



AN INTRODUCTION TO THE COMMUNITY PROFILES

The Community Profiles project was conceived by staff at the Baltimore Metropolitan Council several years ago with the purpose of drawing together data and information about the region's communities into one repository. The data comes from a variety of sources, and is displayed in ways that provide context and reveal trends about how the region's communities are growing and changing. The focus on community is the most important element of these profiles, rather than a large political jurisdiction or the entire region. While it is important to be aware of large-scale trends in the region or in any of its constituent jurisdictions, it is at the community level that demographic changes, residential and commercial development, or changes in the employment mix are most acutely felt by the region's residents. Furthermore, as the geographic unit of analysis becomes smaller, variations from place to place are more easily discernible—high and low income areas, for example, often balance one another out at the jurisdictional level, but reveal themselves when that jurisdiction is subdivided into smaller units of analysis.

This information is of interest to the transportation professional precisely because a significant amount of the transportation network is built to serve these communities. Consequently, a knowledge and awareness of the general demographic makeup of the region's varied communities better informs the planning professional about the effects that transportation policy decisions may have on the region. Furthermore, much of the data in the Community Profiles is presented in several different time periods, reflecting the belief that data loses its value if presented as a static "snapshot" of conditions. Rather, when compared over time, this data becomes a living history and a running account of the evolution of our communities, oftentimes illuminating how past policy decisions have affected the health and vitality of the region.

For the same reasons, the Community Profiles have value for a variety of other users. Community groups, neighborhood organizations, local non-profits and other non-governmental organizations have a need for data about communities, but often lack the resources to collect and organize data themselves. Basic information about population, housing, income, education, residential and commercial development, employment and employers, etc. all help to frame the important issues in a community, and may help to identify policy initiatives or indicate where areas of further study may be needed. Additionally, selected information is provided at even smaller levels of geography to help identify disparities in income, housing, or population density (among other variables) within a community.

Community Profiles-- Introduction

The Community Profiles have also been designed to aid research endeavors in other professions, such as residential and commercial development, marketing, and others. The Profiles may also provide much-needed information for businesses that may be looking to relocate or expand operations in the Baltimore region.

The basic unit of geography chosen for the Community Profiles is the Regional Planning District (RPD.) RPD boundaries were defined by the Regional Planning Council (BMC's predecessor) around the time of the 1970 Census and have remained virtually unchanged ever since, allowing for the consistent comparison of data from four decennial Censuses. Data from other sources, such as the Baltimore Metropolitan Council's (BMC) Master Establishment File (MEF) and the Building Permit Data System (BPDS), are more recent, yet still afford comparisons over time, at a geographic level small enough to be meaningful for community analysis. While at this time data is only available from the 1990 and 2000 Census, later versions of the Community Profiles will incorporate data from the 1970 and 1980 Census as well.

Frequently Asked Questions about the Data

A more detailed Technical Appendix is included as an addendum to the Community Profiles if information is needed about specific data sources, or the process used to calculate particular figures. This section is simply meant to address what is perceived to be the most common inquiries concerning the data presented in the Profiles.

Can data from the 1990 and 2000 Census be accurately compared?

For the most part, yes. There are, however, cases where data from the 1990 Census and data from the 2000 Census have been defined by the Census Bureau in slightly different ways. One example concerns population breakdowns by race. The 2000 Census permitted respondents to identify themselves with more than one race, whereas the 1990 Census required individuals of mixed race to choose only one. In the Community Profiles, those who have chosen to identify with more than one race in the 2000 Census are tabulated in the "Other Non-White" category, rather than distributed into the White and Black population. For the 1990 Census, these individuals would have been required to choose only one race. Therefore, 2000 Other Non-White population may be overstated when compared to 1990 figures. Consequently, White and Black population from 2000 may be slightly understated when compared to 1990 figures.

Why does the sum of White, Black, Other Non-White, and Hispanic population not add up to the total population?

The Census Bureau does not consider Hispanic to be a separate race. Therefore, the Hispanic White population is encapsulated within the White Population total—

Community Profiles-- Introduction

likewise for the Black and Other Non-White population. Consequently, only White, Black, and Other Non-White population should sum to the total population.

How exactly are the household distinctions defined?

The sum of single-person households, married households with no children, married households with children, other family households, and non-family households equals total households. "Other family households" encapsulate all households of two or more related people that do not involve a married couple—such as single mothers or fathers, siblings living together, grandparents living with grandchildren, etc. Non-family households encompass all households containing two or more unrelated persons.

The married family category is simply the sum of married families with no children and married families with children, while the Single Mother category is a subset of the Other Family Households category. Total Household population contains not households, but rather the sum total of individuals living in households. This combined with Group Quarters Population sums to Total Population.

What distinguishes the two vacant housing unit categories?

"Vacant, Sale/ Rent" includes all vacant housing units that are either for sale or for rent, or have been rented or sold but not yet occupied. These units are generally in habitable condition and are not indicative of a distressed neighborhood. The "Vacant, Other" category includes all housing units that are vacant for other reasons, such as seasonal housing, housing for migrant workers (that is vacant on April 1, the Census date) or housing that is boarded-up, dilapidated and unfit for habitation, or been uninhabited for so long that it is off the market.

Who is considered part of the labor force?

The labor force is made up of all individuals aged 16 or over who are either employed or actively looking for work. Those not in the labor force include students, individuals taking care of the home or family, retired workers, institutionalized individuals, and any other individual who is unemployed and not actively seeking work.

Are children younger than high school age factored into the total percentage of high school graduates?

No, only persons over the age of 25 are factored into the total percentage of individuals with high school or college degrees.

What is the difference between median household income and median family income?

Community Profiles-- Introduction

Households and families are defined in slightly different ways by the Census Bureau. Households generally include everyone who is not in group quarters (such as dormitories, prisons, halfway houses, etc.), and include persons living alone. Families, on the other hand, are defined as a household of at least two related persons living together. Therefore, by excluding households with only one individual, median family incomes (which often include two incomes) are often slightly higher than median household incomes.

What is the difference between Median Household Income and Median Household Income (\$99)?

Median Household Income (\$99) simply means that the income figure has been converted to 1999 dollars to make earlier data comparable to data from the 2000 Census (where income data is reported in 1999 dollars).

Why does the sum of new residential units in the Recent Development section not resemble increases in housing units reported by the Census Bureau?

The Census Bureau accounts for all housing units within a community. In other words, if a single-family house is subdivided into four apartments, the Census Bureau will report a net increase of three housing units. This information is captured by BMC's Building Permit Database System as an "Addition, Alternation, or Repair," rather than a new residential unit. Similarly, the adaptive reuse of old industrial buildings for new residential or commercial use is not recorded as new development, but rather the alteration of an existing structure. Therefore, the section on Recent Development should not be considered a summary of all new residential and non-residential units, but rather only those new units built on a previously vacant or unused parcel.

Why do some percentages not add up to 100%?

Some of the data displayed in the Community Profiles has been rounded for convenience. When added together, these rounded figures may not equal the precise total displayed in another column. Also, some calculations in the Profiles use non-rounded numbers for accuracy, creating slight differences where no differences appear to exist. For example, the median age of the population of a particular RPD may be displayed as exactly the same between 1990 and 2000, but small differences beyond the first decimal place may create percentage differences between the two.

More information on these and other questions may be found in the Technical Appendix.