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## Institute for Regional Forecasting: Houston jobs, people to grow by 2.5% a year

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Houston will grow by 3.7 million people and 1.5 million jobs in the next 25 years, according to the **Institute for Regional Forecasting's** annual long-term forecast for the eight county Houston Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Area.

Barton Smith, professor of economics and director of the institute, said, "While economic growth has recently been stunted by the national and global recessions, Houston will continue to expand over the long term."

The area currently has 5.1 million people and 2.5 million jobs. The institute predicts that to increase to 7.4 million and 3.2 million, respectively, by 2020 at a growth rate of 2.5 percent a year.

By 2035, the IRF estimates that the area's employment will have reached 4 million jobs and population will have soared to 9.5 million people.

"While the growth rate will decline during the subsequent 15 years to around 1.5 percent, it will be mostly due to sheer city size as the negative effects of 'city bigness' take its toll on overall growth," said Smith.

The IRF report also shows that the decentralization of Houston will continue with suburban counties capturing an increasingly larger share of new job and population growth. Most recently the suburban counties have been capturing about 44 percent of all employment growth and 51 percent of all population growth.

"This trend will continue well into the future," Smith said, noting that by 2035 the suburban counties will be capturing 63 percent of all new jobs and 78 percent of all new population.

He warned, however, that suburban counties "can't allow themselves to get overwhelmed by the growth that is coming their way or they will lose the quality of life that they now cherish."

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