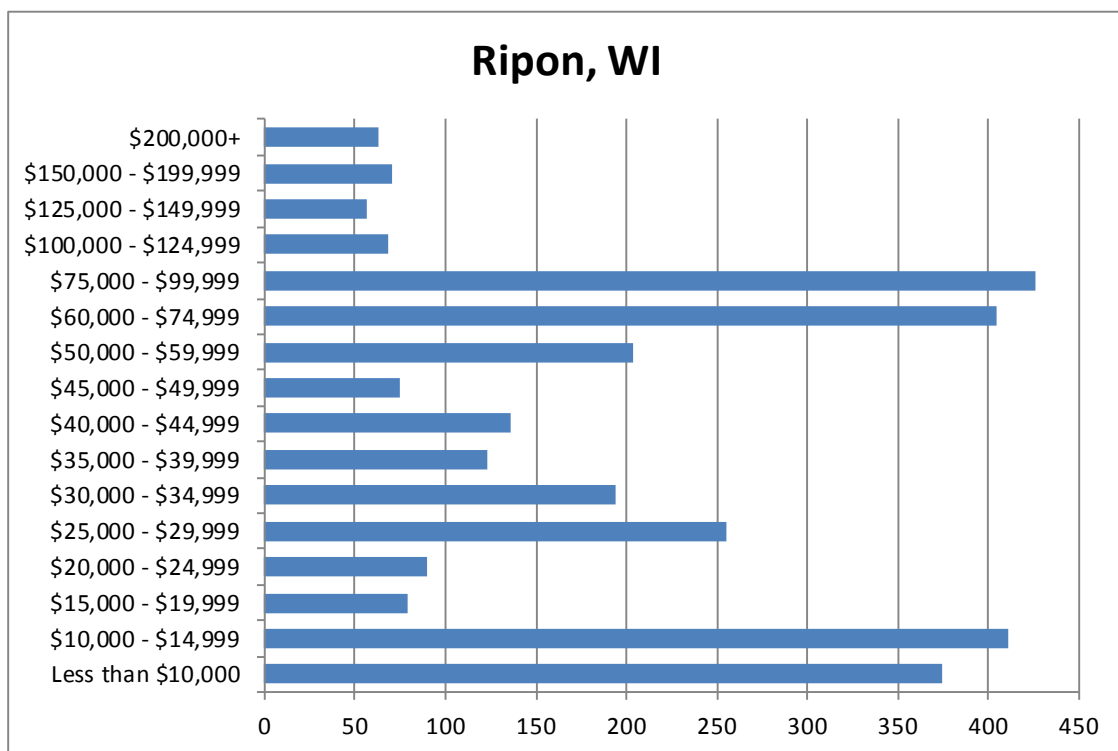
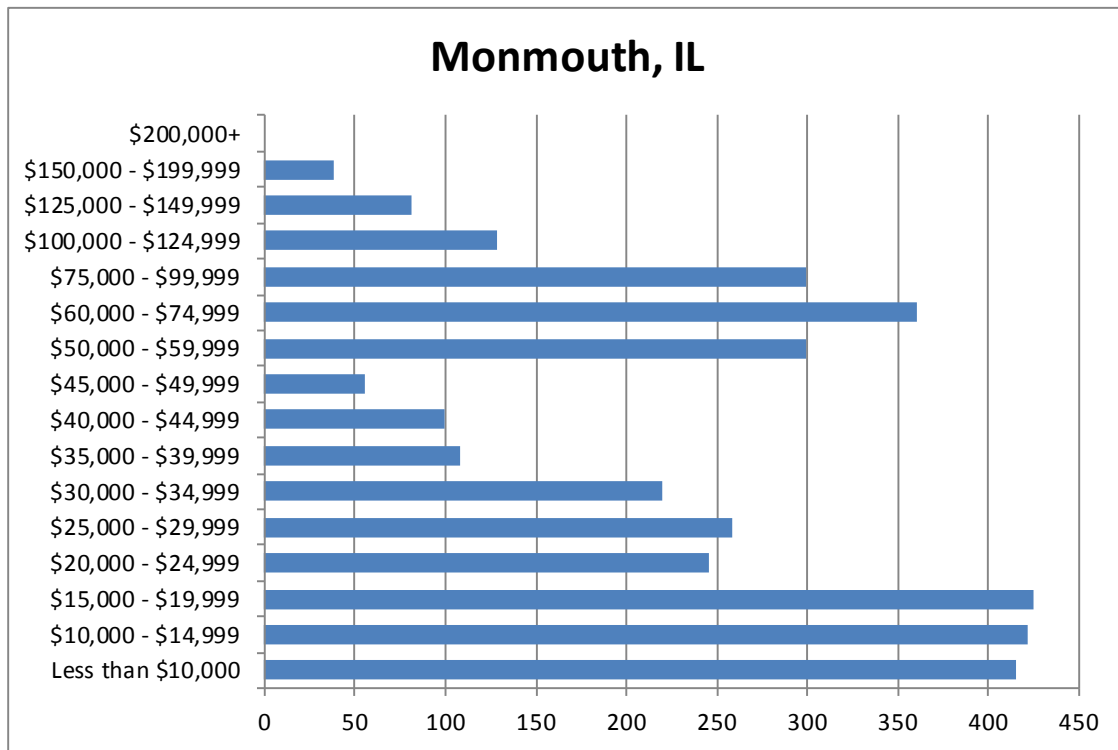
Appendix D: Household Income



