

Cherry Hill Master Plan  
Prepared for Cherry Hill Township by  
Group Melvin Design in partnership with  
Urban Partners

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## INTRODUCTION

Cherry Hill, New Jersey (*Figure 3*) is the epitome of the American Post-War suburb. From its humble roots as an agricultural crossroads, Cherry Hill emerged in the 20th century as the premier business, entertainment, and shopping destination of South Jersey. Today, over 70,000 residents call Cherry Hill home, and over 53,000 workers make their living in the Township.

Cherry Hill's quiet neighborhoods of reasonably priced homes with generous yards and setbacks, interspersed with modern strip malls, office parks, recreation centers, and open spaces provided those leaving the urban settings of Philadelphia and Camden their slice of the American Dream. As the amount of developable land in Cherry Hill has dwindled over the past few decades, the Township's population has plateaued and socioeconomic and housing indicators have remained stable. Although the Township is no longer growing at a significant rate, Cherry Hill has continued to evolve; it has become increasingly diverse, families and households have changed in size and structure, and its role in the Philadelphia metro region may be changing as Philadelphia undergoes an urban renaissance.

In this time of stability and transformation, the Township and its residents must face the exciting prospects of redevelopment, while maintaining the aspects of their community that have made Cherry Hill a great place to live and work.

## AGRICULTURAL BEGINNINGS

The existing suburban fabric and regional significance of Cherry Hill are largely a result of the Township's agricultural beginnings and close proximity to the cities of Philadelphia and Camden.

Cherry Hill's farmers enjoyed convenient connections to Camden's ferry terminals and ports. They also had access to Campbell's Soup factory, where a large portion of the Township's produce was processed.

Unlike the neighboring communities of Haddonfield and Merchantville—with their centralized main



*Figure 1. Holly Ravine Farm and Cowtail Dairy Bar, operated by former Cherry Hill mayor John Gilmour*



*Figure 2. Ben Franklin Bridge under construction (1924)*

streets and townhouse and business development—the early development of Cherry Hill occurred on large swaths of farmland held by single families and in small villages on the edges of these properties.<sup>1</sup>

