

COMMUNITY PROFILE

Norris Square Neighborhood, Philadelphia

REGIONAL SETTING

Norris Square is a neighborhood in the Eastern North area of the City of Philadelphia and is relatively near the center of the city. It is contained in the larger West Kensington neighborhood. The neighborhood is bordered on the North by Lehigh Avenue and on the South by Oxford Street. Norris Square's Western border is Germantown Avenue and Marshall Street. Norris Square's Eastern border is Kensington Avenue, Front Street, Norris Street, and Frankford Avenue. This places Norris Square near Temple University. The neighborhood is also within the American Street Empowerment Zone. Norris Square is represented in Philadelphia's City Council by the 5th and 7th City Council Districts and has a population of approximately 9,815.

A BRIEF HISTORY

Philadelphia

(Team Pennsylvania Foundation Web Site)

Philadelphia County in which Norris Square sits was founded in 1682 by William Penn, an English Quaker, who received a land grant from King Charles II. The city was part of Penn's Holy Experiment in religious freedom and the name means "City of Brotherly Love." By the time of the American Revolution, the city grew to become the second largest English-speaking city in the world, after London. The first Continental Congress met here in 1774 and independence from the Crown was declared in 1776. Philadelphia served as the nation's capital from 1790 to 1800.

Visitors can experience this history at "America's most historic square mile," Independence National Historic Park. Two of the nation's monuments to freedom are here, the Liberty Bell and Independence Hall. Restored historic homes in Society Hill show the style of Colonial urban living while nearby are Elfreth's Alley, the oldest continuously occupied residential street in the country, and the Betsy Ross House.

Philadelphia is the second largest city on the East Coast of the United States with a population of 1.6 million people. It is situated at the crossroads of the Middle Atlantic states and New England and is 100 miles south of New York City and 55 miles west of the Atlantic Ocean. Major airlines operate from Philadelphia International Airport and Amtrak's Northeast Corridor provides rail service. A comprehensive system of public transportation provides regional rail lines reaching the suburban counties as well as buses and subways within the city. Philadelphia is the employment center of the region with 687,000 jobs in 1993 and the downtown area has the greatest concentration of retail establishments in the region with nearly 2,000 stores in operation. The Pennsylvania Convention Center opened in 1993 and ranks as one of the largest on the East Coast; its

spectacular Grand Hall is contained within the historic train shed of the Reading Railroad terminal. Many of the city's cultural treasures line a grand boulevard which links City Center to Fairmount Park, the largest landscaped urban park in the world. Along the Benjamin Franklin Parkway are found the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Franklin Institute Science Museum, the Academy of Natural Sciences and the Rodin Museum. The city is also home to the Philadelphia Orchestra which performs in the historic Academy of Music.

Norris Square

(Norris Square Neighborhood Project Website and Community Profile)

Three hundred years ago, William Penn was describing the Norris Square area, then heavily forested, when he wrote: "The land is good, the springs plentiful, provision easy to come at." In 1693, Penn granted vast tracts of this land to his Quaker friend, Isaac Norris, newly arrived in Philadelphia. Until halfway through the 19th Century, this West Kensington area appears on maps as unsettled land, cut through by streams, and marked "Norris." In 1848, the Norris heirs deeded two plots for "public greens" with instructions to enclose them and plant trees. One of these plots is today Norris Square.

In the mid 1800's, the Industrial Revolution jolted Kensington, drawing workers to the biggest factories and mills in the world. Thomas Dugan, housing developer, built his \$1,200 brick row houses, 13.5 feet in width with attached outhouses, up and down narrow street, heedless of Penn's admonition to build "in the middle of the lot so as to leave ground...for gardens, or orchards or fields that it will be a greene countrie towne which will never be burnt and always be wholesome." Only the Norris deed assured a remnant of Penn's greene towne!

The square is dominated by the Gothic spire of St. Boniface Church which, with its vaulted ceilings and stained glass imported from Bavaria 100 years ago, retains the splendor of bygone days. Around the square stand two other churches, a hospital, a convent and a rectory. Once elegant townhouses, long ago homes of the wealthy, bear witness to a way of life which has since disappeared.

Originally settled by German immigrants in the 19th century, today Norris Square is the home to a predominantly Hispanic population (primarily Puerto Ricans) who immigrated to Philadelphia in the 1920's and 30's. Like its counterpart inner city neighborhoods, Norris Square is undergoing a transition, spurred largely by the work of the Norris Square Civic Association which was founded in 1982, and whose leadership resulted in the neighborhood's first 10 year community development plan in 1997.

