

Blacks are moving throughout

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"In late 60s and early 70s," Heard said, "economic integration began. If you had money, you could go somewhere else."

"The upper class, people moving in from outside and people moving back to the area, like myself, who moved back from New England, began moving to other areas, outside of traditional black areas."

Other African Americans, some very active in political and community affairs, have made similar moves. Folks like Urban League executive director Madine Fails, lawyers Frank Emory and James Ferguson, school board member Arthur Griffin, and businessman Michael Evans and his wife, Judge Yvonne Mims-Evans. Others include NationsBank vice president Ed Dolby and Transamerica Reinsurance chief executive Bill Simms.

Heard sees the black population shift as a trend that will continue and even intensify in coming years, with concurrent impact on the city's political and social life.

Based on 1990 census statistics, the heaviest concentration of blacks continues to be in the areas north and west of Charlotte's center - Belmont, Earle Village, Piedmont Courts, Davidson Street, Villa Heights, Wilmore and the Beatties Ford and Statesville Avenue corridors. There are also some of the poorest areas, with aging housing stocks and high crime rates.

Earle Village is being completely changed with plans to introduce mixed-income housing into that urban public housing area. But economic forces keep much of the rest troubled, despite ongoing revitalization efforts in areas like Wilmore.

African American concentrations thin as it spreads outward along the major thoroughfares like The Plaza, Central Avenue and North Tryon Street. Some of the heaviest growth as been beyond Eastland Mall, along Albemarle Road and Idlewild Roads. In some tracts, the percentage of blacks has doubled and tripled, from single digits to more than 20 percent around the intersection of Central Avenue and Eastway Drive, and south of The Plaza, beyond Eastway.

Inner city areas with the lowest percentages of blacks include the exclusive Myers Park and Eastover areas. Much of the remainder, however, have seen an increase in the ratio of blacks.

Only along the county's fringe has the percentage of blacks remain consistently low, particularly in the Mint Hill and Matthews area and in the Lake Norman area in north Mecklenburg.

African Americans maintain a stable presence in the University City area.

"The original pattern of housing in Charlotte was economic and social segregation," Heard said. "You had pockets of black population, such as Cherry, Grier Heights, and rural areas such as Sterling (and) Derita...The most pronounced area was the West Trade-Beatties Ford Road corridor, especially Beatties Ford Road. Areas such as Seversville, Smallwood and Wesley Heights (now all-black) were predominantly white."

Urban renewal efforts, such as the destruction of Second Ward's Brooklyn community, kicked off a mass movement of African Americans from uptown, into previously white areas such as Piedmont Courts and Villa Heights, and other parts of west Charlotte and north and east along The Plaza and Central Avenue.

And greater economic integration allowed African Americans who could afford it to live wherever they pleased.

Much of that phase of the migration was forced by the lack of new housing construction on the west side and a desire for larger, newer housing by the growing black middle class.

And as the region's economic growth spiraled, attracting new African American residents to high paying professional, skilled

and managerial jobs, the demand for housing grew.

Accompanying this population shift, was a decline in the white flight that had changed Hidden Valley - seemingly overnight back in the early 70s - from an all-white to a predominantly-black community.

Today, in neighborhoods like Shannon Park and those along Idlewild Road in east Charlotte, black and white middle-class families have civil, if not friendly, relationships.

Houses are sold when the owner wants to move up or ages out of a family-sized home and wants a smaller home.

In many cases, when whites sell, blacks, starving for quality middle-class housing, eagerly buy.

The social and political implications of the population shift haven't been fully explored or dealt with by either the white or black communities.

Griffin, who moved to southeast Charlotte near Quail Hollow Country Club in 1978, said the demographic changes sometimes has a positive impact on efforts to maintain a desegregated school system. For example, Idlewild Elementary in east Charlotte was able to be naturally integrated with students from surrounding neighborhoods without crosstown busing of black students.

But formerly predominantly white schools in the Plaza area, like Briarwood and Devonshire

elementary schools and See HOME on page 6A

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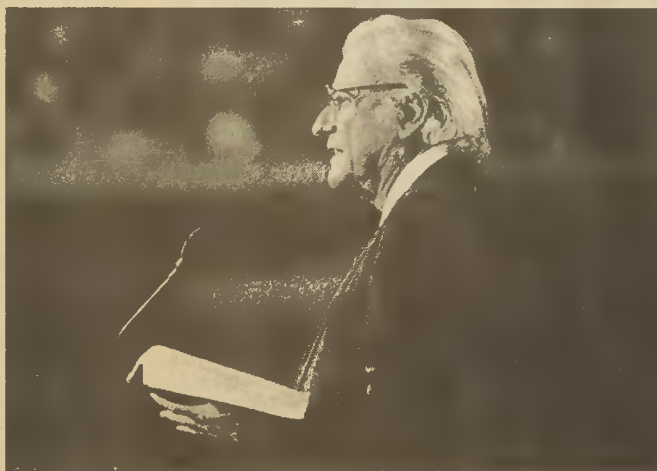
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