New City at Ten: Demographic and Economic Change in Sandy Springs, Georgia a Decade after Incorporation

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**Topic**
Sandy Springs, the first newly incorporated municipality in Fulton County in almost 80 years

**Research Question**
What demographic and economic changes have taken place since incorporation?

**Goal**
Profile of demographic and economic change in Sandy Springs, a baseline for further study of the effects of new city formation
Background

What led Sandy Springs to incorporation, review of scholarship

Methods

Focus, data sources, and analytical approach

Results

Changes in race, ethnicity, income, and wealth

Conclusion

Review, looking ahead, and questions
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Sandy Springs
- Population: 100,000
- Area: 38 square miles
- Incorporated 2005

Fulton County
- Population: 1 million
- Area: 527 square miles
- Borders result of 1932 merger with two neighboring counties
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Political Divide

North Fulton
- Obama: 36%
- Romney: 62%

South Fulton
- Obama: 81%
- Romney: 18%
Demographic Divide

North Fulton
- Black: 14%
- White: 62%

South Fulton
- Black: 62%
- White: 27%

One dot = 10 people
- White
- Black
- Asian
- Hispanic
- Other

Background
North Fulton

- No unincorporated areas
- Alpharetta, incorporated 1858
- Johns Creek, 2006
- Milton, 2006
- Mountain Park, 1927
- Roswell, 1854
- Sandy Springs, 2005
1965 Atlanta Annexation Effort

- Dilute growing influence of Atlanta’s black electorate
- Reaction at times overtly racist, typical of white-flight era

1970s Fulton County Conflict

- Unresponsive to concerns such as zoning
- Redistributive tax policies to subsidize south Fulton

1975-2005 Incorporation Fight

- 30-year political stalemate in Georgia General Assembly
- 94% approve June 2005 referendum, formed Dec. 2005
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Newly Incorporated Municipalities (NIMs)

- Small body of scholarship by geographic researchers
- Focus on *how*, *why*, and *where* new cities are formed
- Absence of research on *what* effects incorporation has

Race and Income Homogeneity

- Leon-Moreta (2015) found pursuit of income homogeneity had clearer effect on incorporation probability than race
- Cities form to avoid class diversity, redistributive tax policies
- Effects of race and class are not mutually exclusive
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Primary Topics

- Race and ethnicity: More or less diverse or diversified differently than surrounding communities? Segregation?
- Income: Increased economic homogeneity, inequality, or class-based segregation?

Foundation in History and Research

- Mid-20th century roots of incorporation in Sandy Springs were unquestionably racial in nature
- Latter-day issues of political representation and service provision are inextricably linked to race and class
- NIMs scholarship highlights pursuit of income uniformity
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Data Sources

- U.S. Census Bureau
  - 2000 and 2010 decennial censuses
  - American Community Survey 5-year estimates
  - Geographic boundary data
- Multi-agency Fulton County geospatial data portal
Methods

Dissimilarity Index

- Most common measure of residential segregation
- Quantifies % of a group that would have to move for each sub-area measured to have same proportion as overall area
- Evenness not dependent on relative size of groups compared

Isolation Index

- Very common measure of residential segregation
- Measures extent to which a group is exposed only to one another, rather than to members of other groups
- Exposure is dependent on relative size of groups compared
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Quintile Shares

- Comparison of aggregate proportion of household income received by each fifth of the income distribution
- Consistently measures earnings distribution across time

Percentile Limit Ratios

- Comparison of income at selected percentiles, such as the household at the 80th percentile to household at 20th

Gini Coefficient

- Most common measure of income inequality
- High median income and low Gini, uniformly high earnings
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Race and Ethnicity

- Population and diversity growing steadily
- 43% of population is non-white
- African Americans accounted for 78% of total population growth

White Population Decline

- 73% to 57% from 2000 to 2010-2014
- Shrank by about 6,000, or 10%
- Proportionally smaller than in other north Fulton cities
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Black Population Growth

- Grew 107% from 2000 to 2010-2014
- From 10,000 to 21,000
- Share of total from 12% to 21%

Hispanic and Asian Growth

- Hispanic up 4,200 and 49% from 2000 to 2010-2014
- Asian up 3,200 and 116% from 2000 to 2010-2014
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Dissimilarity

- Lower but rising in Sandy Springs compared to Fulton County as a whole
- Black to all others: 39 to 48, up 25%
- White to all others: 38 to 37, down 2%

Isolation

- Rising as black population increases
- Black: 21 to 39, up 85%
- White: 78 to 66, down 15%
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Median Household Income

- Down $22,000, or 26%, from 2000 to 2010-2014 after adjusting for inflation
- Lower in Sandy Springs than in other north Fulton cities

Household Income by Race

- 46% of white households made more than $100,000 in 2010-2014
- 8% of black households in same category
- 60% of black households made less than $50,000
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**Median Income by Race**

- White-headed households in 2010-2014: $88,000
- Black-headed households: $40,000
- Black median 54% less than white

**Change in Income by Race**

- White: Down 6% from 2000 to 2010-2014 after adjusting for inflation
- Black: Down 37% from 2000 to 2010-2014
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- Black-headed households: $40,000
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Change in Income by Race

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**80th-20th Percentile Ratio**

- 20th percentile household income: $27,000
- 80th percentile household income: $160,000
- 21% higher than any other north Fulton city
- 8% lower than Fulton County as a whole

**Share of Income by Quintile**

- Highest quintile: 60% of total in 2010-2014
- Up 4% since 2006-2010
- Lowest quintile: 2.4% of total in 2010-2014
- Down 18% since 2006-2010
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Poorest 20% Mean Income
- 2006-2010: $18,000
- 2010-2014: $13,500
- Down 25%

Wealthiest 20% Mean Income
- 2006-2010: $360,000
- 2010-2014: $340,000
- Down 5%
Poorest 20% Mean Income
- 2006-2010: $18,000
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Wealthiest 20% Mean Income
- 2006-2010: $360,000
- 2010-2014: $340,000
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Poorest 20%-Richest 5% Ratio

- Mean income of poorest 20% of households in 2010-2014: $13,500
- Mean income of richest 5% of households in 2010-2014: $640,000
- Richest 5% average 47x greater

Change in Ratio

- Ratio in 2006-2010: 36x
- 30% increase from 2006-2010 to 2010-2014
Poorest 20%-Richest 5% Ratio

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Change in Ratio

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Homeownership by Race

- Overall Sandy Springs rate of 46% in 2010-2014 lowest of north Fulton cities
- White-headed households: 64%
- Black-headed households: 11%
- Hispanic-headed households: 16%

Median Income by Ownership

- Households that owned: $125,000
- Households that rented: $42,000
- Ratio up 37% since 2000
Results

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Poverty

- Sandy Springs poverty rate in 2010-2014: 12.5%, up from 6.5% in 2000
- Number of people in poverty up 122%
- Rate almost 50% higher than any other north Fulton city
- Growth 3.5x faster than county as a whole
Results

- Considerably more racially and ethnically diverse
- Familiar patterns of suburban residential segregation
- Affluent overall, vast and widening racial income gap
- Inequality accelerating faster than neighboring cities
- Massive gap in homeownership by race and ethnicity
Looking Ahead

- Demographic and economic profile of Sandy Springs
- Topical and methodological baseline for further study
- Specific city actions and policies such as code enforcement or economic development
- Broader regional perspective
- Longer period of time