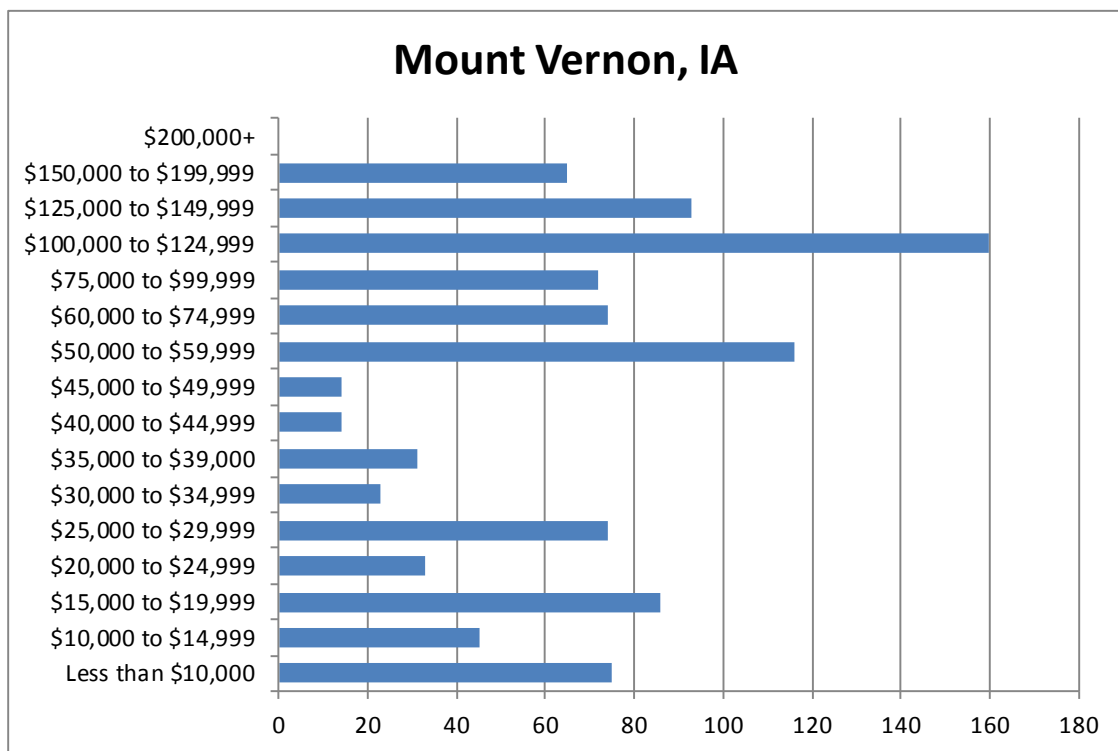
Appendix D: Household Income



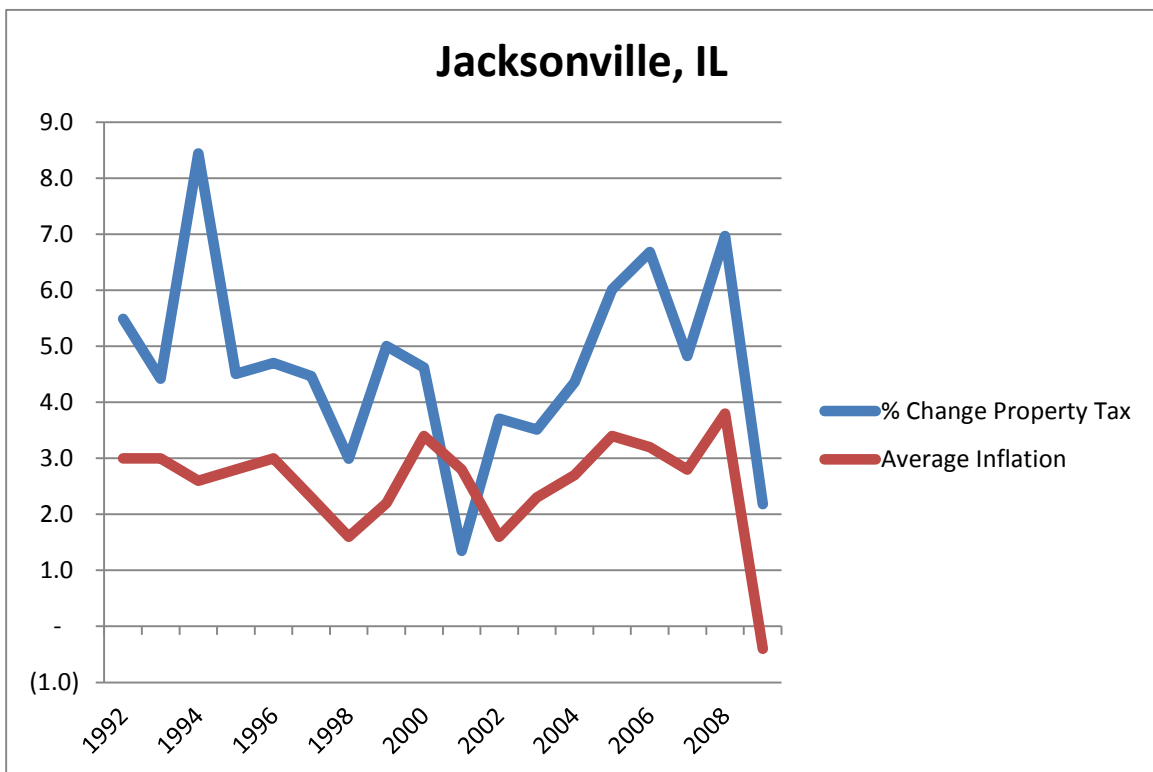
