

# Census: Hispanic residents moving to suburbs, outskirts

Some moving out of city centers for lower cost of living

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When Dinora Garcia's family moved to Brunswick in 2004, they experienced a bit of culture shock.

Unlike their former home in Gaithersburg, their new neighborhood along Frederick County's south-western border boasted few, if any, other Hispanic families.

"I think we were like the first ones in the whole town," Dinora Garcia recalled in a phone interview Thursday.

The city's residents took notice. They weren't rude, or discriminatory, but the Garcia family attracted a fair amount of attention.

"People in Brunswick were not used to seeing people who look Hispanic in their small town," she said.

Fast forward 14 years, and that's no longer the case. Though still a minority, the Garcias are now one of many Hispanic families who have chosen to call Brunswick home, buying property, patronizing local businesses and sending their children to public schools.

"It's really grown by a lot," Dinora Garcia said. "Especially in the last four or five years, I've seen a big change."

In 2016, Hispanic residents made up 8.89 percent of the population in the census tract where the Garcia family lives, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2016 American Community Survey five-year estimates. At the time of the 2010 census, 3.77 percent of the census tract's population identified as Hispanic or Latino, according to the data.

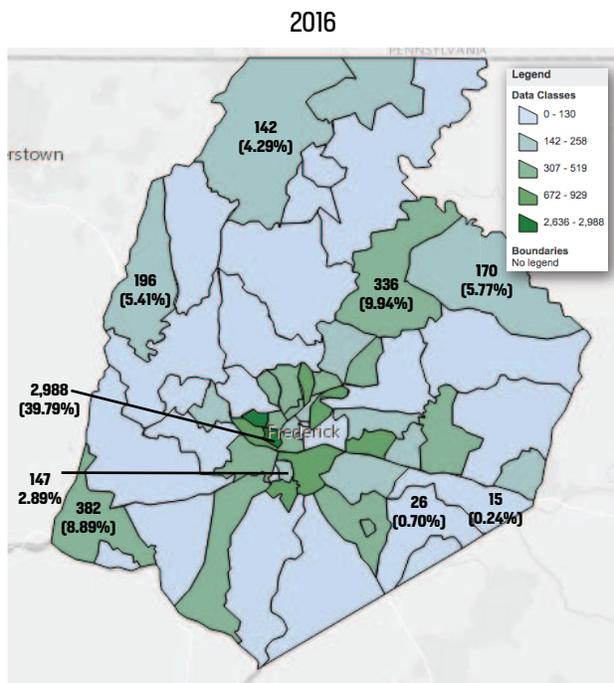
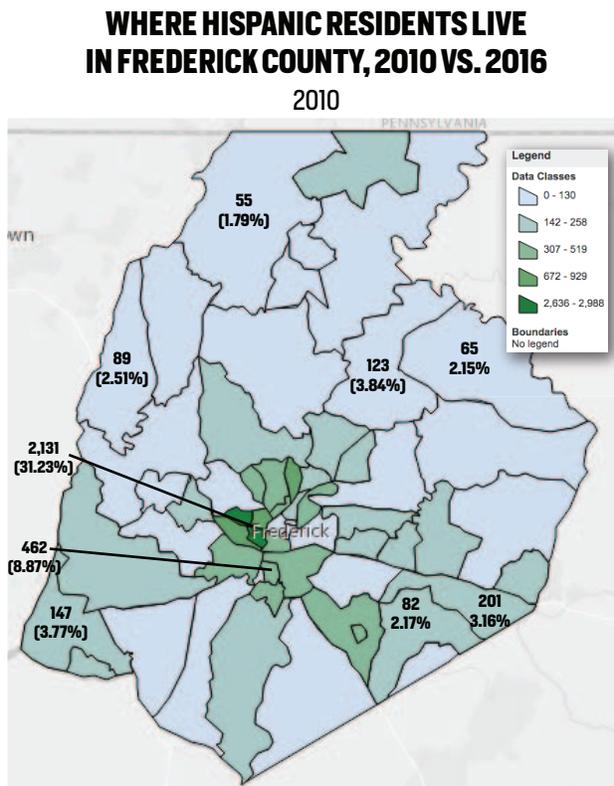
Census tracts in the northern, eastern and western limits of the county saw similar spikes in the number and percentage of Hispanic residents from 2010 to 2016. And several of the census tracts in and around the city of Frederick, once the stronghold for the county's Hispanic population, were marked by corresponding decreases in the number and percentage of Hispanic residents.

The share of Hispanic residents in Frederick County overall increased 1.1 percent in the same time frame: from 7.3 percent in 2010 to 8.4 percent in 2016.

