

COMMUNITY PROFILE

Borough of Brownsville, Fayette County

REGIONAL SETTING

The Borough of Brownsville, located in west-central Fayette County in Southwestern PA, consists of approximately 1.0 square miles and has a population of approximately 2,804 people. The Borough is bounded on the west by the Monongahela River, Luzerne on the South and West Brownsville on the North and West and Redstone on the East. The Brownsville area is bisected by U.S. Route 40.

A BRIEF HISTORY

Fayette County

(Taken from Fayette County Chamber of Commerce Website)

Fayette County's geographic location and the wealth of its natural resources have combined to produce two dominant periods of its history whose influences are still felt today - transportation via road and river, and the coal and coke era. Parallel with both have been agriculture and commerce, and the opportunities inherent in the scenic beauties of the county, especially in the mountain area.

The one feasible land route from Virginia to the strategic point of the Forks of the Ohio (the future site of Pittsburgh) ran through the wilderness of what would become Fayette County. In 1754, George Washington, led his Virginians to reinforce an earlier contingent sent to build a fort at the Forks of the Ohio, heading first for Redstone Old Fort (Brownsville), where a storehouse had been built. His expedition ended in defeat by the French and Indians at Fort Necessity. After the British finally won the French and Indian War, after capturing Fort Duquesne and renaming it Fort Pitt in 1758, the settlers came back over the mountains and set up subsistence farming. A connector was needed to the west and Col. James Burd supplied that in 1759, with the help of the Indian chief Nemacolin, by laying out a road from Gist's to Brownsville (where he built Fort Burd).

Communities grew up at natural geographical centers and in the 1770s the territory that would become Fayette County was claimed by both Pennsylvania and Virginia. The dispute was settled in 1780 when the Mason-and-Dixon Line was extended to the original limit of Penn's land grant, giving Virginia frontage on the Ohio River.

Fayette County was created out of the southern part of Westmoreland County in September 1783 and named for the young French hero of the Revolution, the Marquis de LaFayette. Uniontown, which had been founded on July 4, 1776, was chosen as the county seat.

In the late 1700's, the first industrialization appeared with the iron furnaces in the mountains, taking advantage of deposits of iron ore and abundant wood for charcoal. Strategically located on the Monongahela River, Brownsville quickly became a center for construction and dispatch of flatboats, keelboats and later, the new steamboats.

The National Road was built by the federal government from Cumberland to Wheeling in 1811-18, with its route through Uniontown, Brownsville and Washington assured by the early Fayette County politician and statesman Albert Gallatin. It brought prosperity, creating an entire culture of its own, with freight-laden Conestoga wagons, stagecoaches, "movers" heading west, and huge herds and flocks of livestock. The road opened up the Northwest Territory, reaching vast areas not accessible to rivers.

The presence of bituminous coal had been recognized early, and small mines were opened, but the soft coal could not withstand the rough handling of primitive transportation for long distances. The breakthrough came with the discovery of the coke-making process, and Fayette County coke was one of the essential ingredients upon which the Pittsburgh steel empire was built.

Ironmaster Isaac Mason experimented with coke at Plumsock (Upper Middletown) as early as 1815, but the first beehive oven was not built until 1841, at Connellsville. The first successful export of coke came in 1843 when Little Jim Cochran of Dawson floated a boat land down the rivers to Cincinnati.

The early pre-eminence of Fayette County and the adjoining section of southern Westmoreland County in the coal and coke industry was based on Connellsville coking coal, the best metallurgical coal ever discovered. The first great mines and coke yards sprang up in the 1870s and 1880s in the narrow section from Latrobe south through Scottdale, Connellsville and Uniontown to the Fairchance-Smithfield area. Later the coal fields expanded into the "Klondike" area, from Uniontown west to the Monongahela River. New towns appeared seemingly overnight to accommodate miners, many of them immigrants from Europe, and the county's population exploded.

The coal and coke boom continued through ups and downs until about 1950s, by which time almost all of the large Fayette County mines were worked out. The beehive ovens, which had reached a total of 44,000, disappeared as the more efficient by-product ovens took over. At least 150 coal "patches" (housing communities built and owned by the coal companies) have been identified in Fayette County, of which more than 50 remain as sizable communities, with the houses now individually owned.

