

310

THE URBAN HOMESTEADING PROCESS
AS A POSSIBLE APPLICATION TO
TOWNS OUTSIDE URBANIZED AREAS

by

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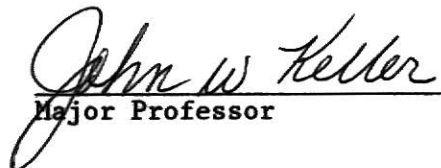
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CHAPTER I

URBAN HOMESTEADING FOR SMALL TOWNS

INTRODUCTION

Numerous problems have affected the growth and development of rural and small town communities in America over the past fifty years. These problems have developed because of changes in small town living patterns, populations trends and economic bases. Data shows that since the early 1930's, America has been a nation composed primarily of urban dwellers even though 61% of all towns are rural. Table I-1 represents current population by size of place. According to the 1980 Census, 243 Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas (SMSAs) contained 73.7 percent of the nation's population.¹ A majority of this population was located in defined suburban areas and not urban centers. The development of these great population centers altered the social and economic structure of the nation. This in turn, also changed and transformed the appearance of rural and small town America.

For the first 150 years of the nation's development, America was predominately influenced by rural values and culture. During the 1900's, six out of every ten Americans were still living in rural and small town communities. Due to the need for better employment, greater economic stability, and a desire for a higher quality of living, the nation experienced a shift from small town areas to urban centers.

Historically, rural employment has been dominated by agricultural production. However, in recent years technological advances in agriculture have become highly sophisticated, and therefore, offer greater employment opportu-