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Charlotte elbows ahead of Atlanta in 1990 census results

From Associated Press reports

CHARLOTTE - For years, residents of North Carolina's largest city have debated the pros and cons of becoming "another Atlanta."

According to preliminary population figures from the 1990 U.S. Census, that's now a moot point — Charlotte has surpassed Atlanta in population.

"Statistically, that day has arrived," said Keith Henrichs, research coordinator for the Charlotte-Mecklenburg planning department.

Still, experts are quick to explain that Atlanta's metropolitan area has nearly 3 million people, compared to about 1 million in the Charlotte area. They say Georgia's restrictive annexation law may be one reason why Charlotte has passed Atlanta in the latest population figures.

North Carolina's more liberal annexation laws have made it easier for Charlotte and other cities to expand during the past decade. On the other hand, Atlanta has not expanded its city limits in that time.

Experts say the comparative population figures are really grist for cocktail parties and Charlotte's boosters.

"For those who like bigness, it's bragging rights," said Jim Clay, who teaches geography at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte.

"It's obviously something the chamber could have fun with," Charlotte Chamber of Commerce Research Director Tony Crumbley added.

The census bureau says Charlotte's population has grown from fewer than 325,000 in 1980 to about 389,000 this year. That's 4,847 more people than live in Georgia's largest city.

"When you're comparing size, to say Charlotte is larger than Atlanta is a type of distortion because of the artificial boundaries of cities," Clay said Wednesday.

"Atlanta is a much more compact city than Charlotte," he said.

Atlanta is surrounded by "20 or 30" suburbs, each with substantial population density, Clay said. Charlotte, on the other hand, is bordered in large part by rural areas.

Several smaller cities, including Gastonia, Concord and Monroe, are located 10 or more miles from Charlotte's city limits. When they are included, the metropolitan area's population swells to about 1.3 million people, Clay said.

Bill Hill of the census bureau said Charlotte appears to be different from some larger cities like Atlanta, Chicago and New York because people who are moving in are buying homes inside the city limits. According to the bureau's statistics, Atlanta has lost more than 100,000 residents in the past 20 years.

"My impression is that Charlotte is still a middle-class city and a lot of people live and work in Charlotte," Hill

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Gainesville murders terrify city

From Associated Press reports

GAINESVILLE, Fla. - Scores of police took up the hunt in this terrified college town Wednesday for the "maniac on the loose" who killed five students, mutilating three. Students armed themselves or fled to their parents.

"We slept with steak knives last night," said a tearful Stacie Green, a 19year-old junior from Jacksonville. "I had to call my mom. This is unreal."

The victims - four women and a man attending either the University of Florida or Santa Fe Community College - were stabbed in three attacks at offcampus apartments since Sunday. Police said three victims were mutilated. A newspaper said one was decapitated.

The killer broke into the apartments, which are within about two miles of each other, through unlocked doors or windows or by forcing a sliding-glass door, Police Chief Wayland Clifton said Wednesday.

"At first that was not real clear in our cases because we thought he might be gaining entry by disguising himself in some way and winning the confidence of the occupants," he said. "We do not now think that that happened in any of the three cases."

The FBI has prepared a psychological profile of the killer but authorities do not plan to make it public, Clifton said.

Police checked out several reports of suspicious people around the city overnight but made no arrests, Alachua County sheriff's Lt. Sadie Darnell said this morning.

"It's clear this part of the country has some maniac on the loose," said University of Florida President John Lombardi. "It reminds us of a natural catastrophe. The killer is selecting victims by criteria that are not clear to us."

Gov. Bob Martinez ordered in dozens of state troopers and other law enforcement agents. Out-of-state experts on serial killers were called in. Local police tripled their patrols.

"You'll see more police coverage than you've ever seen in any city you've ever lived in," Clifton said. The buildup was scant comfort for

the thousands of students living off campus in the town of 90,000, where the slavings have stirred memories of serial killer Ted Bundy. He died in the electric chair last year after murdering two Florida State University sorority sisters in Tallahassee in a 1978 rampage.

Hundreds of students bolted their doors, fled to emergency shelters, went home to their parents or demanded details on the slayings and how to protect themselves. Many armed themselves with pistols, stun guns and Mace.

"My father bought me a gun," said a junior from Tallahassee who refused to give her name. "I'll stay for a while, but I'm thinking of dropping out for a semester."

Said one Miami father who flew into Gainesville to pick up his daughter: "She's going to go back with Mace and knowing how to shoot a gun."

Student Mark Andreozzi said he and a roommate armed themselves when a carpet cleaner turned up unexpectedly Tuesday. "I had an ax and he had a bat. We're going to get guns after this," Andreozzi said.

The university offered lodging for students afraid to return to off-campus apartments. Fraternity and sorority houses, churches and community groups and faculty members also offered to put students up.