

Appendix B: Population Forecasts for the Eighth District

Population in the Eighth District has been declining for 50 years. Although speculative, the Minnesota State Demographic Center (MSDC) projects some modest upticks in population over the next 25 years for some counties in the District; primarily those near Minneapolis, along the I94 corridor toward Fargo/Moorhead, and hosting larger towns such as Willmar in Kandiyohi County or near larger towns in the neighboring Seventh District (Fergus Falls and Alexandria).¹ The projections, however, were developed in 2005 and pre-date the current recession.

MSDC groups their forecasts by economic development region, distributing Minnesota's 87 counties into 10 trade and industry constellations. They are roughly comparable to the assignment areas in the Eighth District. None of the projections portend to dramatically change the current pattern. The chart below compares the three principal economic regions in central Minnesota to the district's three main assignment areas and the projected changes.

Chart C1: Twenty-Five Year Population Forecast for the Eighth District

Minnesota Statewide Economic Regions	Judicial District Assignment Area	Population Change by Assignment Area	Population	
			CY2010	CY2035
	County			
6E – Mid-Minnesota	Central	▲	77,280	81,490
Kandiyohi	Kandiyohi	▲	42,000	44,180
Meeker	Meeker	▲	24,470	27,510
Renville	Swift	▼	10,810	9,800
McLeod				
4 – West Central	North	▲	42,720	43,850
Becker	Big Stone	▼	5,290	5,060
Clay	Grant	▲	6,080	6,400
Douglas	Pope	▲	11,560	12,760
Grant	Stevens	▲	9,650	10,250
Otter Tail	Traverse	▼	3,530	2,920
Pope	Wilkin	▼	6,610	6,460
Stevens				
Traverse				
Wilkin				
6W – Upper Minnesota Valley	South	▶	46,900	46,910
Big Stone	Chippewa	▲	12,790	13,130
Chippewa	Lac qui Parle	▼	7,150	6,520
Lac qui Parle	Yellow Medicine	▼	10,100	9,600
Swift	Renville	▲	16,860	17,660
Yellow Medicine				

¹ The State Demographic Center estimates were developed in 2005. It is likely that the 2007-2009 economic recession and the nation's continued slow recovery into 2010 will retard population growth at greater levels than expected.

Economic development region 6E, Mid-Minnesota, includes Kandiyohi, Meeker and Renville counties. The District's central assignment area contains Kandiyohi, Meeker and Swift counties. Overall, the assignment area counties in Region 6E are expected to grow about 5 percent over the next 25 years to 81,490 residents. Region 4, West Central Minnesota, is essentially equivalent to the north assignment area (Grant, Pope, Stevens, Traverse, and Wilkin counties). Collectively, these assignment area counties will grow 2.5 percent. The south assignment area counties, located in Region 6W, Upper Minnesota Valley, are envisioned to remain relatively stable over the next two and one-half decades.

Regarding the impact of towns and villages, there is little doubt that the size and vitality of county seats also influence greatly the pulse beat and capacity of the trial courts headquartered in those communities. The nearby presence of justice system support services such as jails and lawyers that advance efficiencies and expand options in calendaring and scheduling are critical to the vibrancy of a trial court. Chart 5 subjectively outlines some of the elements that condition community sustainability, including county unemployment vis-à-vis the economic region, special characteristics about the county seat which may encourage or inhibit growth, and comments on the adequacy of the courthouse to accommodate a wider and/or more intense range of adjudication activities. It is likely these factors will partly influence future decisions about the array and nature of decentralized services throughout the district.

Appendix C: County, County Seat, and Courthouse Characteristics by Assignment Area

Although NCSC consultants did not conduct a detailed assessment of the District's 13 courthouses, they visited every one. Some are more versatile and able to accommodate more visitors and higher calendars; some are not. The following chart relates some basic information about the 13 courthouses of the District. There are a total of 24 jury and non-jury courtrooms in the District with at least one large jury courtroom in each of the 12 courthouses outside Kandiyohi County. The Kandiyohi Courthouse has multiple courtrooms.