Fayette County's population dropped from a high-water mark of 200,000 in 1940 to an estimated 150,000 today. Today, Fayette County possesses some diversified industry, in glass, water meters, steel fabrication and other enterprises. Some strip mining remains. The County retains its position as an important wholesale and retail trading center, still a crossroads area despite substandard highways. The future hope for industrial development, enhancement of tourism and commercial prosperity is wrapped up once more in better road and river transportation.

Brownsville

(Taken from Fayette Forward Internet Task Force Webpage)

Brownsville played an important role in the settlement of America's first frontier and in the industrial development of western Pennsylvania. The site where Brownsville now stands, home to Native Americans, was known as 'Redstone Old Fort'. A road connecting Maryland to the lands west of the Appalachian Mountains followed Nemaquin Trail (blazed by the Indian Chief Nemaquin); was the first road paid for by the Government; and was known as the 'National road' or 'National Pike'. The road was later improved and used for pioneer and military use by the British.

Brownsville situated, at the western most part of Fayette County, on the National Road and overlooking the Monongahela River was the gateway to the west. Thomas Brown, realizing that pioneers would be drawn to the Brownsville area to get to the Ohio Valley and the state of Kentucky, purchased land in the 1700's and by mid 1700's a town was being mapped out. It was then that the town of Brownsville (named for Thomas Brown and formerly known as Redstone Old Fort) became a "keel-boat" building center as well as other businesses for travelers. The businessmen from Brownsville supplied transportation and supplies to the traveling pioneers, and the town became very prosperous. The steamboat industry soon took over to facilitate traffic along the Monongahela River. The very first steamboat, the Enterprise, to travel to New Orleans and return by its own power was designed and built in the Brownsville boatyards and launched from the Brownsville Wharf in 1814.

The town began to decline in the mid 1800's due to the completion of a railroad designed to connect Philadelphia to Pittsburgh. Brownsville's transportation system was unable to compete with the fast track railway. The steel industry soon appeared and shortly after that in the twentieth century, Brownsville's rich coal veins provided the necessary product for making steel and became an important railroad and commercial center. This boom lasted until the mid 1900's when many changes in industry, including the decline of heavy manufacturing and the migration of the steel industry began to erode the economy of Brownsville and other communities in Monongahela Valley.

Today, one of Brownsville's main assets is its history, location and its role in the 'Making of America'. As a result, the Brownsville area is now the site of two historical districts created by the state - the National Road Heritage area and the Steel Industry Heritage – which are beginning to bring life back to this once prosperous community. These assets, including the borough's transportation path, are source of attraction.

Currently, however, no current comprehensive plan for Brownsville Borough and Brownsville Township exist; the last one having been adopted approximately 30 years ago. A joint comprehensive plan is, however, in the drafting stage.

DEMOGRAPHICS

In order to enable an assessment of the present and future needs of the Borough of Brownsville and its residents, a broad analysis of demographic factors is presented in this profile. Reviewing population trends and estimates, age distribution, and employment enables the Brownsville to better understand the needs and concerns of the community. This examination also helps to enable planning to occur relative to, for example, the amount and type of services that may be required. The data also provides an understanding of the Borough's future position within the County. All following data used in the profile is extracted from 1980, 1990 and 2000 Census. (U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Census Bureau).