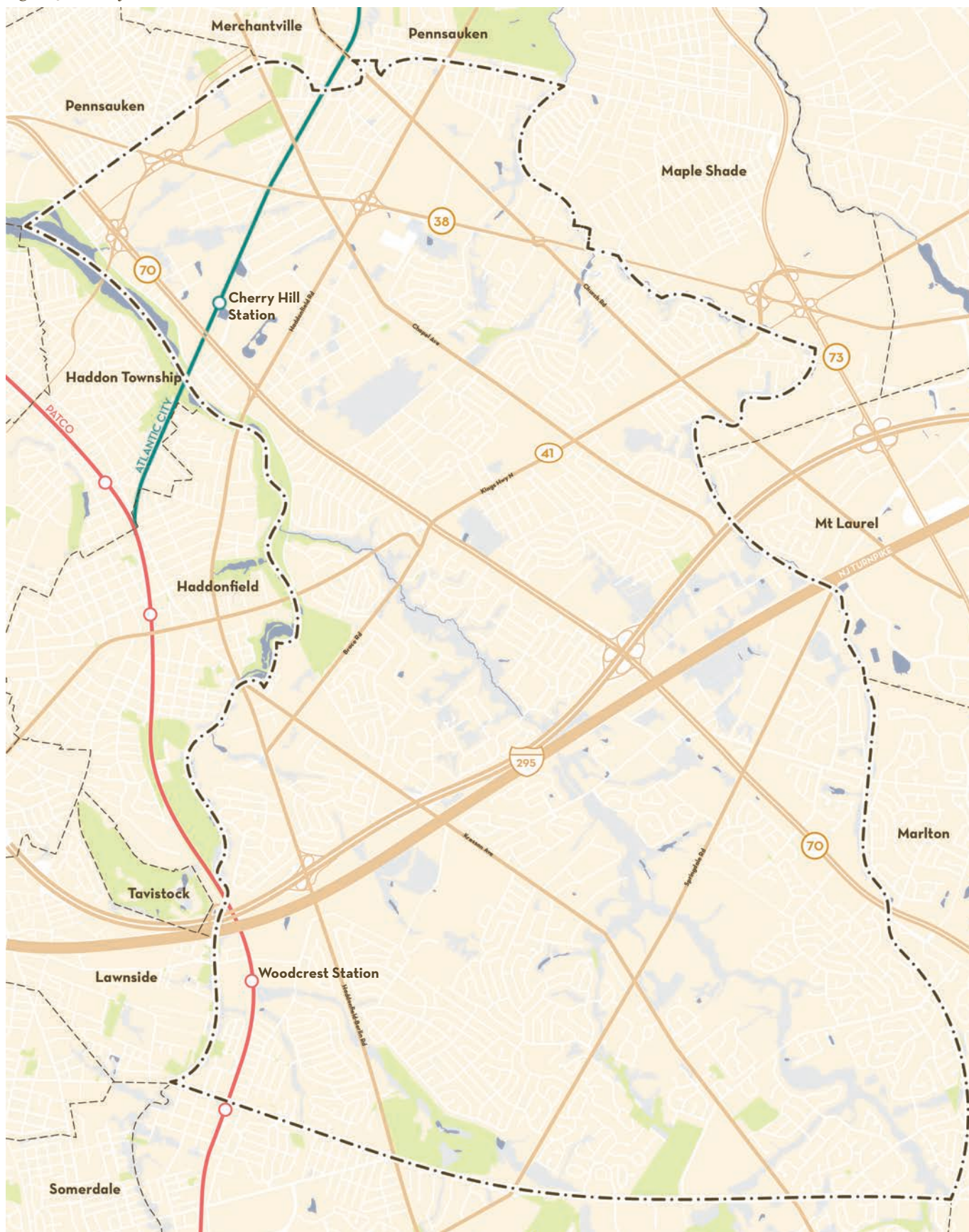
## A QUINTESSENTIAL SUBURB

### Early Construction Boom

The first construction boom in Cherry Hill occurred shortly after the opening of the Delaware River Bridge, known today as the Benjamin Franklin Bridge, in 1926. With a new connection to Center City Philadelphia made even more accessible by the and

<sup>1</sup> Mathis, Mike, and Lisa C. Mangiafico. *Cherry Hill: A Brief History*. (Charleston, SC: History Press, 2010), 15.

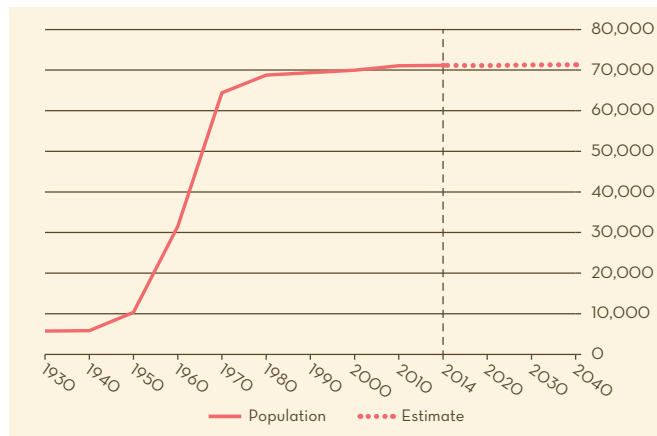
Figure 3. Cherry Hill, NJ





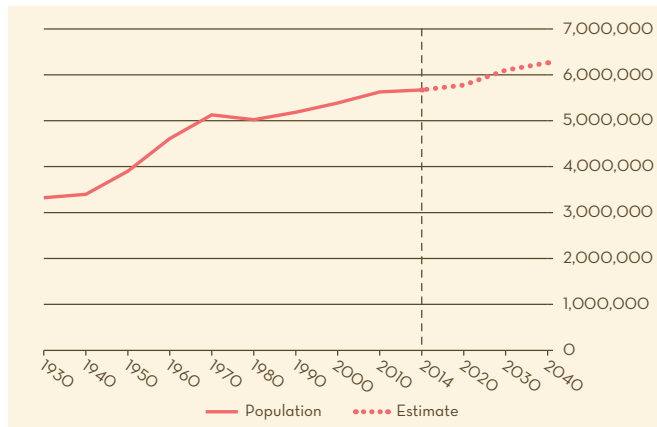
## Population Statistics

Figure 4. Population growth and projections for Cherry Hill



Source: US Census

Figure 5. Population growth and projections for DVRPC Region



Source: US Census

the proliferation of the automobile, the northwestern neighborhoods of Barlow and Woodland were parceled out and gradually developed, and the roads of the Erlton neighborhood along the Cooper River were laid out. Although these neighborhoods were within the Township border, they functioned moreso as extensions of nearby Merchantville and Haddonfield. Development pressures in the Township fell into a lull during World War II, as American soldiers around the world consumed the products of Cherry Hill's fields by way of Campbell's Soup rations.

## Post-War Boom

In the Post-War years, returning servicemen and their families fled crowded cities for greener pastures in the suburbs. *The population of Cherry Hill skyrocketed from 1950 to 1970 fueled by the availability of inexpensive land, the continued rise of the automobile, state and federal subsidization of new highway systems, and white flight from Philadelphia and Camden.*

Between 1950 and 1960, the population tripled, and then doubled again between 1960 and 1970 (Figure 4). This boom corresponded to growth region-wide, although it was not nearly as significant as in Cherry Hill (Figure 5).

