

# Executive Summary

The following key community demographic trends relevant to Billings Public Schools are noted in this report:

- Total K-12 enrollment in Billings Public Schools has been essentially flat for 40 years (1970 enrollment > 17,000; 2010 enrollment < 16,000)
- The population of Billings is growing but aging (1970 population 62,000 with median age 26 years, 2010 population <100K with median age 39 years. The aging trend is expected to continue throughout at least 2030. In total number, the under-19 population has been flat for 30 years.
- According to “Making Opportunity Affordable” (MOA) Montana’s attainment of higher education is low in comparison to other states and it will be critical to increase participation in higher education in order to meet future work force demands and ensure opportunity and prosperity for future generations.
- Affordable housing (an attraction for families with children) is becoming less available overall. Average sales price for housing is lowest in Billings’ southside, heights-east and downtown areas and average sales price is greatest in northwest Billings.
- Assuming the city of Billings household demographics are similar to county household demographics, less than a third of Billings households contain children under the age of 18.
- Homeless children are increasing in number and tend to be centered in lower income neighborhoods where shelters and low-cost motels are located. In 2009, 458 homeless children (the majority of which were elementary aged children) were enrolled in Billings Public Schools at some time during the school year. Homelessness has a negative effect on a child’s academic performance and likelihood of graduation.
- Across the school district, there a wide disparity in the percent of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch, as determined by income (Orchard Elementary > 80%; Arrowhead Elementary < 5%).
- Billings’ geographic size has increased by nearly 300% since 1970, while population has increased by 52%, resulting in fewer residents per square mile.
- Student population density (a factor in student transportation costs and a consideration in school location) varies widely across Billings. The population as a whole, as well as the under age- 5 population, are most concentrated in older core neighborhoods. The under age 5 density (students per square mile) is more than 10 times greater in older core neighborhoods than in newer neighborhoods.