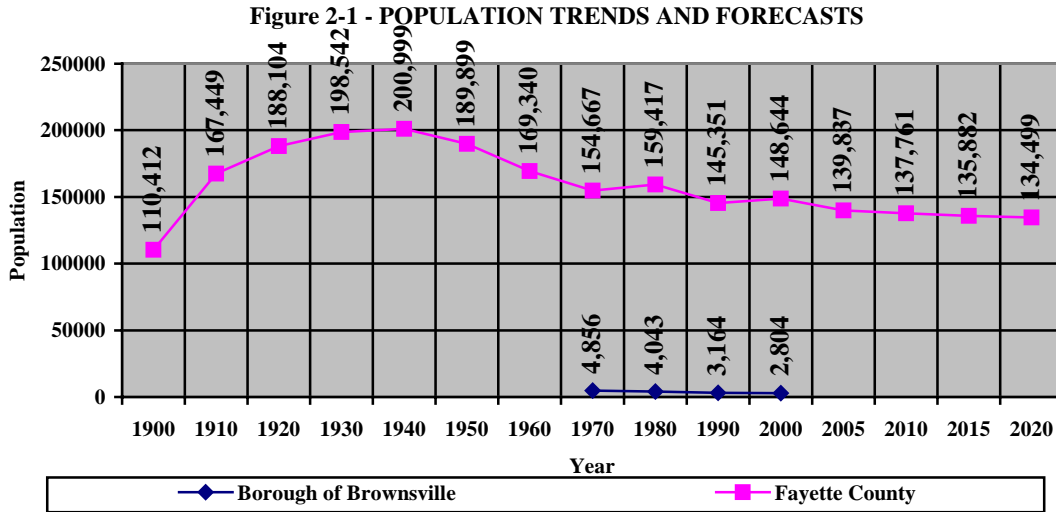
Population

Trends and Forecasts

Over the past hundred years, the population of Fayette County and Brownsville has changed significantly. These changes have followed the same pattern as other regions of the U.S. and particularly Pennsylvania. Fayette County's population grew steadily, peaking in the 1940s. From 1900 to 1940, for example, Fayette County's population increased 45.1%. However, starting in the 1940's, Fayette County's population began to decline due to out-migration and other social and economic changes occurring in the Southwestern PA region. From 1940 to 2000, there was a population decrease of 35.2% in Fayette County. Currently Fayette County's population is predicted to decrease slightly another 10.5% from 2000 to 2020.

The population changes in Brownsville are similar. In 1970, the population of Brownsville was 4,856. Since then, it has declined to 2,804, a decrease of 42.3% (See figure 2-1 – Population Trends and Forecasts). Whether any future significant changes - similar to what is predicted for Fayette County - will occur in the size of Brownsville's population occur is difficult to

forecast.



Racial Composition

Despite a small decline of 2.2% in the White population of Brownsville, the Borough’s racial composition has remained relatively stable over the past twenty years at approximately 86% White. There was no change in the Black or Latino population and only a 2.2 percent increase in the Other populations from 1980-2000. The analysis of Fayette County shows a somewhat similar trend of racial composition stability, with a 0.4 percent decrease in the White population, a 0.3 percent decrease in the Black population, and no change in the Latino population. There was a 0.7 percent increase in the Other populations. (See Table 2-1- Racial Composition, 1980-2000)

**TABLE 2-1
RACIAL COMPOSITION, 1980-2000**

	White	Black	Latino	Other
Borough of Brownsville				
1980%	87.5%	11.3%	0.8%	0.4%
1990%	87.9%	11.4%	0.4%	0.3%
2000%	85.3%	11.3%	0.8%	2.6%
Percent Change 1980-2000	-2.2%	0.0%	0.0%	2.2%
Fayette County				
1980%	95.4%	3.8%	0.4%	0.4%
1990%	95.4%	3.5%	0.3%	0.3%
2000%	95.0%	3.5%	0.4%	1.1%
Percent Change 1980-2000	-0.4%	-0.3%	0.0%	0.7%

Age Distribution

The age distribution of a community can suggest the levels of service and infrastructure necessary to meet the future needs of the various age groups. It can help to forecast future educational, recreational, and elderly facilities that may be needed. Table 2-2 compares the age distribution of Brownsville and Fayette County between 1990 and 2000. Based upon the aggregate data, the age distribution of the population of Brownsville and Fayette County has remained fairly stable, with little evidence of any dramatic shifts from 1990 and 2000. This, notwithstanding, in 2000, the percent of those under the age of 25 is slightly higher in Brownsville (32.1) compared to Fayette County as whole (30.4%) Also, the percent of those 60 years of age or older is slightly higher in Brownsville (25.1%) compared to the County (22.6%). In terms of median age of its population (37.7) in 2000, Brownsville – population-wise- is slightly older than that of Pennsylvania as whole (32.1).

