

Sizing up Southern California

July 10 2012, By Laura Rico



Pioneer Boulevard in Artesia reflects the area's changing demographics. The Asian population of Artesia/Cerritos soared from 18.4 percent in 1980 to 54.5 percent in 2007 - the highest of any city cluster in the five counties studied through UCI's Metropolitan Futures Initiative. Credit: John Hipp

Contrary to some perceptions, the large influx of Asian and Latino immigrants into Southern California over the past 60 years has resulted in stronger and safer multicultural communities, according to [new research](#) led by John Hipp, UC Irvine associate professor of criminology, law & society.

High levels of ethnic mixing were found to be associated with increased property values, lower joblessness and less crime in many areas throughout the five counties studied: Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino and Ventura.

The inaugural Southern California Regional Progress Report was

prepared by Hipp and researchers with the UCI School of Social Ecology's Metropolitan Futures Initiative, which aims to build a base of knowledge to guide policymakers in improving the overall quality of life in the Southland.

Hipp discussed the findings at a recent Student Center breakfast event featuring local government officials, business leaders, community members and UCI Chancellor Michael Drake.

Five faculty members, 10 graduate students and six undergraduates collected data from 14 sources on the region's demographic, social and economic landscape. The information allows for systematic statistical analyses at the county, city, neighborhood and street-block levels.

The report draws on this unprecedented data set to examine the interrelationships among such community factors as racial/ethnic demographics, employment and economic welfare, housing density and availability, crime and public safety, and transportation.

It's intended to serve as a catalyst for evidence-based dialogue that will inform municipal policy. Subsequent biennial reports will continue to monitor trends and expand coverage to include such topics as health and well-being.

"This inaugural study offers a wealth of findings on the area's many changes – findings that constitute crucial considerations for successfully planning a future with healthy, sustainable, affordable, safe, economically vibrant and just communities in which residents enjoy the many benefits of Southern California," says Valerie Jenness, dean of UCI's School of Social Ecology.

"These reports will provide policymakers, businesses, residents and others with essential information and thoughtful analyses about our

region for years to come.”

The study used data from the last five decades to paint a broad yet incisive picture of the Southland. Researchers compiled the data in metropolitan clusters by grouping together cities that are geographically close and socially similar. Among the findings:

- The ethnic makeup of Southern California has changed dramatically during the past half-century: Latino and Asian populations have grown substantially; African Americans have become concentrated within fewer communities; and the proportion of whites has steadily decreased.
- South Central Los Angeles provides a glimpse of the transformation: African Americans made up the majority of residents in 1960, with Latinos accounting for 8.5 percent. In 2007, the area was 80 percent Latino and just 15 percent African American.
- The burgeoning immigrant population in Southland communities has contributed to increases in property values and decreases in crime rates.
- Neighborhoods with 10 percent more Latinos than surrounding areas at the beginning of the 2000s experienced a 1.3 percent greater rise in home values over the decade.
- Similarly, ethnically mixed neighborhoods in Southern California today are more likely to have higher property values than homogenous neighborhoods, reversing a trend from earlier decades. In the 1980s and 1990s, neighborhoods with more racial/ethnic diversity at the beginning of the decade saw less home value appreciation over the following 10 years.

“A number of findings took us by surprise,” says Hipp, also an associate professor of sociology and planning, policy & design. “We’re looking

forward to more extensively analyzing the data to better understand many of the changes that have shaped the region over time.”

Provided by University of California, Irvine

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