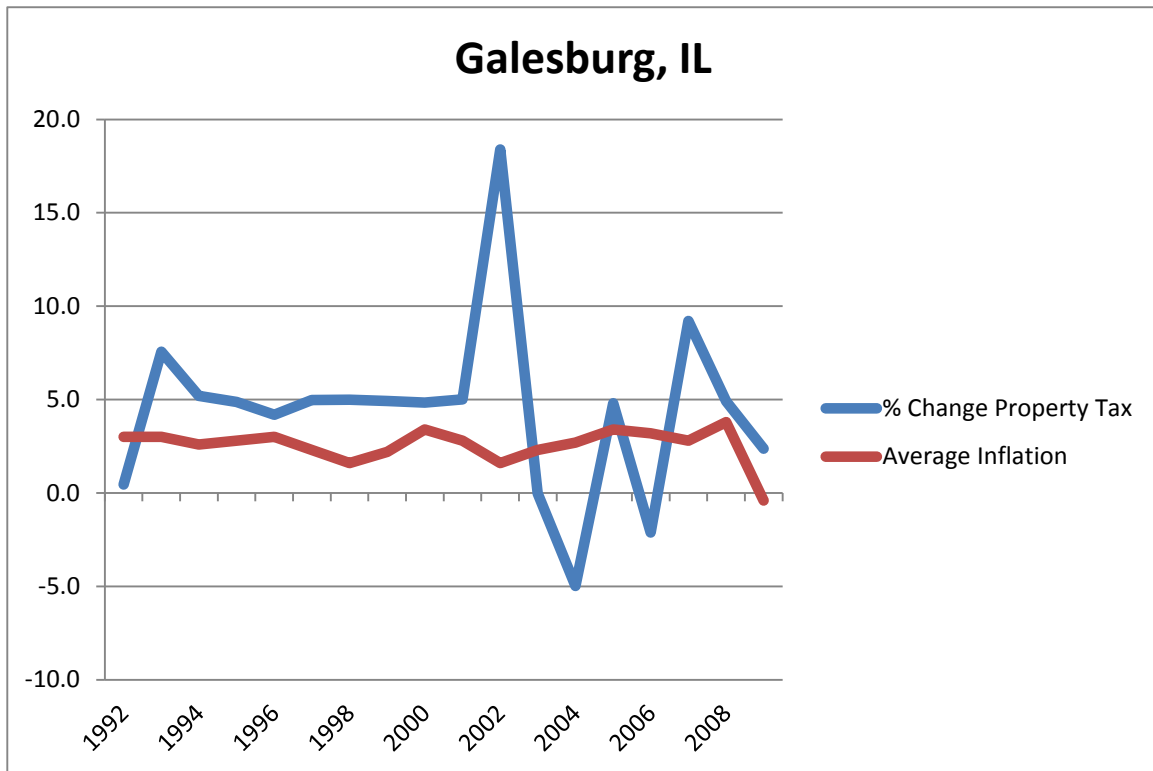
Appendix D: Household Income



