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BACK BAY

Census data: Back Bay population rose less than one percent from 2000

Posted by Matt Rocheleau April 6, 2011 12:55 PM

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By Matt Rocheleau, Town Correspondent

The Back Bay saw slight population growth over the past decade, according to census data recently released by the city.

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Between 2000 and 2010, the Back Bay's population grew 0.76 percent to 18,088, according to figures the Boston Redevelopment Authority compiled from U.S Census Bureau data.

Accounting for the neighborhood's growth, the numbers show 569 more Asian residents, 242 additional Latino residents and 70 more residents who identified themselves as Black or African America, as compared to the 2000 Census.

What offset those figures was a nearly 5 percent decline in the Back Bay's white population, which now stands at 14,151. However, due to demographic shifts elsewhere, the Back Bay moved up one spot from 2000 to claim the third highest ratio – 78.2 percent in 2010 – of white residents among city neighborhoods.

The Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander and American Indian/Alaska Native demographics also dropped from 13 to 2 and 26 to 13 residents, respectively.

There was growth within the other racial and ethnic category counted for census purposes. The Asian population represented 9.9 percent of the Back Bay's total, up from 6.8 percent in 2000; the Latino segment rose from 4.5 to 5.8 percent and the Black or African American demographic grew from 3.5 to 3.9 percent of

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the neighborhood's makeup, according to the data.

- percent over decade
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Boston's population grew by 4.8 percent in the past decade to hit 617,594. The Hub remained a "majority-minority" city as 53 percent of residents are of a non-white race/ethnicity while 47 percent are white. In Boston, 47 percent of residents are white, 22.3 percent are Black/African American, 17.5 percent are Hispanic/Latino, and 8.8 percent are Asian.

While Boston gained over 41,000 people age 18 years and older, the city lost around 13,000 residents under 18. The 11-percent drop was among the most notable statistics for research director at Boston think-tank MassINC Benjamin Forman.

"There's no question that family households have been replaced by people without kids," he said, adding that a trend of fleeing families can often be a sign of gentrification.

The portion of residents 18 years or older grew in all but five neighborhoods; but in the Back Bay it dipped from 95.8 to 94.4 percent. Citywide, that portion grew from 80 to 83 percent.

The total number of housing units in the Back Bay grew over the past 10 years by around 5 percent to 12,226. However, vacant housing soared in the meantime from 7.42 to 13.2 percent, giving the neighborhood the second-highest housing vacancy rate among city neighborhoods, trailing only Downtown at 16.2 percent.

Citywide, housing grew by around 25,000 units, or 8 percent, however, vacancies also rose by 60 percent. Around 5 percent of Boston homes were empty in 2000; in 2010, around 7.25 percent of housing was vacant.

Boston's neighborhoods have no officially-defined boundaries, according to the BRA. In order to sort census data by neighborhood, the city department said it used a combination of ZIP codes and zoning boundaries to define each neighborhood's borders.

While the neighborhoods the city has mapped out for census number crunching by-and-large match how most perceive Boston's configuration, the city acknowledged some may dispute how the BRA has defined where neighborhoods begin and end.

"Everyone has their own definition of 'their' neighborhood -- the best part about Boston is there is such pride in the question -- and therefore there are no official boundaries because if there were, we'd have 617,594 different opinions," said spokeswoman Susan Elsbree.

The department plans to release additional maps and is also fielding individual requests to have data provided based on customized neighborhood boundaries.

To simplify city data analyzed for this report, Boston.com grouped, as follows, smaller neighborhoods and districts into other, larger areas creating a total of 18 city subsections: Beacon Hill includes the West End; Downtown includes Chinatown and the Leather District; Roxbury includes Mission Hill and the Longwood Medical Area; South Boston includes the South Boston Waterfront; and the South End includes Bay Village. The Harbor Islands -- with a combined population of 640 and 535 residents during the 2000 and 2010 census, respectively -- were not used in this analysis.

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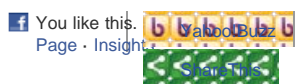
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However, raw data is still available [here](#) for each smaller neighborhood, district and islands that the BRA defined.

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