Norris Square has a number of assets and features which attract people to it. For Hispanics, the neighborhood offers a variety of services which reflect the needs of this population such as bilingual child care and cultural enrichment. The neighborhood is also accessible to trains and buses operated by the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transit Authority. Moreover, there are strong indications that the neighborhood has turned the

tide from its former image as a place of drugs and crime to a community which has become increasingly stable.

DEMOGRAPHICS

In order to enable an assessment of the present and future needs of the Norris Square neighborhood 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 neighborhood 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 neighborhood's future position within the city of Philadelphia. All following data used in the profile is extracted from 1980, 1990 and 2000 Census. (U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Census Bureau) Forecasts for the years 2005-2025 were provided by the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC).

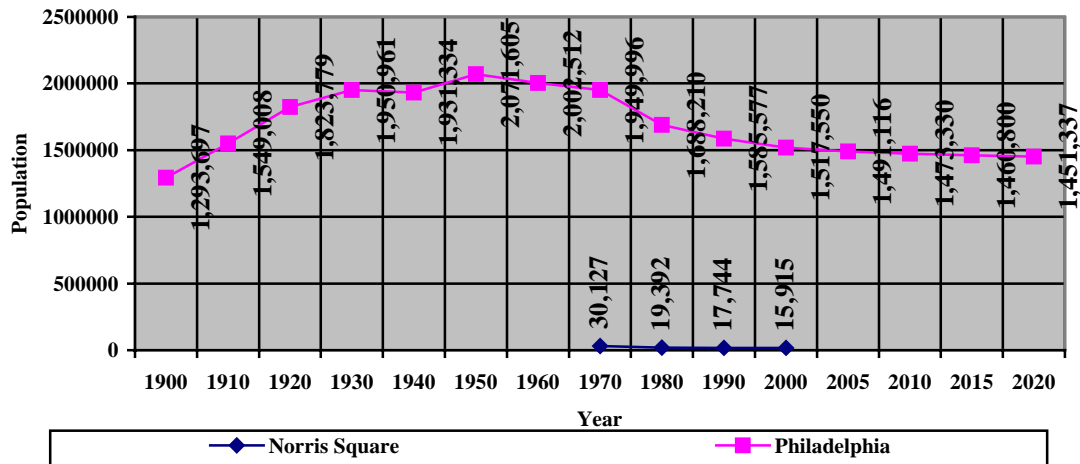
Population

Trends and Forecasts

Over the past hundred years, the population of Philadelphia and its neighborhoods such as Norris Square has changed significantly. These changes have followed the same pattern as many other metropolitan areas of the United States. First, there was significant population growth until the 1950's. However, beginning around the 1970s, Philadelphia's population dropped to around that of its population in 1900. In the last thirty years, from 1970 to 2000, the city's population declined by 28.5%. Currently Philadelphia's population is predicted to decrease another 4.5% from 2000 to 2020.

Similarly, Norris Square's population has declined significantly over the past thirty years and at a greater rate than the city itself. For example, from 1970 to 2000, the population of Norris Square declined from 30,127 to 15,915; a decrease of 69.8% (See figure 2-1 – Population Trends and Forecasts). Though for Norris Square perhaps some future population decline is possible, the higher birth rate of the neighborhood's population might lead to either a stabilized population at its current number or even perhaps an increase.

Figure 2-1 - POPULATION TRENDS AND FORECASTS



Racial Composition

An analysis of the racial composition of Norris Square reveals a trend toward becoming a predominantly “nonwhite” community. The Latino population of Norris Square is now the majority population at around 64.3%, having increased by 9.9% from 1980 to 2000. The White population in Norris Square has declined 9.9 percent since 1980. During the same period those whose racial background is classified as Other increased 2.5 percent. A similar analysis of Philadelphia shows changes as well in the racial composition of its citizens. From 1980 to 2000, the White population decreased by 10.7%, and the population identified as Other decreased by 3.0 percent. The Black population increased by 6.8% and the Latino population increased 6.9%. Whether the racial composition trends in Norris Square and the City of Philadelphia will continue in the future is uncertain – given the complex set of factors involved in residential patterns.

TABLE 2-1
RACIAL COMPOSITION, 1980-2000

	White	Black	Latino	Other
Norris Square				
1980%	17.0%	27.4%	54.4%	1.2%
1990%	10.0%	23.5%	64.1%	2.0%
2000%	7.1%	24.9%	64.3%	3.7%
Percent Change 1980-2000	-9.9%	-2.5%	9.9%	2.5%
Philadelphia				
1980%	57.1%	37.5%	1.6%	3.8%
1990%	53.5%	39.9%	5.6%	1.0%
2000%	46.4%	44.3%	8.5%	0.8%
Percent Change 1980-2000	-10.7%	6.8%	6.9%	-3.0%

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 Norris Square and Philadelphia between 1990 and 2000. When the percent of those 45 years old or younger is calculated, Norris Square's population is younger with almost 75% in this category, compared to 65.6% in Philadelphia as a whole. Likewise, the percent of those 60 years of age or older is considerably lower (9.8% in 2000) in Norris Square, compared to Philadelphia (18%). In 2000, the median age of the Norris Square population was 34.7, which was slightly higher than the median Pennsylvania age of 32.1. It should be noted that the median age of Norris Square has remained approximately the same for the past twenty years.

