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## **Our divided county: Much of Tarrant remains segregated despite pockets of diversity, an analysis finds**

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Much of Tarrant County, particularly in the northeast and southwest, is still largely segregated despite a surge in the minority population over the past decade, a Star-Telegram analysis of census data shows.

The county's Hispanic population nearly doubled, pushing minorities into the majority in Fort Worth, and other minorities have begun to filter into predominantly Anglo Northeast Tarrant suburbs. Yet most county residents still look out their front door and see neighbors who look just like them, the analysis shows.

That trend is no surprise to academics and demographers, who say Tarrant County mirrors most of the nation, where segregation -- particularly between Anglos and African-Americans -- has changed little since the 1920s.

In Texas, most of the large counties showed similar patterns, with Dallas and Harris being the most segregated. The pattern is expected to continue throughout the nation as more state figures from the 2000 Census are released, experts say.

"The levels of segregation across groups have been very stable for a long, long time," said John Logan, director of the Lewis Mumford Center for Comparative Urban and Regional Research at the State University of New York -- Albany.

In Tarrant County, the most diverse neighborhood is in southeast Fort Worth, near Town Center mall. The largest area of racial and ethnic diversity is in east Arlington, although even that city is slightly more segregated than it was in 1990.

Least diverse in Tarrant County is Westover Hills, a small enclave inside Fort Worth that is 97 percent Anglo and is home to some of the county's wealthiest people.

Experts say a shortage of affordable housing combined with a lack of fair lending practices means that it could be decades before the nation lives together in peaceful integration -- if ever.

In parts of east Arlington, however, local businesses and residents look as cosmopolitan as stretches of San Francisco or New York.

A clinic lures clients with bold advertisements in English, Spanish and Vietnamese. An Italian restaurant is mere feet from a Malaysian restaurant and adjacent to a bank where the employees speak Vietnamese, Cantonese, Mandarin Chinese, Bengali, Hindi, Urdu and a few words of greeting in Korean.

The little neighborhood is in the heart of the largest pocket of diversity in Tarrant County.

Many Arlington residents speak of the neighborhood's integration with pride, saying it is what drew them to the city. They believe that Arlington can be a model for how different kinds of people can live and work together.

"My next-door neighbor is Polish. Across from him is a Vietnamese. Across from him is an African-American and right next to him is an Anglo. My whole neighborhood is like that. I love it," said Denise Johnson, an African-American who moved to Arlington in 1989 and volunteers often for the school district.

When Michael Glaspie moved to Arlington from Hewitt near Waco to take a job with IBM in 1982, he had some criteria in mind while house-shopping: good schools, solid value in housing prices, proximity to Fort Worth and Dallas. Many neighborhoods in the Mid-Cities would have met his needs, but Glaspie was impressed with something he discovered in Arlington: There were no predominantly black or Hispanic neighborhoods.

"Really, it has boggled my mind over the years that Arlington is pretty much a place where you can come live where you want to live, and it's fairly spread out," said Glaspie, who became the school district's first African-American board president in 1999. "For some reason, Arlington is a place where everyone is everywhere."

Glaspie speculated that the city's General Motors plant, which had traditionally hired people from across the class spectrum, contributed to the city's history of diversity. Even a small African-American community near Sanford and Cooper Streets that existed in the 19th century has disappeared and is now a blend of 32 percent Anglos, 52 percent Hispanics and 11 percent African-Americans.

Similarly, Fort Worth's north side was built on diversity, said City Councilman Jim Lane, a lawyer who has lived and worked in the area for more than 20 years.

As far back as 100 years ago, the Stockyards drew a mix of workers -- Hispanic, black and Anglo -- who lived nearby. At the time, many of the whites were also immigrants, from Ireland, Greece and other countries.

"It was historically tri-ethnic," Lane said. "It's something that most people in Fort Worth don't realize."

The neighborhood that includes Lane's law office on Central Avenue near North Main Street is among the most diverse in Fort Worth. It is 32 percent Anglo, 36 percent Hispanic, 31 percent black and about 1 percent Asian.

Still, he said, Fort Worth has more work to do before other parts of the city share in the benefits.

"I don't think you can talk about diversity," he said. "I don't think you can preach inclusion. You have to live it and set an example. We need to make sure kids grow up thinking they're welcome anywhere."

A simple game of front-yard baseball on a sunny afternoon told the complex tale of diversity in southeast Fort Worth.

Four children -- one black, two Hispanics and one Anglo -- tossed the ball and swung the bat, oblivious to the talk of differences just a few feet away.

In their neighborhood, the heart of the single most diverse neighborhood in Tarrant County, residents see members of other ethnic groups on a daily basis.