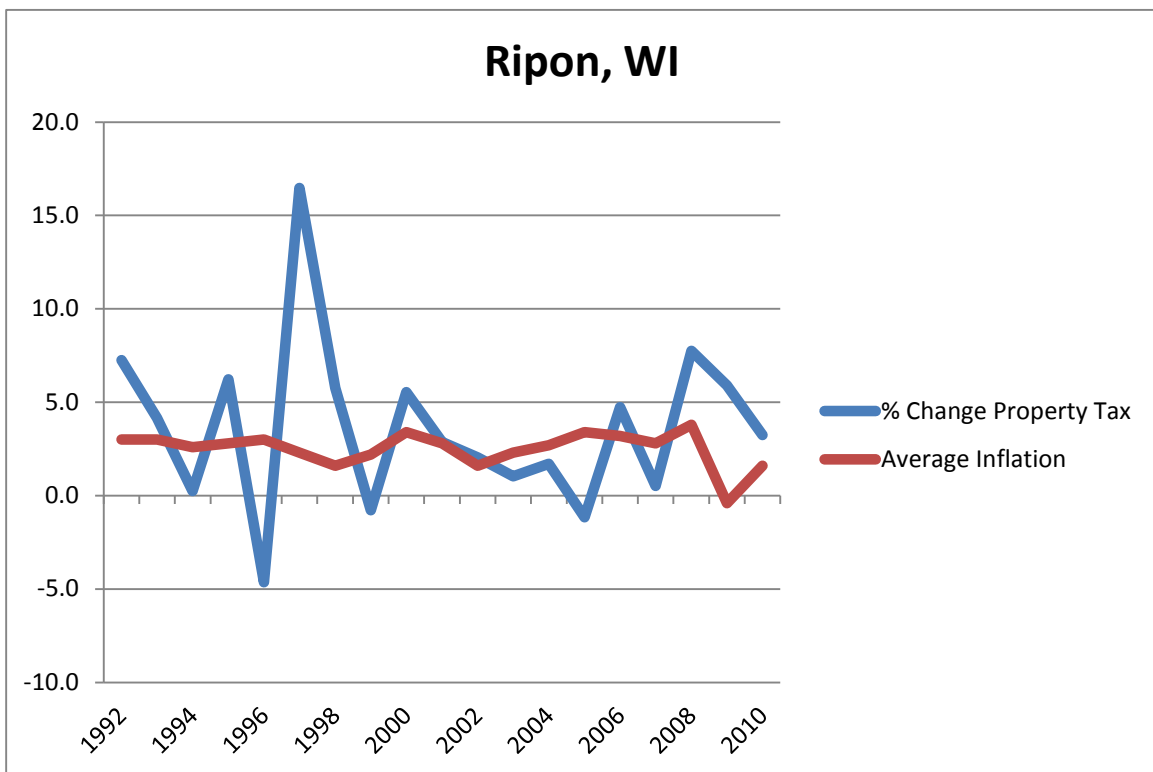
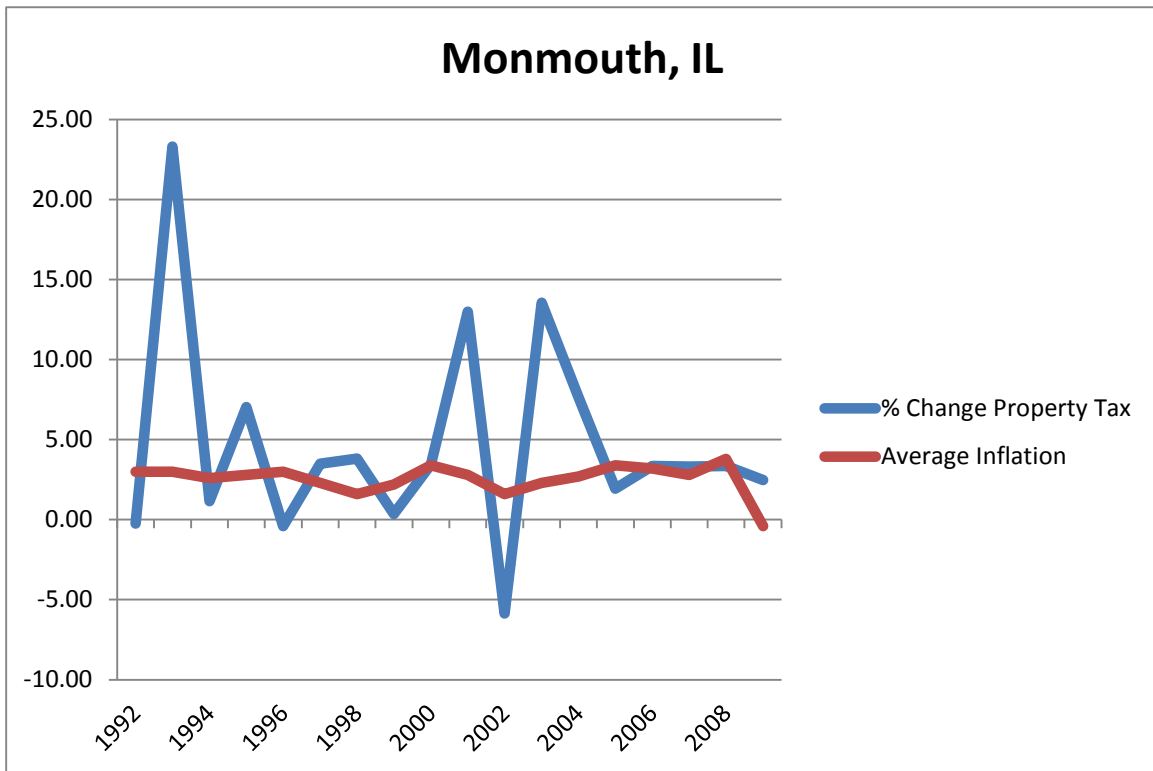
Appendix D: Household Income