This analysis, however, does not take into consideration changes in the age distribution based upon race.

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

	Norris Square					Philadelphia				
	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	2,073	11.7	1,447	9.1	-2.6	115,871	7.3	98,161	6.5	-0.8
05-09	1,865	10.5	1,767	11.1	0.6	104,113	6.6	112,111	7.4	0.8
10-14	1,853	10.4	1,754	11.0	0.6	100,472	6.3	112,726	7.4	1.1
15-19	1,707	9.6	1,475	9.3	-0.3	107,408	6.8	110,701	7.3	0.5
20-24	1,517	8.5	1,158	7.3	-1.2	135,952	8.6	117,609	7.7	-0.9
25-34	2,980	16.8	2,115	13.3	-3.5	276,917	18	224,864	14.8	-3.2
35-44	2,099	11.8	2,192	13.8	2.0	213,327	14	219,910	14.5	0.5
45-54	1,444	8.1	1,766	11.1	3.0	147,923	9	182,530	12	3.0
55-59	632	3.6	679	4.3	0.7	68,766	4.3	67,280	4.4	0.1
60-64	503	2.8	505	3.2	0.4	74,114	4.7	57,936	3.8	-0.9
65-74	684	3.9	651	4.1	0.2	138,175	9	107,048	7.1	-1.9
75-84	322	1.8	321	2.0	0.2	79,738	5	79,335	5.2	0.2
85+	65	0.4	85	0.5	0.1	22,801	1.4	27,339	1.8	0.4
Total	17,744	100	15,915	100		1,585,577	100	1,517,550	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. Although Table 2-3 shows that educational attainment increased from 1980-2000 in almost every category in Norris Square, the disparity in attainment compared to Philadelphia as a whole is considerable. For example, when ‘those with some higher education or above’ are considered, the percent in Norris Square has remained less than one third of the percent of those in Philadelphia over the past twenty years. Specifically, for example, in year 2000 only 17.2 percent of Norris Square have ‘some higher education or above’, compared to 63.2 percent in Philadelphia.

The percent disparity in median family income between Norris Square and Philadelphia is also considerable, with Philadelphians as a whole earning twice that of Norris Square residents. (\$18,439 compared to \$37,036 in 2000) Moreover, the median family income disparity has remained the same over the past twenty years. Further, the median household income of \$9,695 in Norris Square (based on 2000 data) indicates a wide disparity compared to the median household income in the Pennsylvania as a whole, which was \$40,106.

In terms of poverty, using year 2000 data, the percent of families falling below the line in Norris Square is 45.3 percent – a very wide disparity compared to the 7.8 percent in Pennsylvania and 9.8 percent nationally.

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

Income and Education	Norris Square	Philadelphia
1980		
Median Household Income	\$7,354	\$13,169
Median Family Income	\$8,171	\$16,388
NO DEGREE	73.5%	45.8%
High School Graduate	20.4%	33.9%
Some higher education	3.7%	9.3%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	2.8%	11.0%
Graduate or Professional Degree	n/a	n/a
1990		
Median Household Income	\$11,692	\$24,603
Median Family Income	\$11,257	\$30,140
NO DEGREE	68.7%	48.0%
High School Graduate	21.6%	33.0%
Some higher education	6.7%	12.0%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	3.5%	15.0%
Graduate or Professional Degree	1.3%	6.0%
2000		
Median Household Income	\$9,695	\$30,746
Median Family Income	\$18,439	\$37,036
NO DEGREE	60.0%	44.4%
High School Graduate	25.3%	33.3%
Some higher education	10.2%	37.8%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	4.6%	17.9%
Graduate or Professional Degree	2.4%	7.5%
Percent Change from 1980-2000		
Median Household Income	24.1%	57.2%
Median Family Income	55.7%	55.6%
NO DEGREE	-13.5%	55.6%
High School Graduate	4.9%	-0.6%
Some higher education	6.5%	28.5%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	1.8%	2.9%
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 Norris Square's population that is in the labor force increased by 6.5% from 1980. On the other hand, the percent of those not in the labor force remained considerably higher in Norris Square than in Philadelphia as a whole; an average of 18%

difference over the past twenty years. Unemployment in Norris Square has averaged 8.3 percent over the past twenty years, compared to an average of 5.9 percent in Philadelphia over the same period. While other factors are also determinants of employment status, nevertheless, the differences in employment status reflected in the data should be understood in the context of the previous analysis of income and education.