District officials report that all courtrooms are handicap accessible with adequate bathrooms available for the staff and public. Chambers are generally adjacent to the courtrooms. All have private, secure entrances except one. At least one jury deliberation room is located in each courthouse. They are also used as conference rooms, work areas, and training facilities; not uncommon in courthouses across America. Panic buttons are located and operational on judges' benches, clerk stations and in some chambers and court administration offices. All jails are adjacent to the courthouses, except in Kandiyohi County.² There are no holding cells in any courthouses outside Kandiyohi County; sheriff deputies normally walk prisoners to court from adjacent jails. Fire safety problems exist in many of the older courthouses in the District, which are especially problematic since many courtrooms, chambers and court administration offices are on the upper floors. No courthouse has adequate, accessible attorney/client conference rooms, separate witness/victim, or separate juvenile holding areas. Eleven court administration offices have a punch key entry system with secure entry points for judges, judicial staff, and court staff. In Kandiyohi and Pope County, access badges are issued by county facilities management officials who oversee courthouse security systems. For the most part, court officials control entry to Judicial Branch space.

² Kandiyohi County Courthouse has a secure sally-port and holding cells.

Chart E1: County, County Seat and Courthouse Characteristics by Assignment Area

County ³	County Seat	Courthouse
Central Area (pop. 35,320)		
<p>Kandiyohi (pop. 42,000) The most populous county in the Eighth District with 1 out of 4 people in the district living there. Caseload</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Filings 8,736 • District rank 1 County pop. rank 22 Unemployment • County 5.7% • Econ Region 6E 7.2% 	<p>Willmar (pop. 19,000) Largest city in district; regional center for west central Minnesota; 60 miles from St. Cloud, 95 miles from Minneapolis; Jennie-O poultry plant biggest employer (1500 workers); diverse economy. It is home to 12 percent of the population in the district</p>	<p>Modern, Very Good Built in 1964, it has undergone several remodels. Only courthouse in district with public entry security provided by Sheriff; location of central district office; Court Payment Center location; 3 jury courtrooms/chambers; nearby full-time public defender offices; local jail close to courthouse</p>
<p>Meeker (pop. 24,470) Located west of Minneapolis and east of Kandiyohi County, it is collar or ring county to the Twin Cities' seven county metro area. Major commerce: dairy and poultry. Caseload</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Filings 2,796 • District rank 3 County pop. rank 44 Unemployment • County 7.9% • Econ Region 6E 7.2% 	<p>Litchfield (pop. 7,000) Largest city in the county; 42 miles from St. Cloud, 64 miles from Minneapolis; major employers are government and health and hospital services. Roughly 4 percent of the district's population resides in Litchfield.</p>	<p>Modern, Very Good Built in 1974, it is located in the center of Litchfield. There are two courtrooms in the building which can be combined when necessary; they are quite functional. A one-story addition for county offices was added since 1974. Chief Judge Drange is chambered at the courthouse.</p>
<p>Swift (pop. 10,810) Located west of Kandiyohi County, Swift County is primarily an agricultural region with some related manufacturing including an ethanol plant. Caseload</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Filings 2,646 • District rank 4 County pop. rank 64 Unemployment • County 6.5% • Econ Region 6W 5.6% 	<p>Benson (pop. 3,390) Largest city in the county; 30 miles from Willmar and 22 miles from Morris. Benson exists primarily as a trade center supporting the surrounding agricultural area as a railroad "whistle" stop location. Hospital and medical services are also available in Benson for nearby farming communities.</p>	<p>19th Century, Well Maintained Built in 1898, it has one jury courtroom. Judge Mennis is chambered at the courthouse where he routinely is calendared three days per week; equivalent to 43% of his time. The facility is adequate given its use.</p>

³ *County population rank* depicts the subject county's relative rank vis-à-vis all 87 Minnesota counties (1 being Hennepin, as the most populous, and 87 being Traverse, the least populated). Population figures are based on 2009 estimates. *Caseload filings* denote total filings for all case types during a recent 12-month period (April 2009 to March 2010) as obtained from the Minnesota Judicial Branch Trial Court Reports website, and the relative *district rank* of the county (1=most cases; 13 least number of cases) in relation to the filings of other counties in the District. *Unemployment* figures represent joblessness as of May 2010 for the county and Economic Development Region, a multi-county geographic zone including the county. The Minnesota Department of Economic Development establishes a series of economic areas throughout the state. Those that encompass the counties in the Eighth Judicial District conform roughly to the three administrative districts set up court to manage itself and include the following: Region 6E – Meeker, Kandiyohi, Renville; Region 6W – Big Stone, Chippewa, Lac qui Parle, Swift, Yellow Medicine; and Region 4 – Grant, Pope, Stevens, Traverse, and Wilkin.

