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# Depth Perception

15 July 2008 -- Commentary from Design Group International™

## Changing Times

I have traveled through several small towns in recent weeks and live between two more. Help Wanted signs are everywhere. In spite of what feels like an economic downturn for many, there seems to be no shortage of job opportunities. Why is this?

Most of the advertised jobs are entry level, paying \$8-12 per hour, less than full-time, and pay little to no benefits. With high gas prices, employees are unwilling to travel a distance to work. If one must spend \$8 in gasoline (and more in payments, insurance, oil and maintenance) to travel to a three-hour shift paying \$8 per hour, the employee quickly slides toward bankruptcy. Thus, a shift is on of where people are willing to live and work.

This shift bodes well for students and back-to-work moms and bi-lingual immigrants who are willing to live in extended family households and networks as they begin participating as wage earners.

Therefore, we ought not to be surprised by some of these developing trends:

- College students living at home and getting their degrees online or at nearby campuses.
- Younger workers filling jobs previously unavailable to them.
- Back-to-work moms finding they have a choice in where they want to build or resume a career.
- Relocating workers preferring to live near their place of employment or near reliable public transportation.
- A shifting map of what real estate is valuable and what is less so due to changing lifestyle preferences among workers and retirees.
- A continued shift of businesses to leisure markets, due to cheaper travel and a smaller tax bite.
- A shift in the criteria one uses to choose a congregation. Local access and neighborhood involvement may well win out over doctrinal difference.

Parish fish fry anyone?

- mark I vincent

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