**TABLE 2-2
AGE DISTRIBUTION, 1990 AND 2000**

	Borough of Brownsville					Fayette County				
	1990 Pop.	Percent of Pop.	2000 Pop.	Percent of Pop.	Percent Change	1990 Pop.	Percent of Pop.	2000 Pop.	Percent of Pop.	Percent Change
00-04	202	6.4	185	6.6	0.2	8,812	6.1	8,454	5.7	-0.4
05-09	205	6.5	186	6.6	0.1	9,638	6.6	9,384	6.3	-0.3
10-14	210	6.6	162	5.8	-0.8	10,271	7.1	9,874	6.6	-0.5
15-19	202	6.4	185	6.6	0.2	10,329	7.1	9,546	6.4	-0.7
20-24	213	6.7	183	6.5	-0.2	8,810	6.1	7,994	5.4	-1.0
25-34	426	13.5	337	12.0	-1.5	20,535	14	18,188	12.2	-1.8
35-44	361	11.4	381	13.6	2.2	20,887	14	22,237	15	1.0
45-54	261	8.2	349	12.4	4.2	14,580	10	21,401	14.4	4.4
55-59	157	5.0	135	4.8	-0.2	6,925	4.8	7,931	5.3	-0.5
60-64	215	6.8	108	3.9	-2.9	8,488	5.8	6,705	4.5	1.3
65-74	416	13.1	287	10.2	-2.9	15,521	11	13,441	9	-2.0
75-84	225	7.1	247	8.8	1.7	8,355	6	10,292	6.9	0.9
85+	71	2.2	59	2.1	-0.1	2,200	1.5	3,197	2.2	0.7
Total	3,164	100	2,804	100		145,351	100	148,644	100	

Economics

Income and Education

The U.S. Census Bureau records income in two categories. Household income is defined as the yearly earnings of a group of unrelated people or one person living alone. Family income comprises a group of two or more people residing together and who are related by birth, marriage, or adoption. As more residents obtain diplomas and degrees, their income earning potential improves, creating a direct positive correlation between the two. Table 2-3 shows that educational attainment in Brownsville increased in almost every category over the past twenty years. Similar increases in level of educational attainment are also evident over the same period in Fayette County.

As expected, the median family income has also increased in Brownsville over the past twenty years, and has kept pace with the similar increases in Fayette County; although the median income growth in the latter has been consistently slightly higher. Compared to the state of Pennsylvania as a whole, the median income in Brownville in 2000 was over 20% less than the state's. It should be noted, however, that a similar disparity in median income between Fayette County and the state of Pennsylvania also exists.

**TABLE 2-3
INCOME AND EDUCATION, 1980-2000**

Income and Education	Borough of Brownsville	Fayette County
1980		
Median Household Income	\$9,539	\$14,282
Median Family Income	\$15,489	\$17,282
NO DEGREE	46.7%	42.2%
High School Graduate	40.2%	43.5%
Some higher education	7.8%	7.1%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	5.3%	7.2%
Graduate or Professional Degree	n/a	n/a
1990		
Median Household Income	\$11,791	\$19,195
Median Family Income	\$20,423	\$23,578
NO DEGREE	36.8%	41.4%
High School Graduate	40.6%	46.0%
Some higher education	11.6%	9.0%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	11.0%	9.0%
Graduate or Professional Degree	6.1%	4.0%
2000		
Median Household Income	\$18,559	\$27,451
Median Family Income	\$32,662	\$34,881
NO DEGREE	23.5%	35.9%
High School Graduate	39.1%	47.9%
Some higher education	22.1%	28.2%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	15.4%	11.5%
Graduate or Professional Degree	8.3%	4.3%
Percent Change from 1980-2000		
Median Household Income	48.6%	48.0%
Median Family Income	52.6%	50.5%
NO DEGREE	-23.2%	-6.3%
High School Graduate	-1.1%	4.4%
Some higher education	14.3%	21.1%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	10.1%	4.3%
Graduate or Professional Degree	n/a	n/a

Employment

Based upon the analysis of Table 2-4, several employment characteristics are evident. In 2000, the percent of Brownsville's population that is in the labor force increased by 6.4% from 1980, despite a 49.0% decrease in Brownsville's population of persons 16 years old and over. Comparatively, Fayette County's population of individuals 16 years and over fell only 1.7%, while its labor force still increased 5.7%. While both Brownsville and Fayette County has averaged over 5% unemployment over the past twenty years, the percent of unemployment in Brownsville in 2000 dropped to 2.8% while Fayette County's remained close to the twenty year average. What these statistics do not show, however, are those who have "dropped out" of the labor market and are no longer seeking employment.

Relative to poverty, 28.8% of families in Brownsville are below the poverty level. This is almost four times higher than the Pennsylvania rate of 7.8% and three times higher than the national rate of 9.2. The very high percent of families below poverty in Brownsville is an indicator of significant economic distress.

