

Chapter 2: Demographic Analysis

In order to adequately plan for its future, a community needs to understand trends occurring in its population. Questions regarding the sources of development pressures, the types of households in the Township, and the kinds of housing in demand are relevant to officials making community service decisions. For example, a young family in a single-family home has different needs than a single senior citizen in an apartment. This chapter provides an overview of basic descriptive statistics (including housing, employment and income levels) to provide Township decision-makers with a frame of reference regarding area demographics. Note that most of the data in this section was derived from the 2000 Federal Census.

Population

Almena's population has grown steadily since the 1950's (see Table I). Between 1970 and the year 2000 (see Figure I) the population more than doubled, increasing by about 130%. By comparison, Van Buren County's population increased by about 25% (see Table II) and Michigan's increased by about 12% in the same thirty years.

Table I
Almena Township Total Population by Decade

1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
1,014	1,288	1,845	2,956	3,581	4,226

Source: U.S.

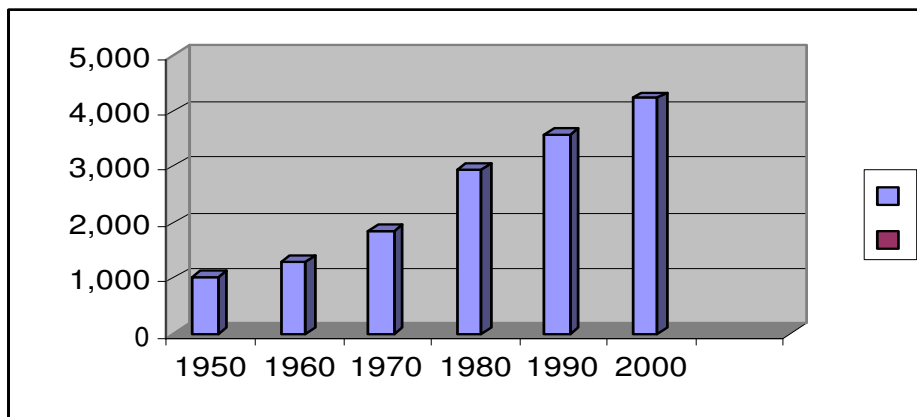


Figure I Total Township Population by Decade

Table II
Total County Population by Decade

1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
39,184	48,395	56,173	66,814	70,060	76,263

Source: U.S. Census

Compared to its surrounding communities and the County, the Township had a sizable increase in its population between 1990 and 2000, increasing by 18% (see Table III). Oshtemo and Texas Townships, located between the City of Kalamazoo and Almena, increased by about 27% and 42%, respectively. These figures are significant considering the State population increased by 6.9% in the same ten years. It appears that a large portion of Almena's population increase is a result of spillover from development expanding beyond Kalamazoo and its neighboring Townships of Oshtemo and Texas.

Table III Area Population Changes

Unit of Government	1990 Population	2000 Population	Percent Change
Van Buren County	70,060	76,263	8.9%
Almena Twp.	3,581	4,226	18%
Antwerp Twp.	9,293	10,813	16.4%
Paw Paw Twp.	6,701	7,091	5.8%
Waverly Twp.	2,188	2,467	12.8%
Bloomingtondale Twp.	2,864	3,364	17.9%
Pine Grove Twp.	2,594	2,773	6.9%
Alamo Twp. (Kalamazoo Co.)	3,276	3,320	16.6%
Oshtemo Twp. (Kalamazoo Co.)	13,401	17,003	26.9%
Texas Twp. (Kalamazoo Co.)	7,771	10,919	41.6%

Source: U.S. Census

Housing Trends and Density

Although suburbanizing, Almaena still has relatively low population density overall. As of the year 2000, Almaena had approximately 123 persons and 47.4 housing units per square mile. For comparative purposes, Antwerp Township had about 310 persons and 114 houses per square mile. The largest concentration of population in Almaena is in the subdivisions located in the easternmost sections of the Township (again, nearer Kalamazoo). These subdivisions have larger lots than would be found in most traditional suburban settings. Development outside of the subdivisions is on larger parcels (e.g., two-, five-, ten-, and twenty-acre parcels). While this type of large-lot development keeps density lower, it consumes land faster and is more difficult to service. Provisioning such lower density, scattered development with buses, emergency services, water, and sewer lines ultimately costs local governments more time and money.

Households

In 1990, Almaena Township had 1,204 households. By the year 2000, the number of households had increased by 29%, to 1,553 households. The increase in number of households was much larger than the increase in population. This is likely a reflection of national trends of smaller households and more single-person households. In many ways the increase in the number of households is more significant than the increase in population because it is the household unit that consumes land and requires services.

The majority of Almaena households are married-couples (70%) reflecting a higher percentage than County and State averages (see Table IV). A higher-than-average number of married couple households are common for suburbanizing areas because the more affluent two-income households drive the large-lot single-family market. Not surprisingly, the presence of children in the Township's households is higher than County and State averages. About 40% of all households have school-aged children (individuals 18 or under). The number of households with a senior citizen is lower than County and State averages in that about 17% of all households in the Township have a senior in them while the County and State averages are about 23%.