The expansive tracts of farmland that composed Cherry Hill provided the ideal canvases for rapidly developed suburban communities. Federal Housing Administration subsidized mortgages aimed specifically at suburban single-family homes made buying one's own home in Cherry Hill cheaper than renting in the city.<sup>2</sup>

As illustrated in Figure 6, entire neighborhoods—such as Cooper Park Village, Old Woodcrest, and Windsor Park—were constructed at the same time. By 1970, nearly all of the land west of the New Jersey Turnpike had been developed. As a result, *over 70% of Cherry Hill's housing units were constructed in the boom between 1940 and 1980, and only 4% of the Township exists as vacant land today.*

<sup>2</sup> Duany, Andres, Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, and Jeff Speck. *Suburban Nation the Rise of Sprawl and the Decline of the American Dream*. (New York, NY: North Point, 2010,) 8.

Figure 6. Residential Construction by Decade





## DELAWARE VALLEY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

The Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) is the federally designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Greater Philadelphia Region. The DVRPC serves the following nine counties: Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery, and Philadelphia in Pennsylvania; and Burlington, Camden, Gloucester and Mercer in New Jersey.

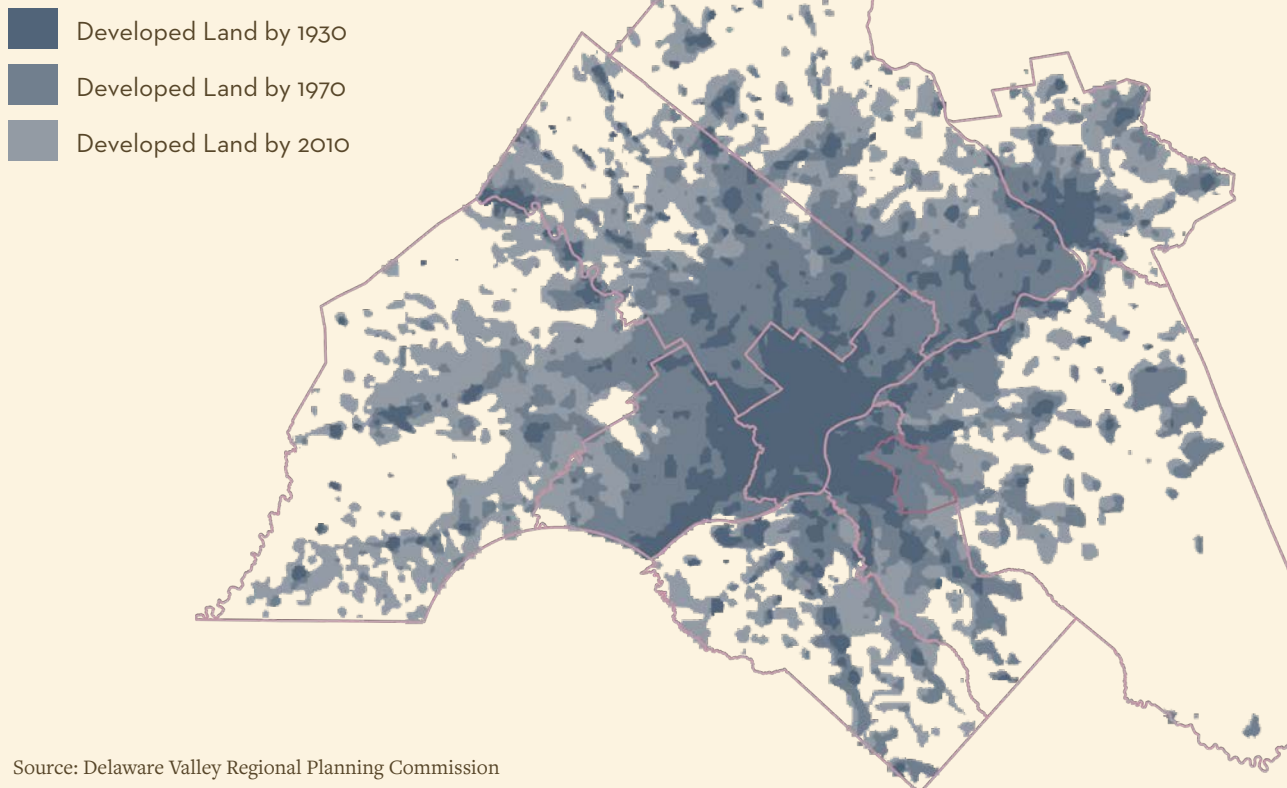
As the regional MPO, the DVRPC both collects and analyzes data for the nine counties, providing local planners with reliable data for analysis. This report uses DVRPC data, as well as US Census Bureau data, as part of the demographic analysis.



## REGIONAL GROWTH

Cherry Hill is a classic “second ring” suburb of Philadelphia. This map showing land that was developed in different eras illustrates how Cherry Hill is developed after the “first ring” suburbs of Haddon Township and Collingswood but ahead of the more distant suburbs of Marlton, Voorhees, and Evesham.

