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NORTH END

Census data: North End grew, but kept 'Little Italy' feel over past decade

Posted by Matt Rocheleau April 6, 2011 12:00 PM

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By Matt Rocheleau, Town Correspondent

Boston's "Little Italy" has stayed true to being little.

As it was a decade ago, the North End's population remained the smallest among Boston's neighborhoods, even with a 5-percent growth, according to Census data recently released by the city.

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Between 2000-2010, the North End added 494 residents, increasing the neighborhood's population to 10,131, according to figures the Boston Redevelopment Authority compiled from US Census data.

While the North End retained the highest density of white residents, the neighborhood saw increases across most racial and ethnic demographics.

The neighborhood's Hispanic/Latino segment nearly doubled to 374 residents; the number of Black/African Americans rose by 47 residents, or 70.2 percent, to 114; and the Asian population grew 117, or 68.8 percent.

Overall, 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 non-white race/ethnicity while 47 percent are white; 22.3 percent are Black/African American, 17.5 percent are Hispanic/Latino; and 8.8 percent are Asian.

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

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among city neighborhoods

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“There’s no question that family households have been replaced by people without kids,” he said, adding that a trend of fleeing families can often be a sign of gentrification.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 total residents 18 or older grew in all but five neighborhoods; in the North End it slipped from 95.8 to 95.4 percent. Citywide, that portion grew from 80 to 83 percent.

The total number of North End housing units rose over the past 10 years by 5.2 percent to 6,728.

A housing influx Downtown lifted that neighborhood past the North End, which through 2010 had the least housing of any city neighborhood. The North End's housing vacancy rate rose from 6.5 to 8.5 of the total housing stock.

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.

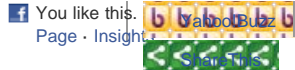
"Everyone has their own definition of 'their' neighborhood -- the best part about Boston is there is such pride in the question -- and therefore there are no official boundaries because if there were, we'd have 617,594 different opinions," said spokeswoman Susan Elsbree.

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.

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

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