South Area (pop. 46,900)

<p>Chippewa (pop. 12,790) Located in the south central part of the District approximately 140 miles from the Twin Cities, the county is dominated by agri-business interests. Caseload</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Filings 2,406 • District rank 5 <p>County pop. rank 62 Unemployment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • County 6.0% • Econ Region 6W 5.6% 	<p>Montevideo (pop. 5,500) As with many of the county seats in the Eighth District, Montevideo is the largest city in the county. Located at the convergence of the Minnesota and Chippewa Rivers, it has steadily diversified its economy to include light manufacturing, hospital/medical/V.A. services, food processing and some high-tech operations.</p>	<p>Modern, Very Good Built in 1954, two courtrooms and court staff offices are located in the courthouse. Judge Nelson is chambered in the building, spending over 50% of his time on Chippewa County matters. Judge Mennis is calendared approximately 2 days per week in Montevideo as well</p>
<p>Lac qui Parle (pop. 7,150) Adjacent to South Dakota on the west, Lac qui Parle is a farming area; the primary crops being corn, soybeans, wheat and sugar beets. Livestock production is largely hogs. Caseload</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Filings 1,190 • District rank 11 <p>County pop. rank 75 Unemployment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • County 5.0% • Econ Region 6W 5.6% 	<p>Madison (pop. 1,700) A small town on the rail line from the Twin Cities, it reached its zenith in the 1960's with a population of 2,600. Like the county, it has steadily declined for the last 50 years. Madison is in the geographic center of the county. It is closer to Sioux Falls, SD by 40 miles than to Minneapolis. It dubs itself the lutefisk capital of the U.S.</p>	<p>19th Century, Well Maintained Built in 1899, the courthouse has been updated over the years including new HVAC systems in 1966. It is adequate.</p>
<p>Yellow Medicine (pop. 10,100) The county is primarily a farming community. As with many counties in this region of Minnesota, it has consistently declined in population from a high point of nearly 17,000 residents in the 1940's. Caseload</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Filings 2,065 • District rank 6 <p>County pop. rank 68 Unemployment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • County 5.1% • Econ Region 6W 5.6% 	<p>Grant Falls (pop. 2,900) A diverse small community with retail, health, and light manufacturing industry founded at the site of one of two waterfalls on the Minnesota River which supplies electric power to the surrounding area. It is 84 miles to St. Cloud and 12 miles to Montevideo. The population of the city peaked in the 1980's and has steadily declined over the last 30 years.</p>	<p>19th Century, Well Maintained Completed in 1889, the courthouse has been remodeled, modernized and expanded at least four times since 1942. It is an adequate and useable building today.</p>
<p>Renville (pop. 16,860) Located 90 miles from the Twin Cities, it is touted as the "corn capital of the world" due to seed research and processing companies. Caseload</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Filings 3,478 • District rank 2 <p>County pop. rank 53 Unemployment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • County 7.7% • Econ Region 6E 7.2% 	<p>Olivia (pop. 2,341) As the largest town in Renville County, it is an industrial and commercial service center for the surrounding agri-business region. Located near the Twin Cities on a major rail line, it provides easy transport to the urban marketplace for grain and other agricultural commodities. Olivia is also home to nine seed research facilities.</p>	<p>Early 20th Century; Functional Built in 1902, various updates and preservation projects have improved the courthouse over the 108 years yet retained its outside appearance and historical nature. Judge Slieter is chambered here full time.</p>

North Area (pop. 42,720)