Figure 7. Regional development over time



Source: Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission

## Peak Growth

After decades of explosive population growth and rapid development, Cherry Hill has likely reached peak growth. Cherry Hill's population leveled off at 71,152 in 2014, growing only 1.7% since 2000. Over the next 25 years, the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) projects that Cherry Hill will only grow 0.24% (*Figure 4*).

## A COMMERCIAL DESTINATION

### Shopping and Entertainment

Concurrent with the housing boom, Cherry Hill was quickly emerging as the premier entertainment, shopping, and business hub of South Jersey. After its opening in 1942, the Garden State Park racetrack became an instant success and provided steady tax revenue for the Township.<sup>3</sup> The success of the racetrack spawned commercial and residential development along Routes 38 and 70, including the popular Latin Casino nightclub, the Hawaiian Cottage restaurant, the Park City apartment complex (today known as Cherry Hill Towers), and the Cherry Hill Inn, which became South Jersey's number one convention center.

### THE Mall

The opening of the Cherry Hill Mall in 1961 was a seminal moment in the Township's history. As the largest and most luxurious mall east of the Mississippi, and the first indoor mall in the Delaware Valley, the Cherry Hill Mall attracted shoppers and visitors from across the East Coast.<sup>4</sup> *The Mall also functioned as the heart of Cherry Hill, with summer concerts, Easter services, and even junior proms held in its gleaming halls and corridors.*

The success of the Cherry Hill Mall encouraged the construction of strip malls and shopping centers

<sup>3</sup> *Cherry Hill: A Brief History*, p. 51

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid* p. 58

Figure 8. Historic image of the Garden State Park racetrack



Source: horseracing-tracks.com

Figure 9. Cherry Hill Mall circa 1962



Source: njmonthly.com (top and bottom)



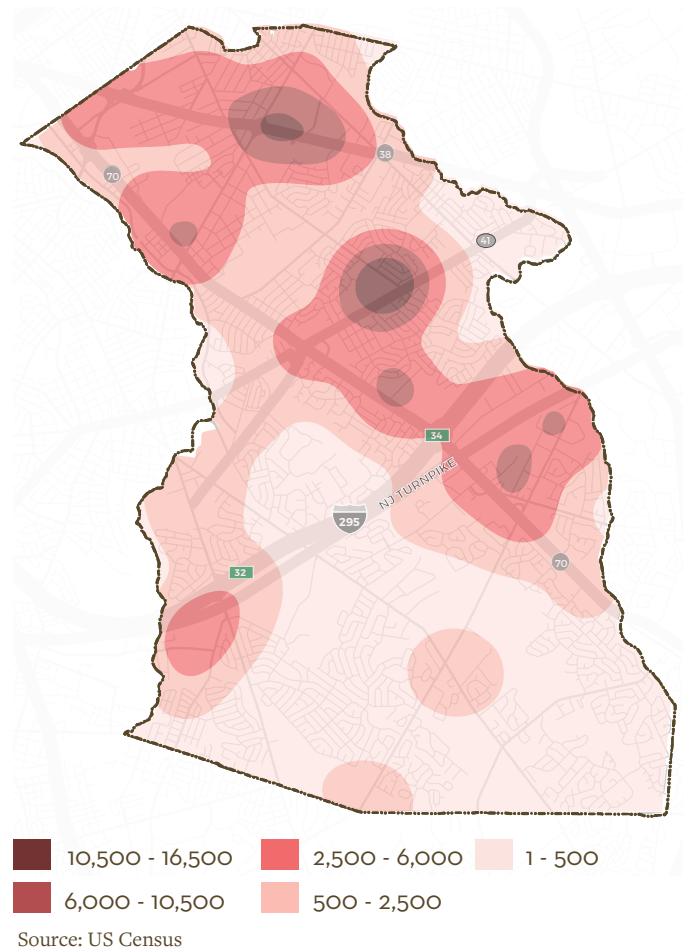
throughout the Township, and cemented Cherry Hill as a regional retail destination. In the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, many of the entertainment venues that had put Cherry Hill “on the map” including the Garden State Racetrack, the Cherry Hill Inn, and the Hawaiian Cottage Café were demolished in favor of new and expanding shopping centers. However, Cherry Hill’s status as a regional destination remains in tact. Today, over 7,700 people work in Cherry Hill’s retail sector, and another 4,250 work in accommodation and food services.

## Office Growth

Retail was not the only business attracted to Cherry Hill, however. As workers and executives left Philadelphia and Camden, and the tax structures of the cities became increasingly punitive, companies of all sorts rushed to the newly constructed office and industrial parks of Cherry Hill. *With 53,725 workers employed in the Township in 2014, Cherry Hill is still the third largest job market in the entire Philadelphia-Camden-Wilmington Metropolitan Area, behind only Philadelphia and Upper Merion Township (King of Prussia),* and contains nearly twice the number of jobs as Camden County’s next largest employment center, the City of Camden.

