April 11, 2011

Contact: Jim Sylvester, director of survey operations, UM Bureau of Business and Economic Research, 406-243-5113.

SOME SHIFTS IN 2010 CENSUS NUMBERS DUE TO BOUNDARY CHANGES, NOT ALL GROWTH

MISSOULA –

Many Montana communities saw increases in population between the 2000 and 2010 Census, but in some cases these shifts were because of changes in geographic boundaries, as well as population growth, according to a University of Montana researcher.

Jim Sylvester, an economist at UM's Bureau of Business and Economic Research, said that while Montana cities like **Bozeman** and **Kalispell** experienced population gains mainly due to new residents moving in, exaggerated increases in numbers in other communities like **Lakeside** and **Bigfork** largely reflect changes in boundaries established by the U.S. Census Bureau, as well as new residents.

 "Recent news stories about the 2010 Census highlight large population changes for several Montana places," Sylvester said. "Some of the population growth in these places is actual growth, but a large proportion can be attributed to boundary changes between 2000 and 2010."

Boundary changes affected the growth of several Flathead County areas, particularly those along Flathead Lake. **Bigfork**, a Census Designated Place (CDP), posted a whopping 200 percent change in population, growing from 1,421 in 2000 to 4,270 in 2010 – a difference of 2,849 people. Maps of census boundaries for the two years show the changes in geographic area covered by Bigfork are double those of 2000.

Lakeside CDP experienced 59 percent growth accompanied by large boundary change. Lakeside's population increased from 1,679 in 2000 to 2,669 in 2010.

Kalispell grew 40 percent in the last decade, from 14,223 to 19,927 people, Sylvester said, adding that a sizable part of Kalispell's growth was because of annexation of newly developed areas.

Boundary changes also affected **Billings** and the suburb of **Lockwood** in Yellowstone County, although on a smaller scale. Billings saw its population increase from 89,847 to 104,170 between 2000 and 2010, a difference of 14,323 people or 16 percent. According to Sylvester, maps comparing census boundaries for Billings from 2000 to 2010 show some of this growth can be attributed to the city covering a larger geographic area.

The Lockwood CDP had 58 percent population growth over the decade, from 4,306 in 2000 to 6,797 in 2010. The census maps for Lockwood show the boundaries for the community nearly doubled the area from 2000 to 2010.

Changes to census boundaries also accounted for some Montana communities losing population between 2000 and 2010, Sylvester said. In Ravalli County, the population of **Florence** CDP declined from 901 in 2000 to 765 in 2010, a decrease of 15 percent. **Victor** CDP lost 13 percent of its population in the census, declining from 859 people to 745.

"Looking only at changes in population can be misleading as communities grow and decline over time," he said. "When areas such as Florence and Victor in Ravalli County show declines between 2000 and 2010 one needs to ask why. The answer is they covered a smaller area in 2010 than 2000."

Census Designated Places (CDP) are statistical geographic entities representing closely settled, unincorporated communities that are locally recognized and identified by name. They are the statistical equivalents of incorporated places, with the primary differences being the lack of both a legally defined boundary and an active, functioning governmental structure, chartered by the state and administered by elected officials.

For more information contact UM's Bureau of Business and Economic Research at 406-243-5113

or the U.S. Census Bureau at www.census.gov.

