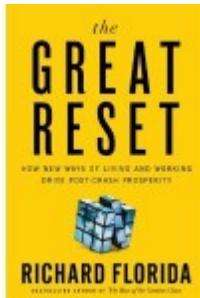




## Should North Country families really fight to keep their kids around?

April 27th, 2010 by Brian Mann



It's become a political mantra in the North Country.

One of the reasons we want better jobs and better opportunity is so that our children can stay here after they graduate from high school — or return here after college.

You hear it again and again from Democrats and Republicans alike.

In rural policy circles, the part of our population that yearns for this kind of stability is known as 'place bound.'

They are loyal to their communities, their neighborhoods, their networks of family and friends — even when those places are no longer prosperous.

In some North Country towns, people have stayed on long after there was any viable private sector economy.

Now an author and urban theorist named Richard Florida is urging Americans to be...less rooted.

"During our era of mass production and American greatness, we really thought extending home ownership to just about every American was part of the American dream," Florida [said this morning on NPR](#).

It's a startling argument.

Florida points to studies indicating that in areas of high home ownership — translation: low geographic mobility — there is "less economic productivity, higher rates of unemployment and...lower levels of well-being."

Sound familiar?

Here's more from Florida's conversation with Morning Edition host Steve Innskeep:

“I think the great advantage that the US has had in being a competitive innovative and productive country is that it’s had great labor mobility. What’s happened now is that so many people are trapped in houses they can’t sell. US mobility is at the lowest levels that it’s been at in decades. And I think this is the biggest long-run constraint on our ability to reset and recover. If folks are trapped in their homes, they can’t get out, they can’t sell them, they can’t recoup their investments...”

Florida is talking chiefly here about the housing market collapse, which has hit urban and suburban families the hardest.

But he’s also touching on a cultural idea that is deeply rooted in small towns — the idea of staying put, holding on, ranking place over prosperity.

You can read [more about Florida’s ideas here](#).

What do you think? Are we and our kids better off anchored in the North Country? Or should we follow the path of opportunity and career wherever it leads?