Jobs in Cherry Hill are dispersed throughout the Township, but there are concentrations of workers along Route 41 near Chapel Avenue; just east of Route 70 and the New Jersey Turnpike’s crossing; around the Woodcrest PATCO Station near the Township’s southeastern border, and of course, around the Cherry Hill Mall (*Figure 10*).

Figure 10. Job Density in Cherry Hill (Jobs per Square Mile)



## A PLACE OF STABILITY

Despite monumental changes in land use and population size in the Post-War era, one of the most striking attributes of contemporary Cherry Hill is its stability. *Many of the features that made Cherry Hill an attractive place to live during the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century continue to be influential today.*

## Education and Employment

*Cherry Hill continues to attract and retain educated residents.* Township residents are more likely than those of the 9-county DVRPC region to possess a bachelor's degree or higher, and the proportion of Cherry Hill residents with a high level of educational attainment has steadily increased (Figure 11).

*The educated and well-trained residents of Cherry Hill are employed in a wide range of industries (Figure 12)* making them more resilient to economic downturns, and financially comfortable. The Township has long been a desirable location for middle and upper-middle class households; *family and household median*

*incomes have been higher than that of the region since 1980.* While the unemployment rate has mirrored regional trends and increased between 1990 and 2014, it remains below that of the region and the nation. The poverty rate for individuals has only increased by 1.6 percentage points since 1980, and remains at roughly one third that of the DVRPC area.

## Housing

Figure 11. Educational Attainment

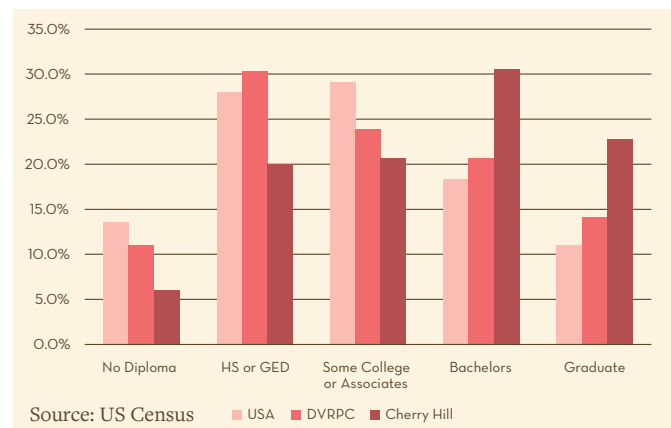
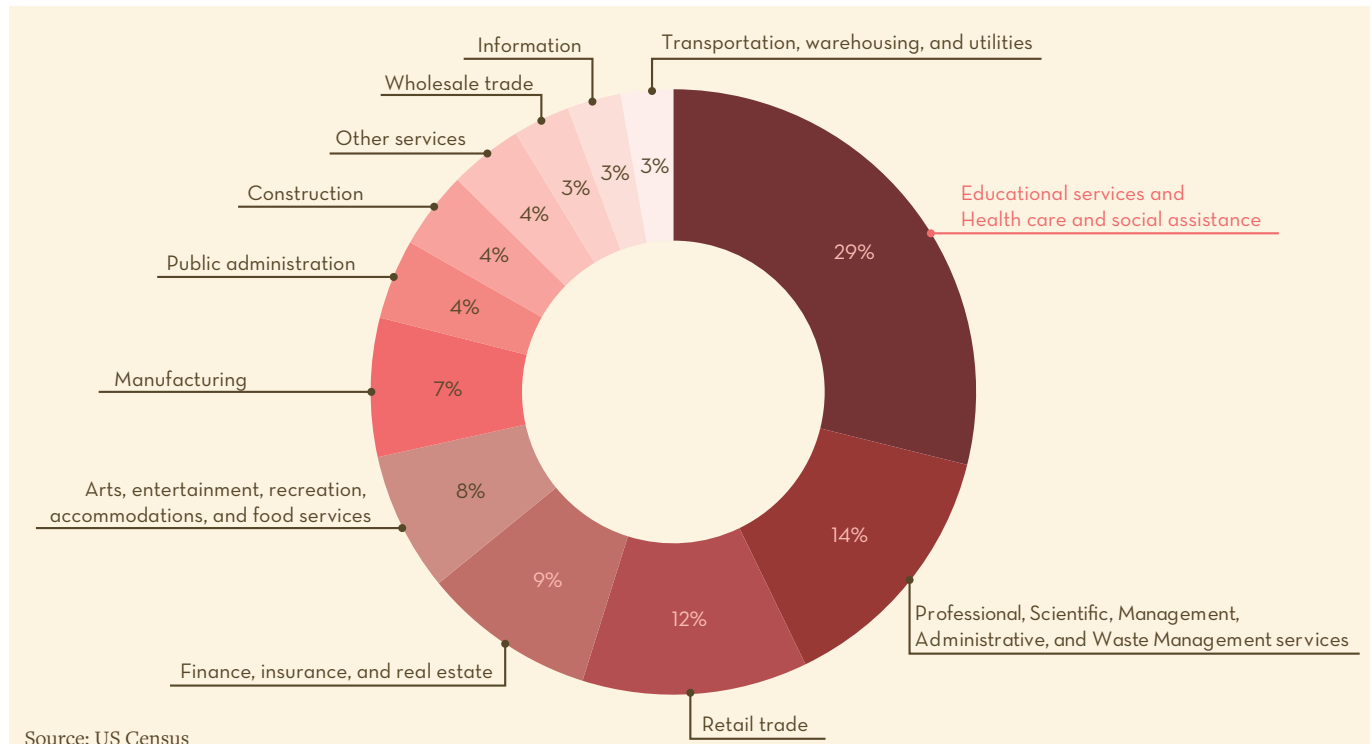