"We have everything around here," said Johnny Pulido, 39, who has lived in the neighborhood most of his life and whose 4-year-old son was the youngest of the baseball players.

"I think it'll probably stay the same, real mixed."

The neighborhood, which sits in a small pocket of southeast Fort Worth that straddles Interstate 35W and stretches from Hemphill to Wichita streets and from Seminary Drive to Felix Street and Interstate 20, is 9 percent Anglo, 49 percent Hispanic, 35 percent black and nearly 5 percent Asian.

Fort Worth Mayor Kenneth Barr said learning to live together is a challenge for the future.

"Our goal is to have a community where race and ethnicity are not a factor in where people live and work, and who associates with whom," he said. "While there's no doubt that racism is alive and well in Fort Worth, I think we've made progress. But we have an enormous distance to go."

Housing prices, not discrimination, are the most likely reason that Westover Hills remains mostly Anglo, said Mayor Earle Shields Jr. The city of 658 lost population slightly in the 1990s.

"It's certainly not purposeful, and there's certainly no segregationist policies," Shields said. "That's just the way it's been."

Demographic changes will confront more communities in the future. A number of Northeast Tarrant cities saw a jump in their minority percentages, and they expect more diversity by the next census.

"It has had such a high percentage of nondiversity that, over the years to come, we should expect change and should embrace it," said Joe Hennig, city manager of Euless, which has the only Northeast Tarrant neighborhood ranked among the county's 50 most diverse.

The neighborhood, south of Airport Freeway, is 48 percent Anglo, 25 percent Hispanic, 12 percent African-American and 11 percent Asian.

For example, he said, Euless held a unity dinner to foster communication between the larger community and its residents from Tonga, a kingdom of islands in the southwest Pacific.

Yet, living together has proved confounding for many Americans, said Logan, with the Mumford Center in New York.

Even when people say they want to live in neighborhoods with a substantial ethnic mix, they often don't buy houses there -- particularly if it means living in an area where crime might be higher or the school's performance might be lower, Logan said.

Moreover, segregation -- particularly between Anglos and African-Americans -- has persisted because of a number of factors, particularly discrimination in the housing market and bank lending

policies that, although illegal, still exist.

"Choice is what is preferable," Logan said. "The current situation, particularly for African-Americans, is that even if they achieve a high level of socioeconomic mobility, the range of choice tends to be quite narrow."

Segregation may not always be forced.

Hispanics are clustering across Texas, but it may be attributed in part to preference as well as limited affordable housing. Immigrants from Mexico, for example, may want to live near an established network from their hometown and in an area where Spanish is accepted.

Diversity, particularly when it brings change, is often difficult to sustain.

"It's always a burning question about single census snapshots: Are we catching a transition toward re-segregation or are we catching real change? Unfortunately, I generally have a pessimistic conclusion," said Karl Eschbach, a sociology professor at the University of Houston who is studying segregation in Harris County.

Experts say that in some neighborhoods, the 2000 Census may have simply caught the middle of a shift from one predominant ethnic group to another. In the two most diverse Arlington neighborhoods, the number of Anglos declined sharply from 1990 to 2000.

Rapha Sullivan, 45, has lived in east Arlington all her life and now works at the snack bar of The Bingo Mall at the corner of Pioneer Parkway and Collins Street. When Sullivan and her husband bought their home on Biggs Circle in 1977, the street was filled with Anglos like her. Now, most of them have left.

Sullivan isn't ready to leave. She doesn't see herself as racist, but she said it disturbs her when she walks into nearby convenience store and not one clerk speaks English.

"My daughter has said: 'I get to where I feel like I'm not in Texas, much less in the United States. It's like I'm in a foreign country,' " Sullivan said.

Sue Phillips, an Anglo who is president of East Arlington Renewal, said that some Anglos complain about immigrants who cook in their front yards. The Anglos, she said, may not stop to think that many immigrants probably didn't have a back yard and that it's simply a holdover from the only culture they've known.

"That is one of the biggest challenges: How do we integrate people from different cultures into our society?" Phillips said.

Fort Worth City Councilman Ralph McCloud said he's encouraged by the mix of people who are moving into the city, including the most diverse neighborhood, which is in his district.

"One of the good things about that census tract, as well as many others in my district, is we're fortunate enough to have people from different ethnicities moving in," he said. "I'm not anywhere near as worried about the person who is moving out as the person who is moving in."

But he said the city has a long way to go before all neighborhoods are diverse.

"We have to move beyond tolerance to acceptance, and that's a huge shift sometimes for folks," McCloud said. "We realize what the demographics and trends are showing us, and we need to see that not as a weakness but a strength and not an impediment but a gift."

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