Appendix E: Annual Percent Change in Property Tax 1992 - 2010



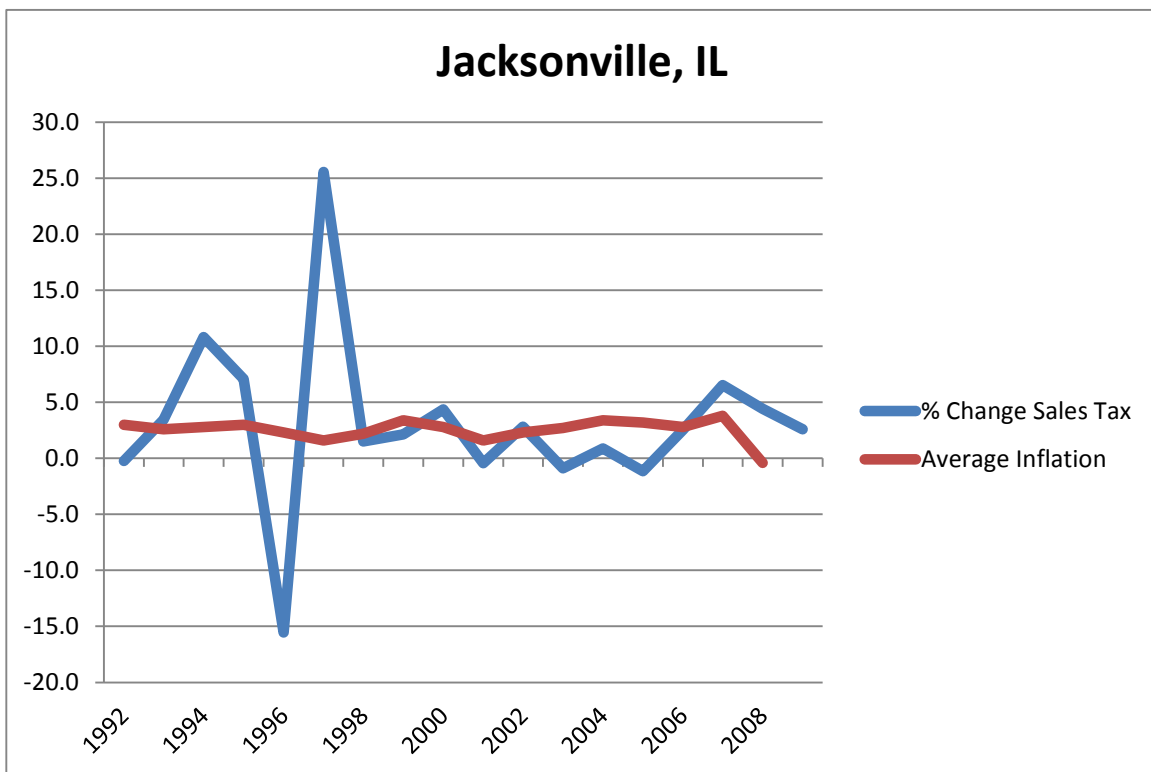
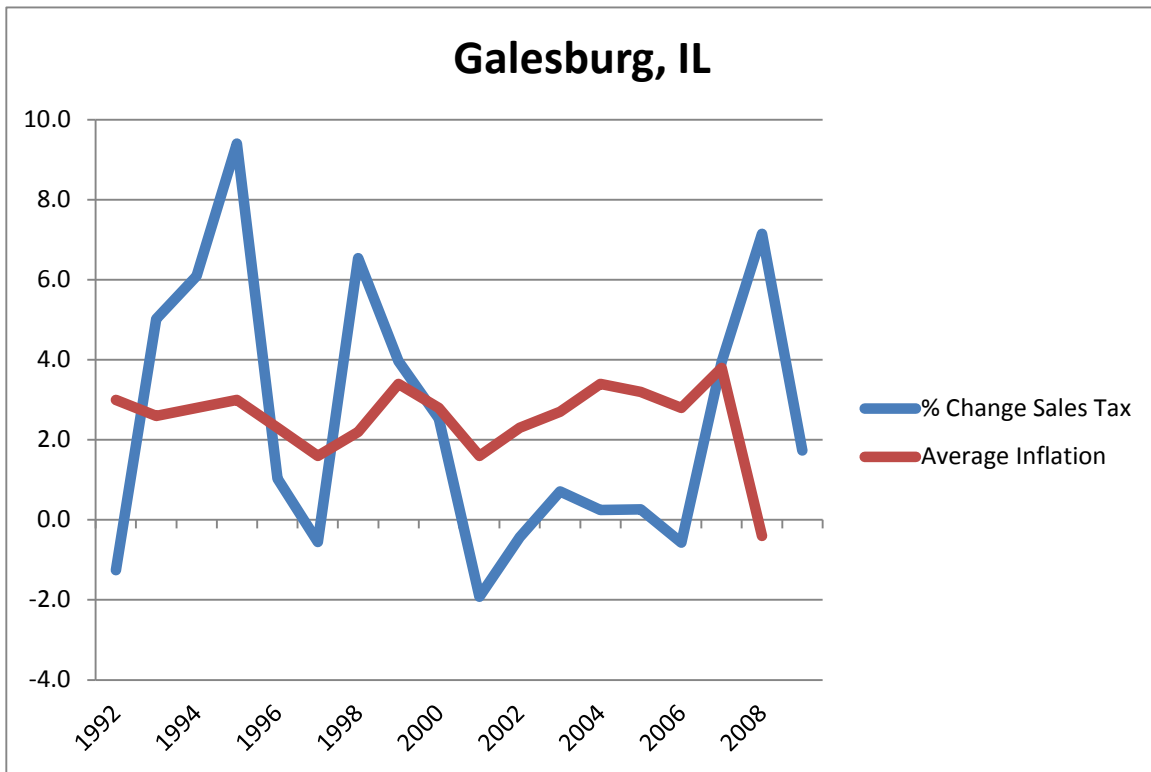
Source: Illinois Department of Revenue; Iowa Department of Revenue; Wisconsin Department of Revenue Consumer Price Index, 1991-2010.