Figure 12. Employment By Sector



As mentioned above, the housing stock of Cherry Hill has remained largely stable over the past 50 years. *Only 5.3% of Cherry Hill housing units were constructed after 1999, and the majority of homes are 3-or 4-bedroom units. Only about 10% of housing units are 1-bedroom or studio units.*

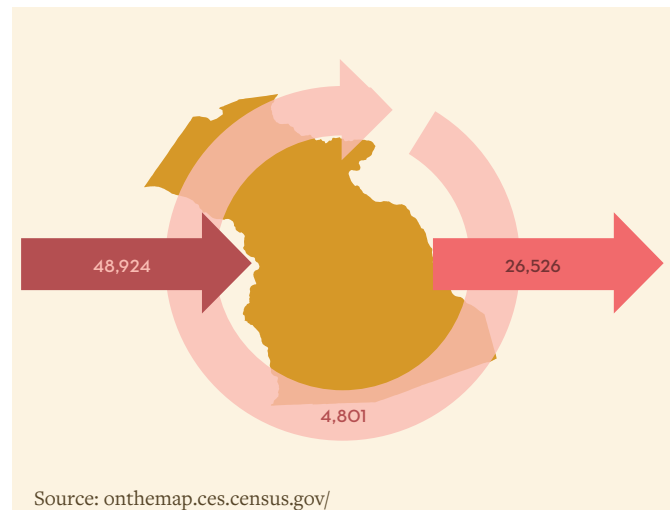
Median housing values have also remained stable. After adjustment for inflation, median housing value has remained in the mid-\$200,000 range since 1990, and Cherry Hill's median has remained squarely between high-end Haddonfield and more-affordable Pennsauken. While inflation-adjusted median gross rent has increased by about \$150 since 1990, Cherry Hill again maintains a solid position in the housing market between Haddonfield and Pennsauken.

With home values ranging from less than \$100,000 to over \$1,000,000, the neighborhoods of Cherry Hill continue to offer housing stock suited to a variety of household income levels (*Figure 14*). The neighborhoods to the East of the NJ Turnpike, which developed most recently, trend toward higher home values, with neighborhoods such as Wilderness Glen, Sienna, Short Hills Farms, and the Voken Tract offering homes with average values above \$500,000 and several homes valued above \$1,000,000. The Hunt Tract, adjacent to the Barclay Farms neighborhood, shares similar home values, though it is located on the opposite side of the NJ Turnpike. The neighborhoods with home values of \$250,000 or less, particularly those located on the southern edge and northwest portion of the Township, tend to be those neighborhoods which were earliest to develop, and represent some of the oldest and smallest homes in the Township. The Hinchman neighborhood is a classic example.

## Regional Access

Stable job and housing opportunities within Cherry Hill have solidified the Township as a place to both live and work, however it also functions as a classic suburb. Many Cherry Hill residents do not work within the Township and rely on personal and public forms of transportation to reach their destinations (*Figure 13*).

