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New Brookings report finds increase of 6,000 jobs per square mile in nation's largest metro areas, on average

*Just four large metro areas are responsible for 90% of this increase: **New York, Chicago, San Francisco, and Seattle***

Washington, D.C. – The Bass Center for Transformative Placemaking at Brookings released new research today that analyzes job density—the degree to which jobs are concentrating or dispersing—in the nation's largest metro areas.

In analyzing job density within and across 94 of the nation's largest metro areas, which together contained 66% of the nation's private sector jobs as of 2015, this report finds that job density increased from 2004 to 2015 by nearly 6,000 jobs per square mile on average in these 94 large metro areas, or nearly 30%. Not only did most metro areas have more jobs in 2015 than 2004, jobs became more concentrated in denser parts of metro areas.

The report, titled [***Where jobs are concentrating and why it matters to cities and regions***](#), finds that job density has *increased* at a faster pace than job growth, driven in large part by the densification of core urban areas and advanced business service sectors, while job growth has also continued to *spread out*, or *sprawl*, to less-dense parts of metropolitan areas, such as suburban and exurban counties.

Increases in overall job density from 2004 to 2015, a period of dramatic urban and economic change, were driven primarily by four metro areas: **New York, Chicago, San Francisco, and Seattle**. These four metro areas are succeeding economically in part because they are able to provide the dense, connected environments that are attractive to companies and workers in fields like technology, sciences, and professional services, while many older industrial cities and Heartland areas—particularly small and mid-sized cities and rural towns—struggle to keep pace.

The report's authors, Chad Shearer, Jennifer Vey, and Joanne Kim note that job density offers metropolitan areas a means to increase productivity and economic growth, improve social and environmental outcomes, increase civic engagement, and reduce fiscal stress. When coupled with investments in people, dense places can become vibrant, inclusive communities where firms and workers flourish.

Key findings include:

- Just four metro areas accounted for about 90% of the increase in job density seen among the 94 large metro areas from 2004 to 2015: New York, Chicago, San Francisco, and Seattle. Taken together, job density in these four metro areas increased 40 percent. In contrast, overall job density in the other 90 large metro areas increased only 9% on average.
- Only about half (48 of 94) of large metropolitan areas experienced an increase in job density, while the others saw jobs sprawl. Fourteen (14) metro areas posted increases in job density that exceeded the 94-metro area average, led by San Francisco, Honolulu, Oxnard, Calif., San Jose, Calif., Charlotte, N.C., Albany, N.Y., New York, and Nashville.
- Within metro areas, job concentration trends varied. Almost every metro area in this study had at least one county where jobs grew denser and almost every metro area also had at least one county in which job density declined. Core urban counties collectively saw job density increase by 35% on average. Mature suburban counties and emerging suburban counties saw increases in job density of 13% and 1%, respectively. Exurban counties collectively saw job density decline by 18%.
- Across the 94 metro areas, job density increased from 2004 to 2015 in every sector except manufacturing and logistics. These large and greater-than-expected increases in job density indicate that new jobs in most sectors disproportionately located in denser areas during this period, which could suggest an increasing preference for density throughout most of the economy.
- Most sectors of the economy saw large but not widespread increases in job density from 2004 to 2015. Job density increases were seen pervasively across metropolitan America in sectors such as health care, education, hospitality (including food service and hotel industries), and arts and entertainment. Jobs in the knowledge-intensive information sector saw a 60% increase in density across all 94 metro areas, though this was driven largely by San Francisco, New York, and Seattle.

“The large rise in job density during the recent economic expansion suggests that place actually matters more, not less, in today’s digital economy,” said Chad Shearer, senior research associate and lead author of the report. “City and regional leaders can build stronger, more inclusive economies by investing in policies that promote more concentrated development patterns that better meet the needs of businesses and workers.”

The report, including interactive data displaying job density data for 94 of the nation’s largest metro areas, is available here: <https://brook.gs/2Kj90zM>.

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