

Census shows changing racial makeup of county

By Steve Levin
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Atlanta, Raleigh-Durham, N.C., and Philadelphia have all been making concerted efforts to attract African-American professionals for vacation visits, with the pitch that not only are they nice places to visit, but they're good cities to live in, too.

Penn Hills, Forest Hills and Stanton Heights don't have their own marketing campaigns, but they also are proving to be magnets for attracting professional African-Americans in Allegheny County, according to local experts.

In a county that lost more than 4,000 people in the past decade, as shown by the results of the federal government's April 1, 2000 census, the number of African-Americans grew by 9,508 — about 43 percent of the increase occurring in those three areas.

The new census showed that among Pittsburgh residents who listed themselves as being of one race, a category covering 98 percent of city residents, 69 percent identified themselves as white and 28 percent as African-American. In 1990, when no multi-race option was available, 72 percent were white and 6 percent black.

In Pittsburgh, many large and "additional" white neighborhoods became more integrated during the decade for an influx of black residents, thinning white population or both. Pittsburgh's white population shrank by 40,000 during the decade. The shrinkage could have come from smaller household sizes as well as migration out of the city, demographers noted.

Of Pittsburgh neighborhoods listing more than 1,000 African-American residents as of 1990, the greatest percentage increases during the last decade occurred in Highland Park, with a gain of 67 percent, or 10 black residents; Marshall-Shadeland, 53 percent or 743 black residents; and Stanton Heights, 52 percent or 591 black residents.

Conversely, each of those communities — as well as Penn Hills and Forest Hills — experienced sharp drops in their white populations. The same trend held true in communities with lower percentages of black residents such as Swissvale, North Braddock, Duquesne and McKeesport.

Demographers said not enough census information has been released yet to determine whether the declines in white population in these communities are a result of migration to other areas, deaths or other causes.

But several community leaders with the numbers, of both blacks and whites, as part of the long-established American custom of people moving to larger homes and other socioeconomic neighborhoods as income increases.

"People are moving where the opportunities are," said Doris Carson Williams, president of the African-American Chamber of Commerce of Pittsburgh. "We're not just being considered a

CENSUS 2000

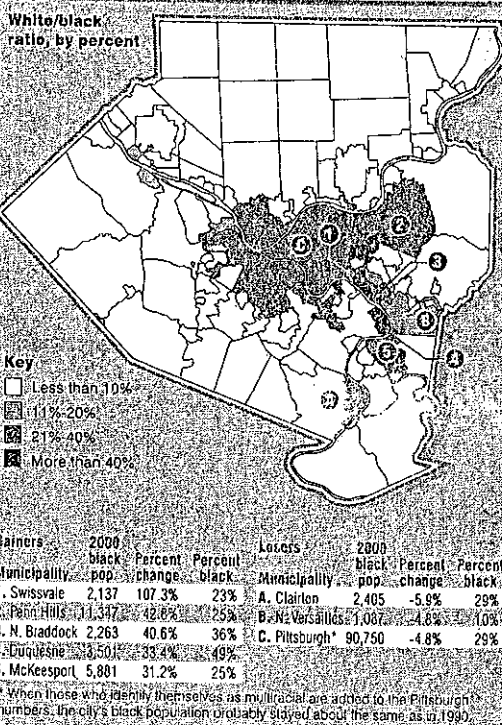
Black population: Pittsburgh and Allegheny County

The 20 Pittsburgh neighborhoods with the greatest black population and the change since 1990:

Neighborhood	2000 Black	% change
Homewood	8,949	-20%
East Liberty	4,980	7%
Lincoln-Lemington-Belmar	4,924	-15%
Garfield	4,537	-6%
Hill District	4,024	-19%
East Hills	3,706	-13%
Perry South	3,430	8%
Terrace Village	2,509	-50%
Northview Heights	2,427	-8%
Crawford Roberts	2,374	1%
Beltzhoover	2,268	-17%
Larimer	2,267	-31%
Manchester	2,143	-19%
Marshall-Shadeland	2,142	53%
Bedford Dwellings	2,023	-10%
Highland Park	1,991	67%
Hazelwood	1,835	7%
Central Northside	1,778	-14%
Stanton Heights	1,735	52%
Point Breeze North	1,564	-8%

Source: U.S. Census

Areas of Allegheny County according to black population and the biggest increases in black population in municipalities over 1,000:



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monolithic community. We can live wherever our economics allow us to move."

Fifty-three of the city's 90 neighborhoods experienced some increase in African-Americans.

Upper Lawrenceville's black population grew from 29 to 318, making it 11 percent black instead of 1 percent. Spring Garden grew from 1 percent to 7 percent black by adding 81 African-Americans.

"I'm pleased," said Esther L. Bush, president and chief executive officer of the Urban League of Pittsburgh. "I hope it will encourage an increased awareness of the importance of African-Americans and more tolerance of African-Americans."

National figures released yesterday by the Census Bureau showed that minority groups are growing much faster than the white population.

Nationally, the number of people identifying themselves as white and no other race was only 6 percent higher than the number of whites counted in 1990, before people had a multi-race option.

That contrasts with a growth rate of 16 percent among black citizens, 48 percent among Asians and 58

percent among Hispanics, who are listed under a separate ethnic category and may also be of any race.

No municipality is a better example of diversity than Penn Hills.

In 1990, there were 7,946 black residents in Penn Hills; by 2000 it had increased 43 percent to 11,347 black residents. During the same period, the number of white residents declined about 10 percent, from 51,479 to 46,809. Students enrolled in the Penn Hills School District followed a similar pattern: The number of black students increased by nearly 50 percent, while the number of white students decreased by almost 23 percent.

"Penn Hills is still very solid," said O.T. Jackson, a real estate agent in his hometown for the past 33 years. "Money-wise, real estate-wise and educationally, people are getting a good share. The homes are not losing value, they're increasing in value."

Jackson and others believe that while part of the municipality's loss of white population is caused by so-called "white flight," some of it is also due to Penn Hills' relatively high real estate, wage and sewage rates. Some feel Penn Hills' increased

diversity can be a marketing tool.

"Anything that can help attract African-American population to want to live and do business and raise families in this region is positive," said Audrey Murrell, an associate professor of business administration and psychology at the University of Pittsburgh who conducts research on race, particularly among black professionals.

Sara Werner, a Penn Hills school board member for 23 years and director of the municipality's chamber of commerce, said she has received several phone calls from people interested in relocating to Penn Hills.

"I think it's very, very healthy to have a real mixture like this," Werner said. "We're unique as far as people cooperating and getting along with people. This is how you get to know people and know what they stand for. This is the world."

Staff writer Gary Rotstein contributed to this report.

Readers can check Census data for communities in the nine-county Pittsburgh region at www.post-gazette.com