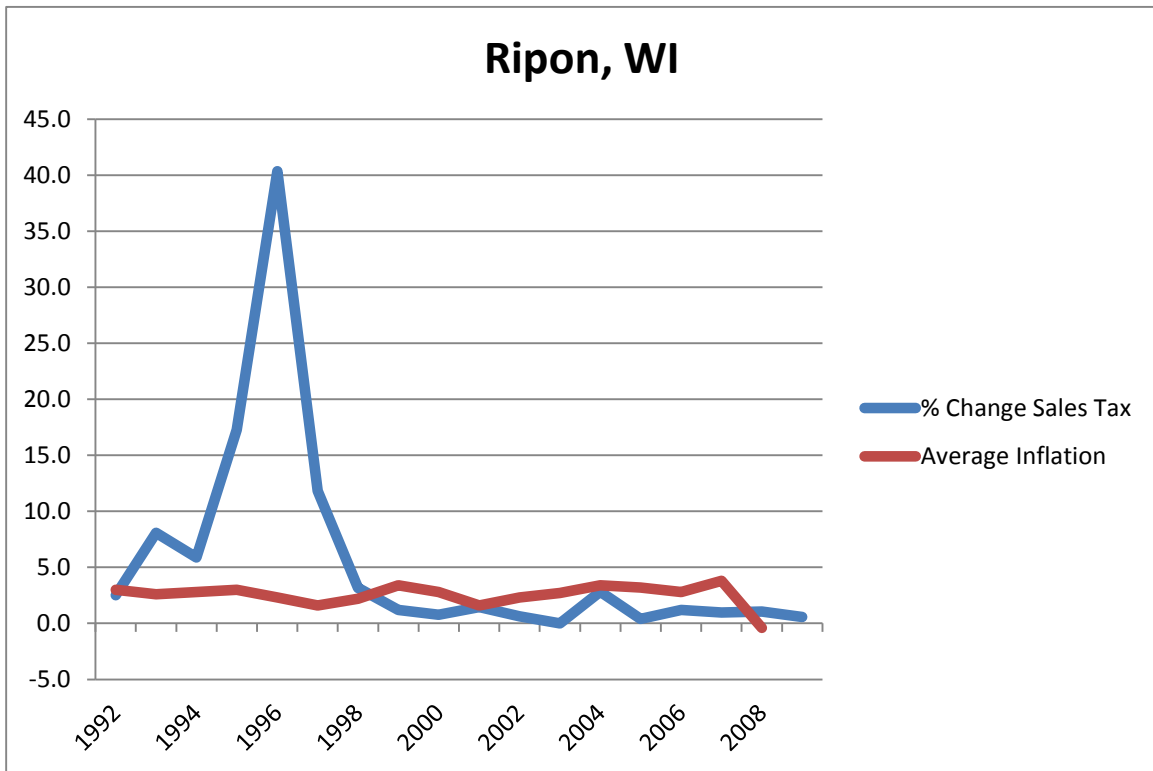
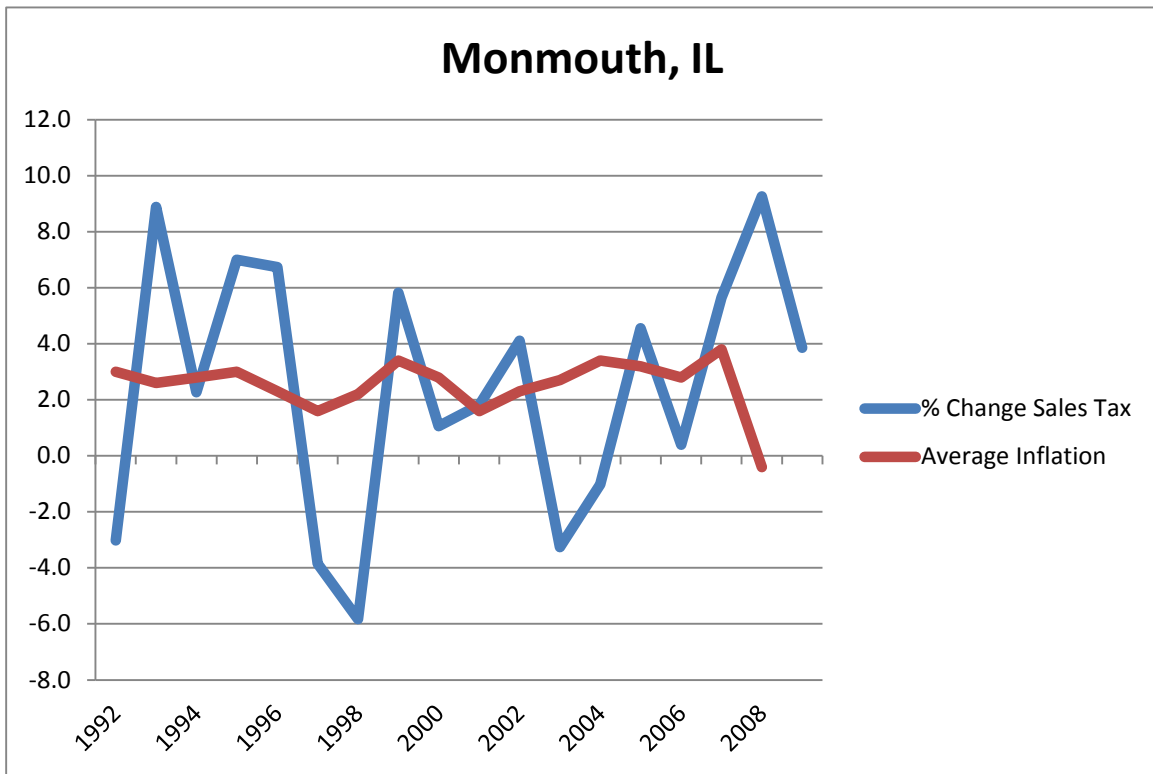
Source: Illinois Department of Revenue; Iowa Department of Revenue; Wisconsin Department of Revenue Consumer Price Index, 1991-2010.

Mount Vernon data unavailable at this time.

