

The Riddle of Midwest City, Oklahoma

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Midwest City, Oklahoma, a "war baby" of 1942, has grown to include a population of more than 20,000 persons in 1956. This growth is nothing short of phenomenal. No one factor accounts for the rapid increase in population, but Tinker Air Force Base has, of course, played a significant role in the expansion.

A great deal of attention has been focused on city planning, population increase, characteristics of the population, shopping habits, and other facets of Midwest City and its populace. Some facts are well documented, while others are imperfectly known. The writer hopes to shed some light on population characteristics and shopping habits of the inhabitants of Midwest City.

The figures presented in this paper are tabulations of a questionnaire used in interviewing 150 families in a random sample in Midwest City. The sample was selected, insofar as possible, to include representative samples of various income groups and to cover each geographical area of the city.

Following are some of the pertinent facts discovered. First, the population of Midwest City is young. Of the householders interviewed exactly 58 per cent were less than 35 years of age, 36 per cent were between 35 and 50, and only 6 per cent were over 50. Secondly, the family size is surprisingly small. The average number of children per family is approximately 1.9. The average age per child is about $7\frac{1}{2}$ years.

Significantly these facts point to a population which is substantially less than the estimates of Chamber of Commerce boosters and real estate developers. Most such estimates assume $4\frac{1}{2}$ -5 persons per family or more.

The sample revealed some interesting facts about shopping habits of the Midwest City populace as well. Obviously the head of the house and the housewife are *extremely* mobile. With the exception of day-by-day necessities, the shoppers showed no apparent regard for store, shopping district, or brand names. Superficial examination of the tabulated results indicate that no developer can insure success of a shopping center simply by building it on a convenient site.

In short, Midwest City is probably substantially smaller in size than most estimates indicate, and the populace is highly mobile. This mobility is inherent in the nature of the supporting function, Tinker Field, and in the individual inclinations of the citizens of the area.