**TABLE 2-4
EMPLOYMENT, 1980-2000**

	Brownsville		Fayette County	
	No. of Persons	%	No. of Persons	%
1980				
Persons 16 years and Over	3,176	100.0%	120,853	100.0%
In labor Force	1,358	42.8%	58,649	48.5%
Civilian Labor Force	1,358	42.8%	58,613	48.5%
Employed	1,150	36.2%	52,120	43.1%
Unemployed	208	6.5%	6,493	5.4%
Armed Forces	0	0.0%	36	0.0%
Not in Labor Force	1,818	57.2%	62,204	51.5%
1990				
Persons 16 years and Over	2,526	100.0%	114,694	100.0%
In labor Force	1,059	41.9%	56,861	49.6%
Civilian Labor Force	1,059	41.9%	56,792	49.5%
Employed	855	33.8%	49,221	42.9%
Unemployed	197	7.8%	7,571	6.6%
Armed Forces	7	0.3%	69	0.1%
Not in Labor Force	1,467	58.1%	57,833	50.4%
2000				
Persons 16 years and Over	2,132	100.0%	118,862	100.0%
In labor Force	1,050	49.2%	64,371	54.2%
Civilian Labor Force	1,050	49.2%	64,335	54.1%
Employed	991	46.5%	59,017	49.7%
Unemployed	59	2.8%	5,318	4.5%
Armed Forces	0	0.0%	36	0.0%
Not in Labor Force	1,082	50.8%	54,491	45.8%
Percent Change from 1980-2000				
Persons 16 years and Over	-49.0%	n/a	-1.7%	n/a
In labor Force	6.4%	n/a	5.7%	n/a
Civilian Labor Force	6.4%	n/a	5.6%	n/a
Employed	10.3%	n/a	6.6%	n/a
Unemployed	-3.7%	n/a	-0.9%	n/a
Armed Forces	0.0%	n/a	0.0%	n/a
Not in Labor Force	-6.4%	n/a	-5.7%	n/a

Housing and Real Estate

Not unlike many older urban areas in Fayette County, the proportion of housing 30 years or older (86.4%) in Brownsville is high, indicating that there has been relatively little new housing built in the last ten years. (See figure 2-2) The data further suggests that the level of occupancy of existing housing has decreased 6.4% over the past decade which may indicate an over supply of housing. What is not known, however, is the quality of the occupied or unoccupied housing units though evidence seems to suggest that much of it is classified as deteriorated or dilapidated.

On the other hand, it is significant to note that over the past decade, the number of units valued at over \$100,000 in Brownsville has increased by 7.9%; a characteristic that might reflect the general increasing value of housing in Fayette County. (See figure 2-3). A closer examination of the housing market analysis of the Borough as whole suggests that real estate values may, however, be more depressed than in the County as a whole. While the exact level of affordability of rental housing cannot be fully determined, the data indicates that only 23.7% of the families spend more than 30% (the generally accepted threshold of affordability) of their household income for rent.

Figure 2-2 - AGE OF STRUCTURE, 1990 AND 2000

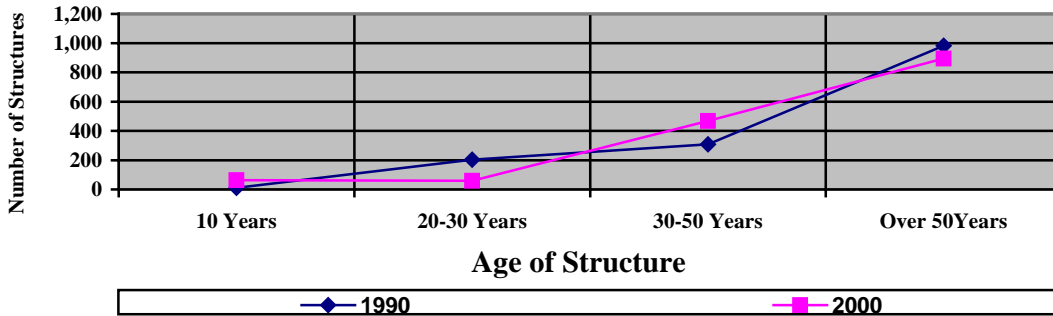


Figure 2-3 - VALUE OF STRUCTURE, 1990 AND 2000