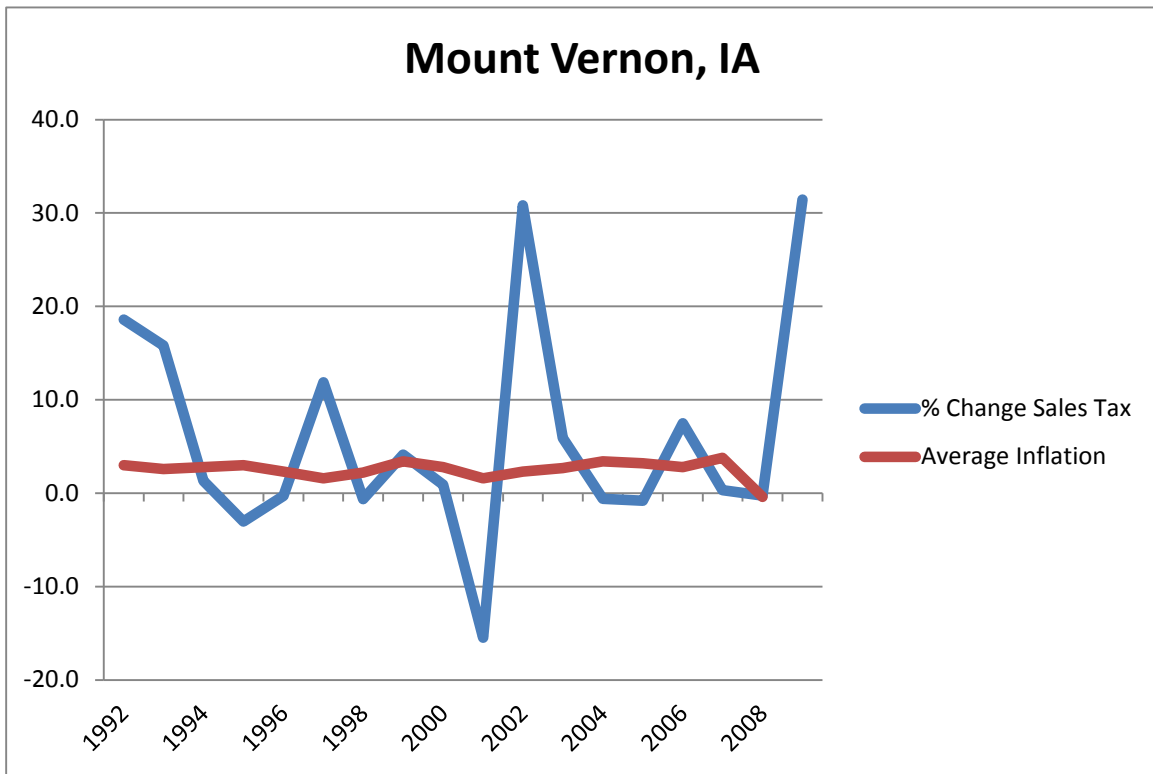
Appendix F: Annual Percent Change in Sales Tax 1992-2010



Source: Illinois Department of Revenue; Iowa Department of Revenue; Wisconsin Department of Revenue Consumer Price Index, 1991-2010.



Source: Illinois Department of Revenue; Iowa Department of Revenue; Wisconsin Department of Revenue Consumer Price Index, 1991-2010.



Source: Illinois Department of Revenue; Iowa Department of Revenue; Wisconsin Department of Revenue Consumer Price Index, 1991-2010.





Appendix G: Economic Development Tools

	TIF District	BID	Enterprise Zone	Facade Loan/Grant	Revolving Loan Fund	Tax Credits - Historic	Tax Credits - Disabled Access	Building Grant Funds	Rent Subsidies	Signage Loan/Grant
Galesburg, IL	●	●		●	●	●		●		
Jacksonville, IL	●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Monmouth, IL	●		●	●	●				●	
Ripon, WI		●		●		●				
Mount Vernon, IA				●		●				●

* Some fiscal tools have similar names and functions and I have collapsed them into a single category. For instance, Ripon uses a Business Improvement District (BID) which is very similar to a Special Service Area (SSA) used in Galesburg.

Appendix H: Community Events

Galesburg, Illinois






January Casino Night Gala and Silent Auction Casino games and auction to benefit the Knox-Galesburg Symphony 	February Annual Tractor Show Tractors, art and gifts depicting American farm life Chocolate Festival Entertainment, prizes and chocolate art	March Home Show Vendors from all phases of building for remodeling the home Country Music Concert Music to support the Red Cross of Galesburg
April Eastminster Dog Show Dog show benefiting the animals of the Knox County Humane Society Candle-lighting Ball Celebrating the anniversary of Galesburg with dinner and dance	May Nurses' Week Convocation Celebration honoring past and present nurses K-Mart March of Dimes Pie in the Face Fundraiser Benefiting the March of Dimes	June More on 34 100+ miles of yard sales on US 34  Cruise Night Auto show featuring classic and antique cars
July Nees Harley-Davidson Open House Bikes, cars, food and entertainment as well as a charity run Taste of Galesburg Food samples, live entertainment and beer garden	August Galesburg Heritage Days One of the Midwest's largest history festivals with food, re-enactments and entertainment Annual River '2' River Car Cruise Parking downtown for 1,000 vehicles to showcase classic and antique cars	September National Stearman Fly-In Largest gathering of Stearman bi-planes Cardboard Boat Regatta Family tournament for home-made cardboard boats
October Galesburg Scarecrow Festival Scarecrow competition with cash prizes Home Based Party Extravaganza Kick off holiday shopping with 30 local home party vendors 	November Christmas Begins at Walnut Grove Farm Wagon rides, food, music and Christmas trimmings to begin the holiday season 	December Holiday House Walk View decorated homes around Galesburg 