<p>Big Stone (pop. 5,290) Primarily a rural county with a large farming community along the SD border. It is somewhat isolated from any larger population areas Caseload <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Filings 724 • District rank 12 County pop. rank 81 Unemployment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • County 4.8% • Econ Region 6W 5.6% </p>	<p>Ortonville (pop. 1,931) This county seat is the center of retail, health and consumer services for a largely agri-business region that stretches into South Dakota. Ortonville sits at the southern edge of Big Stone Lake, the headwaters of the Minnesota River. It is on the Minnesota / South Dakota border.</p>	<p>Early 20th Century; Adequate Constructed in 1902, it has been continually upgraded over the last 108 years and functions well as a courthouse.</p>
<p>Grant (pop. 6,080) A county with a mixture of farming in the west and south, and resorts and tourism in the north and east along the I-94 corridor. Caseload <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Filings 1,201 • District rank 10 County pop. rank 79 Unemployment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • County 6.7% • Econ Region 4 5.4% </p>	<p>Elbow Lake (pop. 1,148) Near the center of Grant County, Elbow Lake is 12 miles from I-94. As a health services and commerce hub for a largely agricultural and resort region, it is within easy access to Alexandria and Fergus Falls, two larger cities in the Seventh District.</p>	<p>Early 20th Century; Adequate Dedicated in 1906, it is on the National Historical Register. It has been well maintained over the years and appears sufficient for the court's needs at present.</p>
<p>Pope (pop. 11,560) A resort and agri-business region, the county benefits from nearby Alexandria and Douglas County in the Seventh District. Caseload <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Filings 1,910 • District rank 7 County pop. rank 67 Unemployment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • County 6.0% • Econ Region 4 5.4% </p>	<p>Glenwood (pop. 2,478) Glenwood is on the east end of Lake Minnewaska at the junction of 4 state highways. It is 12 miles from I-94 and 14 miles from Alexandria in the Seventh District. The town is a service area for the surrounding resort and agricultural region.</p>	<p>Mid 20th Century; Very good Opened in 1930, the Pope County Courthouse has undergone a series of upgrades. Currently, a \$3.3 million dollar new law enforcement center addition is planned to begin construction in Sep. 2010. It likely will include some holding cells near the courtroom.</p>
<p>Stevens (pop. 9,650) Primarily an agricultural community, Stevens County has moved from family farms to agri-businesses. Caseload <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Filings 1,556 • District rank 9 County pop. rank 73 Unemployment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • County 4.7% • Econ Region 4 5.4% </p>	<p>Morris (pop. 5,647) Although Morris has lost population over the last few decades as other towns in west central Minnesota, it has remained more vibrant due to the UMM campus, a 4 year residential liberal arts college with a robust agricultural research institute. Morris provides retail, health and business services to the surrounding region.</p>	<p>Modern; Very Good The current courthouse, built in 1957, is undergoing a major remodeling effort with the construction of a law enforcement center, holding cells for the court and a sheriff's dispatch center. The project, started in Nov 2009 is expected to be completed in early 2011. County officials decided not to build an attached jail. Court space is not largely affected.</p>

<p>Traverse (pop. 3,530) With the smallest population of Minnesota's 87 counties, Traverse continues to steadily lose residents. Caseload</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Filings 711 • District rank 13 <p>County pop. rank 87 Unemployment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • County 5.7% • Econ Region 4 5.4% 	<p>Wheaton (pop. 1,383) Wheaton is Minnesota's quintessential small town with a high population of middle-age and elderly residents. It is in the heart of a farming community providing related services to agri-business including functioning as a hub for grain transportation via railroad. The town is relatively isolated from any high population areas.</p>	<p>19th Century; Well Maintained Built in 1892, this two-story, small courthouse has been upgraded on numerous occasions including electrical fixtures, a new vault, air conditioning and building expansions that increased the size of the courthouse significantly and located a jail adjacent to the courthouse</p>
<p>Wilkin (pop. 6,610) Adjacent to Richland County ND with a population of 17,000, the interaction between Minnesota and North Dakota residents is extensive. Caseload</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Filings 1,571 • District rank 8 <p>County pop. rank 78 Unemployment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • County 4.3% • Econ Region 4 5.4% 	<p>Breckenridge (pop. 3,185) Located at the headwaters of the Red River, Breckenridge is a historic riverboat and railroad town in the far reaches of the District serving a two-state agricultural region centered on Wahpeton, ND (pop. 7,418), adjacent to Breckenridge. It is also only 45 miles to Fargo / Moorhead and 23 miles from Fergus Falls.</p>	<p>Early 20th Century; Good shape The Wilkin County Courthouse, constructed in 1928, has been upgraded over the years. The ceilings have been lowered, windows altered, air conditioning installed and lighting improved. It is a two-story building that serves the court well.</p>