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

	Norris Square		Philadelphia	
	No. of Persons	%	No. of Persons	%
1980				
Persons 16 years and Over	11,840	100.0%	1,310,583	100.0%
In labor Force	3,913	33.0%	709,812	54.2%
Civilian Labor Force	3,870	32.7%	705,248	53.8%
Employed	3,553	30.0%	624,706	47.7%
Unemployed	877	7.4%	80,599	6.2%
Armed Forces	43	0.0%	4,564	0.0%
Not in Labor Force	7,927	67.0%	600,771	45.8%
1990				
Persons 16 years and Over	11,557	100.0%	1,245,682	100.0%
In labor Force	4,532	39.2%	727,389	58.4%
Civilian Labor Force	4,527	39.2%	721,621	57.9%
Employed	3,434	29.7%	651,621	52.3%
Unemployed	1,093	9.5%	70,000	5.6%
Armed Forces	5	0.0%	5,768	0.5%
Not in Labor Force	7,025	60.8%	518,293	41.6%
2000				
Persons 16 years and Over	10,936	100.0%	1,174,798	100.0%
In labor Force	4,324	39.5%	656,935	55.9%
Civilian Labor Force	4,324	39.5%	656,539	55.9%
Employed	3,444	31.5%	584,957	49.8%
Unemployed	880	8.0%	71,582	6.1%
Armed Forces	0	0.0%	396	0.0%
Not in Labor Force	6,312	60.5%	517,863	44.1%
Percent Change from 1980-2000				
Persons 16 years and Over	-8.3%	n/a	-11.6%	n/a
In labor Force	6.5%	n/a	1.7%	n/a
Civilian Labor Force	6.8%	n/a	2.1%	n/a
Employed	1.5%	n/a	2.1%	n/a
Unemployed	0.6%	n/a	-0.1%	n/a
Armed Forces	0.0%	n/a	0.0%	n/a
Not in Labor Force	-6.5%	n/a	-1.7%	n/a

Housing and Real Estate

Not unlike many older urban areas in Philadelphia, the proportion of housing 30 years or older (85.2%) in Norris Square 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 has increased in Norris Square from 35.7% in 1990 to 83.8% in 2000 which may indicate a trend toward greater residential stability. However, what is not known, however, is the quality of the occupied housing units. What is also significant is that over the past decade, the number of units valued at over \$100,000 has decreased by 0.5% in spite of the general rise in real estate prices in the Philadelphia area as a whole. (See figure 2-3). Further, the housing market analysis of the neighborhood as whole suggests that real estate values in Norris Square are lower than in the City as a whole; a factor which increases the affordability of owner-occupied for many families. The currently lower valued housing in Norris Square may have reached its low, in view of the neighborhood's close proximity to areas now undergoing gentrification.

While the exact level of affordability of rental housing cannot be fully determined, the data indicates that approximately 48.5% of the families spend 30 percent (the generally accepted threshold of affordability) or more of their household income for rent. This fact, notwithstanding, Norris Square is a neighborhood, which, on the whole, appears to provide more "affordability" than many others.

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

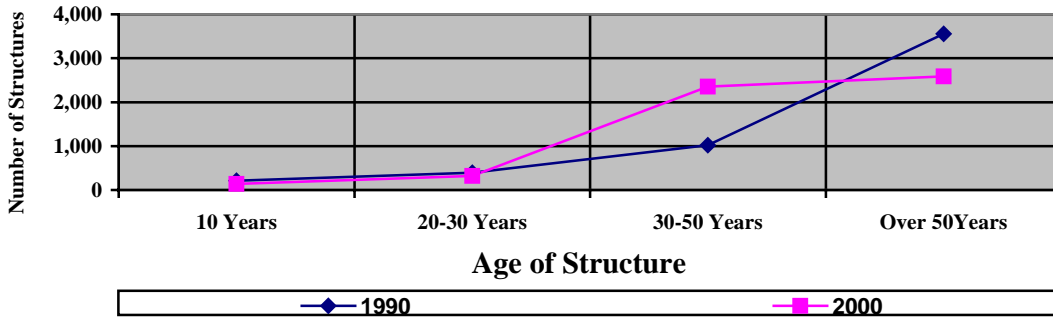


Figure 2-3 - VALUE OF STRUCTURE, 1990 AND 2000