Event Sponsors

Galesburg Symphony Society
 Sandburg Mall
 Galesburg Historical Society
 Western Illinois Chapter of the Red Cross
 Knox County Human Society
 Galesburg Chamber of Commerce
 Galesburg Cottage Hospital School
 Galesburg K-Mart
 Spoon River Regional V-8 Group
 Nees Harley-Davidson
 Standish Park Arboretum
 Walnut Grove Farm
 Galesburg Civic Art Center

www.visitgalesburg.com • visitors@visitgalesburg.com






Jacksonville, Illinois

January Bridal Expo Products and services for wedding planning and bridal fashions Eagles on the Illinois River Free guided tours to view bald eagles on the River 	February	March
April Beaux Arts Ball Fundraiser to support monthly art shows and gallery maintenance Rotary Bass Tournament Tournament for all anglers with prizes for best catch	May Spring Flea and Craft Market A free event sponsored by Heart of Jacksonville Jacksonville Street Rod Reunion Games, prizes and free safety inspections	June General Grierson Days Largest Civil War re-enactment in the Midwest  Juneteenth Celebration Commemorating the end of slavery in America
July Crazy Horse Bluegrass Festival Live music, gospel and food concession River Country Quilt Show Exhibit of quilts, wall-hangings and antique quilts	August DAR Annual Ice Cream Social Held on the lawn of the historic Governor Joseph Duncan Mansion	September Prairieland Chautauqua Four days of historic re-enactments with musical shows and historic storytellers Cruise Nite and Car Show Classic and antique auto exhibit
October Porky Days and Applefest Free event sponsored by Heart of Jacksonville 	November Woodhaven Hospice Festival of Trees Designer wreaths and trees as well as live music and food 	December Pilot Club Holiday Home Walk and Tea View beautifully decorated homes to inspire holiday spirit 

Event Sponsors

Jacksonville Main Street
Art Association of Jacksonville
Jacksonville Rotary Club
Heart of Jacksonville
Grierson Society
Crazy Horse Campground
Morgan County Historical Society
Woodhaven Hospice
International Pilot Club of Jacksonville







Monmouth, Illinois

January 	February Home Show Exhibit with products, services and professionals for home improvements	March
April	May Cinco De Mayo A celebration of Mexican heritage and pride	June Pottery on the Square Celebrating Western Stoneware Market Alley Music Dayz Music in the downtown alley ways, June through September 
July Fly in Breakfast Breakfast, live music and aircrafts at the Monmouth Municipal Airport	August Cruise Night Car enthusiast show featuring more than 1,800 cars and motorcycles College Walk Out Incoming freshman parade through downtown to the sound of bagpipes	September Bridal Show Bridal expo featuring products and services related to weddings and proms Prime Beef Festival Parade, festival and livestock show the week after Labor Day
October Deep Blue Innovators Blues Festival Blues music at the Rivoli Theater downtown 	November 	December Christmas Around the World Christmas events for children and families 

Event Sponsors

Monmouth Chamber of Commerce
1st Street Armoury
The Hispanic community
Monmouth Business Council
Monmouth Flying Club
Maple City Street Machines
Monmouth College
Prime Beef Festival Committee
La Tapatia Mexican restaurant
The YMCA
MonmouthBlues.Com






Ripon, Wisconsin

January 	February	March Farm Toy and Craft Show An opportunity to view and purchase collectible farm toys
April Home Show Exhibition for homeowners to meet with builders, contractors and landscapers for tips on home improvement	May	June Ripon Farmer's Market The market is open from June through October Hay Days Wisconsin's largest living history encampment 
July Twilight Tour Garden Walk Ripon United Way hosts a tour of 6 featured gardens. Wine and cheese is included	August Maxwell Street Days Extended hours shopping days for great bargain deals on Maxwell Street Cookie Daze Children's festival featuring free events, crafts and rides	September Septemberfest A fall festival in downtown historic Ripon. Features a classic car show and a pet parade
October Ladies on the Loose A special shopping weekend for women featuring music, spa treatments and shopping therapy 	November Twinkle at Twilight Ripon's Holiday Open House with caroling, Santa Claus, music and extended shopping hours 	December Dickens of a Christmas Over 40 stores feature "living windows" depicting old time settings as carolers stroll through historic downtown Ripon  

Event Sponsors

Ripon Chamber of Commerce
 Ripon United Way
 Ripon local businesses
 Ripon College
 Ripon Main Street

Mount Vernon, Iowa

January Crazy Days Sale Downtown merchants discount their wares for a few days 	February Cabin Fever Outdoor events put together by students at Cornell College	March
April	May Chalk the Walk Participants and artists create a 3,000 square foot replica of a famous painting ...out of chalk!	June Chocolate Stroll Live music and chocolate vendors take over First Street storefronts 
July Lincoln Highway Antique Show Open air antique vending with food and beverages Mount Vernon Heritage Days Three day celebration of Mount Vernon's history with races, entertainment and fireworks	August	September Lincoln Highway Arts Festival Part of Iowa's Cultural Corridor, including art exhibits, live dance and music
October Chili Cook-Off Chili cooking and tasting on First Street 	November 	December Magical Night Shopping, caroling, live Nativity and horse-drawn wagon rides 

Event Sponsors

Mount Vernon activities are independently sponsored through fundraising and dedicated volunteerism. Advertising and marketing support is provided by the Mount Vernon-Lisbon Community Development Group, which oversees the Main Street Program.