Figure 13. Job inflow and Outflow



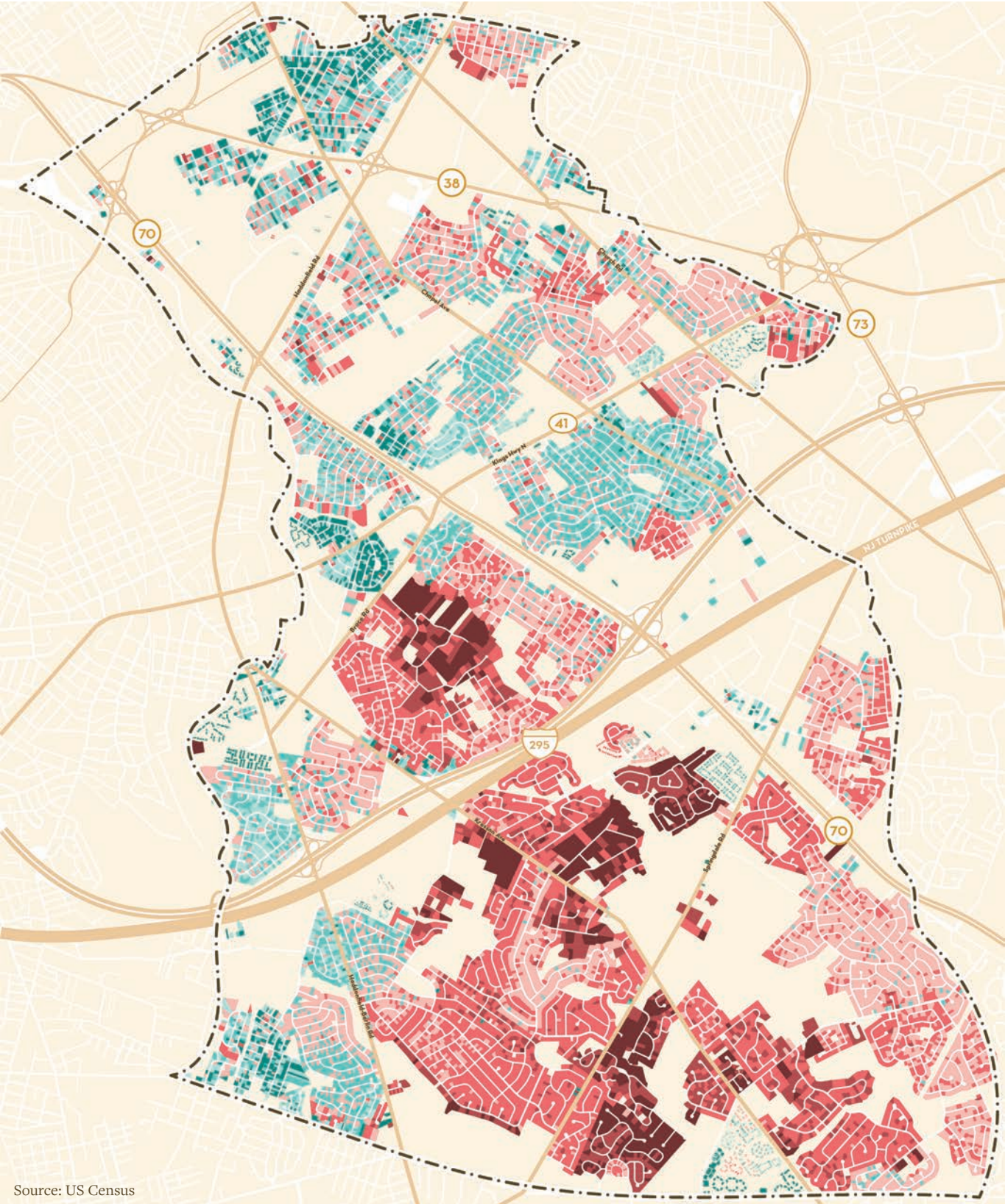
Cherry Hill accommodates daily inflow and outflow on state and county roads, such as NJ 70, NJ 73, I-295, and the New Jersey Turnpike, and through public transportation systems such as the PATCO high speed rail and NJ Transit bus systems and commuter rail branch.

*Cherry Hill's access to Philadelphia and the region is as good as it has ever been.* The Ben Franklin Bridge, the opening of which in the 1920s sparked the first wave of development in Cherry Hill, continues to serve as the Township's primary connection to Philadelphia by car or PATCO high speed rail. Additionally, NJ Transit's Atlantic City commuter rail branch provides a single-seat ride from Cherry Hill to Philadelphia's 30<sup>th</sup> Street Station District and seaside destinations. The New Jersey Turnpike and I-295 provide quick access to the rest of New Jersey and beyond.

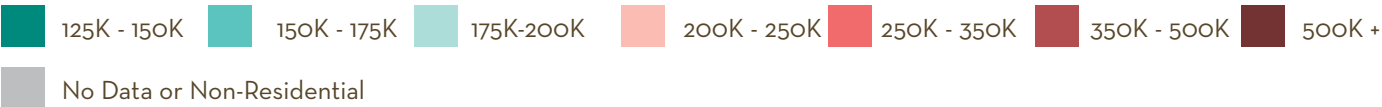
The DVRPC Long-Range Plan has identified Cherry Hill as a Metropolitan Subcenter, a focal point for Smart Growth planning in the region, because of its strong access to multiple types of transportation. The Township is in a strong position to strengthen its position as a prime suburban community if transportation infrastructure improvements continue to allow manageable inflow and outflow to Cherry Hill.



Figure 14. Home Value



Source: US Census



## Ratables

Finally, *Cherry Hill maintains its advantageous ability to attract ratable development*. Just as the Garden State Park racetrack provided a revenue stream to fund Township services and afforded some tax relief for homeowners in the 1940s, redeveloped shopping centers and new commercial developments continue to help Cherry Hill maintain its high quality of life.