The number of single-parent households (6.4%) in the Township is not far from County and State averages. Non-family households consist of single persons or unrelated persons living together. Almaena's portion of non-family households is smaller than that of the County and State. About 20% of the Township's households are non-family while nearly one-third of the State's households are non-family. About 5% of the Township's non-family households are senior citizens living alone. When considering Township services, non-family and single parent households need to be kept in mind in that they are less able to bear the cost of increased services. The average household size in the Township is 2.72 persons per household, slightly higher than the State and County averages of 2.56 and 2.66 persons, respectively.

Table IV Household Types

	Almena Twp.	Van Buren Co.	Michigan
Married-couple families	70%	56.7%	51.4%
Single-parent families	6.4%	7.0%	7.5%
Non-family households	19.8%	27.4%	32%
Households with individuals under 18 years of age	39.5%	38.3%	35.6%
Households with individuals 65 years and over	16.9%	23.2%	22.8%

Source: U.S. Census

Age

The percentage of school-aged children (eighteen years and under) in the Township is a little higher than that of the State, but lower than the County average (see Table V). Almena has a higher median age than both the County and the State but it also has fewer people sixty-five years and over than the County and State. Further, well over one-third of Almena's population is between thirty-five and fifty-four years of age. These facts suggest a predominance of older families (with children in upper grade levels) and "empty-nesters" (couples whose children are raised and out of the house).

Table V Age Ranges

	Almena Twp.	Van Buren Co.	Michigan
Percent of the population under 18 years of age	26.9%	28.1%	26.1%
Percent of the population 65 years or older	8.8%	12.3%	12.3%
Median Age	38.3 yrs.	36.6 yrs.	35.6 yrs.

Source: U.S. Census

Housing

In the year 2000, the Township had a total of 1,631 housing units. Over half of those units were built within a span of nineteen years. Between 1980 and March of 2000, 830 housing units were built in Alma. The housing stock of the Township is almost exclusively single-family (98.2%). Only twenty-nine multi-family units were recorded in the 2000 Census, and they were all two-family units. Mobile homes are considered single-family units and accounted for about 11% of all housing units in the Township. Mobile homes are scattered throughout the Township on individual parcels, in a mixed mobile home subdivision, and in a mobile home park. Single-family homes are found in both large-lot subdivisions as well as on scattered, large-lot parcels. Single-family homes on smaller lots are primarily along the Township's lakeshores. The value of Alma homes is much higher than the state average of \$94,200. The median home value of owner-occupied homes in Alma as of the year 2000 was \$118,500. In 1980 the median value of the Township's housing was \$46,400. In twenty years median housing value has gone up 250%.

Income and Educational Attainment

The Census measures income in three ways: 1) median household, which is representative of all households (non-family and family); 2) median family, which is representative of all family households, including those with single parents; and 3) per capita income, which averages all incomes among the entire population, including non-workers such as children. In all scenarios the Township's income levels are higher than those of the County and the State (see Table VI). Given the higher income levels of the Township, it's not surprising that there is a high level of educational attainment. As of the year 2000, over 87% of the population had a high school education and about 24% had a Bachelor's degree or higher.

Only 1.4% of the Township's population was on public assistance at the time of the 2000 Census, yet 5.3% of the population (or 222 individuals) had income below poverty level. Of greater concern are the income levels of female-headed households in the Township. About 27% of all female-headed household incomes were below the poverty level. For female-headed households with children under 18 years of age and children under five years of age, the poverty rates jumped to 43% and 69%, respectively.

Table VI Income Levels

	<u>Alma Twp.</u>	<u>Van Buren Co.</u>	<u>Michigan</u>
Median household	\$51,027	\$39,365	\$31,020
Median family	\$56,653	\$45,824	\$36,652
Per capita	\$20,733	\$17,878	\$14,154

Source: U.S. Census

Employment

As is suggested by the mean reported travel time to work of about twenty-five minutes, most workers in the Township commute out of the area for employment. Workers are primarily employed in “manufacturing,” (23.5% of all workers), and “education, health and social services,” (19% of all workers). About 10% of those employed worked in “retail trade.” The top two occupations that Almena workers reported were “management, professional and related occupations,” (34.2%), and “sales and office occupations,” (23.6%). Another 19.3% of all workers were in “production, transportation and material moving” occupations. At the time of the Census, 63% of all women sixteen or more years of age were in the labor force.

Summary

Over the last several decades Almena Township has grown substantially and evolved from a predominantly rural area to a community of people who want to live in the “country” yet work in other areas. Because of a general lack of industry and commercial services, this development pattern is typically called a “bedroom community” where the principal type of development is single-family homes. Older homes in the Township are more modest while newer homes reflect a much higher level of wealth coming into the community. There is a notable dichotomy in some of the developments in that a mobile home/modular home subdivision can be located across the street from homes that are several thousand square feet in size and several hundred thousand dollars in value.

Most of the population growth can be attributed to in-migration from other more populous areas. Households are dominated by married-couple families, many of them in later family stages (i.e., children in upper grade levels) or “empty nesters” (i.e., the children are grown and out of the house). Many of the households are two-income commuting families but there are senior households and single parent households to keep in mind as well.