Flathead County Population and Boundary Changes, 2000-2010

2000 Census Boundary
2010 Census Boundary

Kalispell
40%

Lakeside CDP
59%

Bigfork CDP
200 %
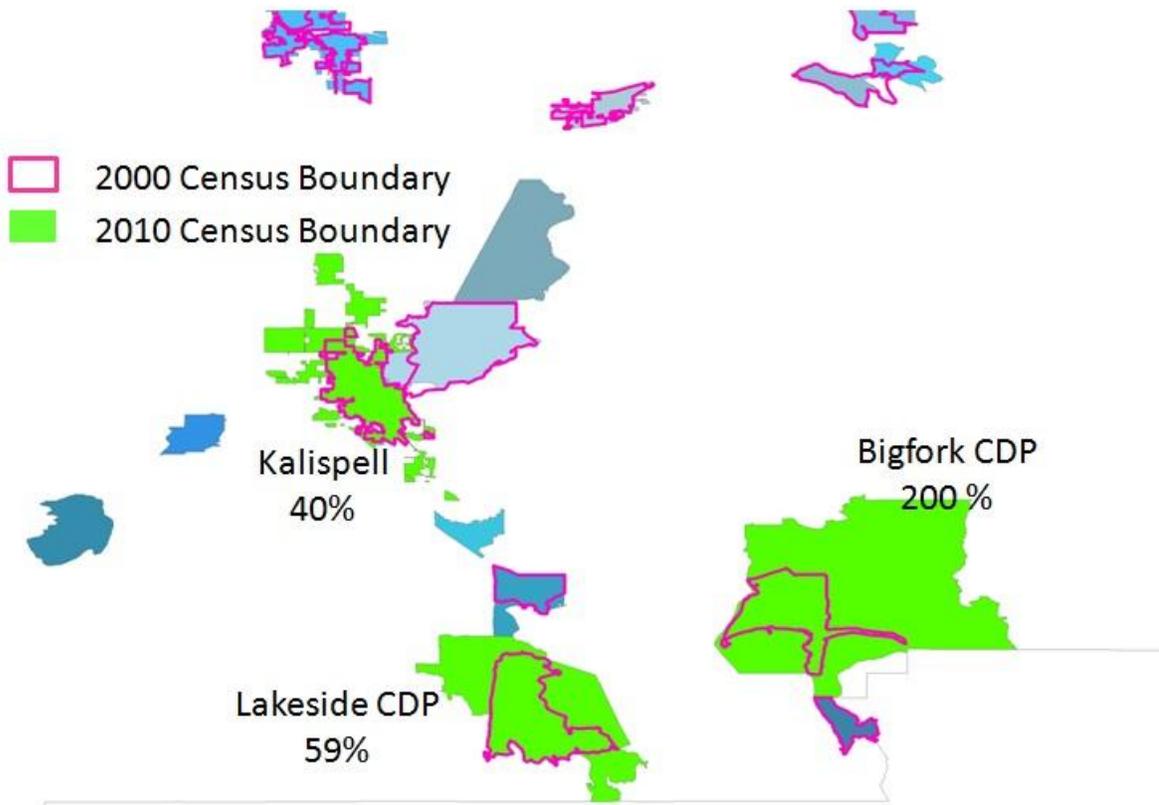
Yellowstone County Population and Boundary Changes, 2000-2010

☐ 2000 Census Boundary
🟩 2010 Billings Census Boundary
🟦 2010 Lockwood CDP Census Boundary

Lockwood
58%

Billings
16%
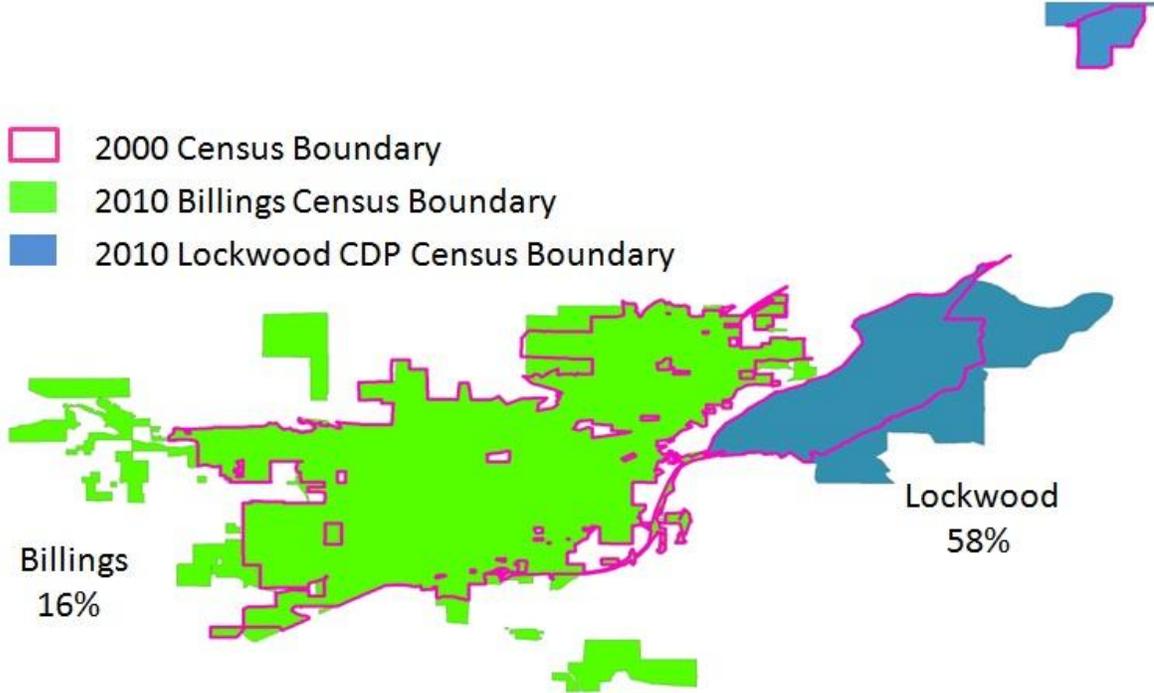
Ravalli County Population and Boundary Changes, 2000-2010

Florence
-15%

☐ 2000 Census Boundary
🟩 2010 Census Boundary

Stevensville
16%

Victor
-13%