The data confirms what Dinora Garcia and other local residents had already noticed: Hispanic families are migrating, moving out from the city center in search of the lower cost of living and other benefits the more rural areas of the county provide.

## SEEKING SAVINGS

Affordable housing was the deciding factor in the Garcia family's move to



Sources: U.S. Census Bureau 2010 census, 2016 American Community Survey five-year estimates

Note: Data is broken down by census tract, and listed both as the total number of residents who identified as Hispanic or Latino, as well as a percentage of that census tract's total population

Brunswick, Dinora Garcia said. She and her husband wanted to trade in the cramped town house they rented in Gaithersburg for a free-standing house they

could call their own, with room to raise their two sons. "Brunswick was the only place we could afford," she said. Housing costs typically

top the list of reasons behind migration from urban centers to more rural areas, according to Gustavo (See MOVING A5)



Staff photo by Graham Cullen

## Dinora Garcia and her son Esteban in their Brunswick home.

### Moving

(Continued from A1)

Velasquez, director of the Washington-area Research Initiative for the Urban Institute. As city dwellers trade in their urban residences for cheaper alternatives in the suburbs, that, in turn, drives up housing costs there. It creates a kind of ripple effect in which residents who cannot keep up with the higher cost of living in their suburban neighborhoods move even farther away from city centers, Velasquez said.

For Latino residents, who as a general demographic have "much less disposable income," can be disproportionately affected by this phenomenon, Velasquez said. That was the case in D.C. 20 to 30 years ago, followed by places in the Greater D.C. region such as Montgomery County.

Employment opportunities, access to public transportation and extended family networks can also drive Hispanic migration, though being closer to family usually sends people into cities instead of away from them.

Brunswick's economic growth, as well as its proximity to job opportunities in Virginia and West Virginia, could be a source of appeal for the Hispanic families who moved there, according to Brunswick High School Principal Michael Dillman. Dillman also named the MARC train station in Brunswick, offering area residents easy access to D.C., as an attraction.

Thurmont Mayor John Kinnaird, meanwhile, highlighted the quieter way of life as reason why residents of all races and ethnicities move to the rural northern areas of the county.

"It's just a more laid-back way of life," he said. "There's open space, and it's a really small, close-knit kind of community."

Asked if he thought the increase in

Hispanic residents in northern Frederick County had changed the area, Kinnaird said no.

### ADDRESSING THE IMPACT

Schools are often the first places affected by Hispanic migration, Velasquez said. Changes or increases in a school district's distribution of Hispanic students drive up demand for specific resources that serve that population, Velasquez said.

Frederick County Public Schools has grappled with this very situation in recent years as its Hispanic student body spreads out from the city of Frederick schools to other feeder patterns. Larry Steinly, supervisor of the district's English Language Learners (ELL) program for students whose primary language is not English, highlighted Brunswick and Walkersville as two areas where the Hispanic student population had increased significantly in recent years.

At Brunswick Elementary School, Hispanic students made up 8 percent of the student body in the 2010-11 academic year, according to information provided by the district. At the start of the 2016-17 year, 9 percent of students were Hispanic or Latino.

As a result, the district upped the hours for the ELL program instructor at Brunswick Elementary from a part-time to a full-time job, Steinly said.

The ELL program has also expanded at the high school in response to shifts in the Hispanic student population. Until this year, all high school students participating in the program went to Frederick High School, regardless of where they lived. Gov. Thomas Johnson High School was added at the start of this school year, and Tuscarora High School is slated to join the program next year, Steinly said.

Of course, not all Hispanic students need English language services.

Dillman didn't think adding an ELL program would really benefit Brunswick High's Hispanic students, most of whom are native speakers or no longer need language services after participating in the program at the elementary or middle school level.

Dillman instead spoke of the need for more diversity in the school's employees to better reflect the school's increasing number of Hispanic students. He also hoped to bring on more Spanish-speaking teachers to better communicate with students' families, some of whom speak little or no English, he said.

"We need to be as proactive as possible," Steinly agreed, referencing the expectation that the district's Hispanic student population will continue to grow and migrate.

### LIVED EXPERIENCE

While he's no longer one of the only Hispanic students in his class, Esteban Garcia, a junior at Brunswick High, didn't feel that increasing diversity changed his own experience as a student. His peers never treated him differently, the 17-year-old said.

"I grew up here, so we've all been going to school together from the start," he said.

Asked if that was the case for his Hispanic classmates who came to Brunswick later on, he said not as much. The two groups of students, Hispanic and non-Hispanic, interact a bit, but "they're kind of separate, too," he said.

He's successfully bridged the divide, though a majority of his friends from school are non-Hispanic, he said.

"It's never really been this big thing," he said regarding the race and ethnicity of his classmates.

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