## CHANGE

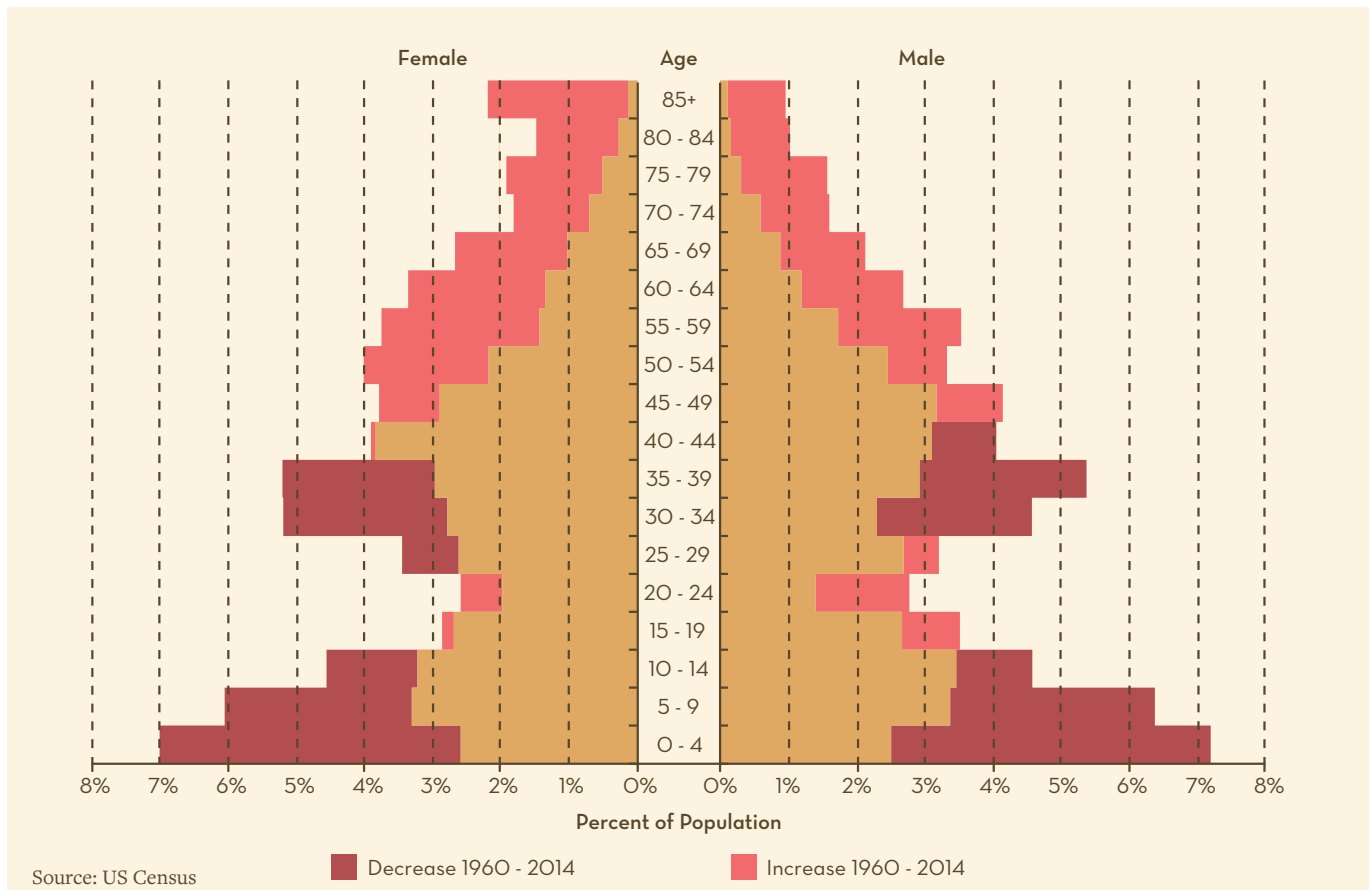
Although the total population, socioeconomic indicators, and built environment have largely remained unchanged in Cherry Hill in recent decades, *the Township is undergoing a number of exciting and important transformations*. Household and family size and structure in the Township are changing in significant ways, the population is becoming

increasingly diverse, gas and transportation costs are more unpredictable, and state and federal priorities have begun to shift away from the suburbs.

## Households

The families and households that inhabit Cherry Hill are changing in size and structure. Mirroring national trends, median household and family sizes have decreased since 1980. There are fewer children and more elderly residents in Cherry Hill today than in earlier decades. *The median age of Cherry Hill residents has increased from 29 to 42 since 1970, and one quarter of the population has been living in their home for 25 years or longer. Finally, the number of single-person households (persons living alone) has grown by 36% between 1990 and 2014, while the number of households with 3 people or more have decreased.*

Figure 15. Population Pyramid Comparison



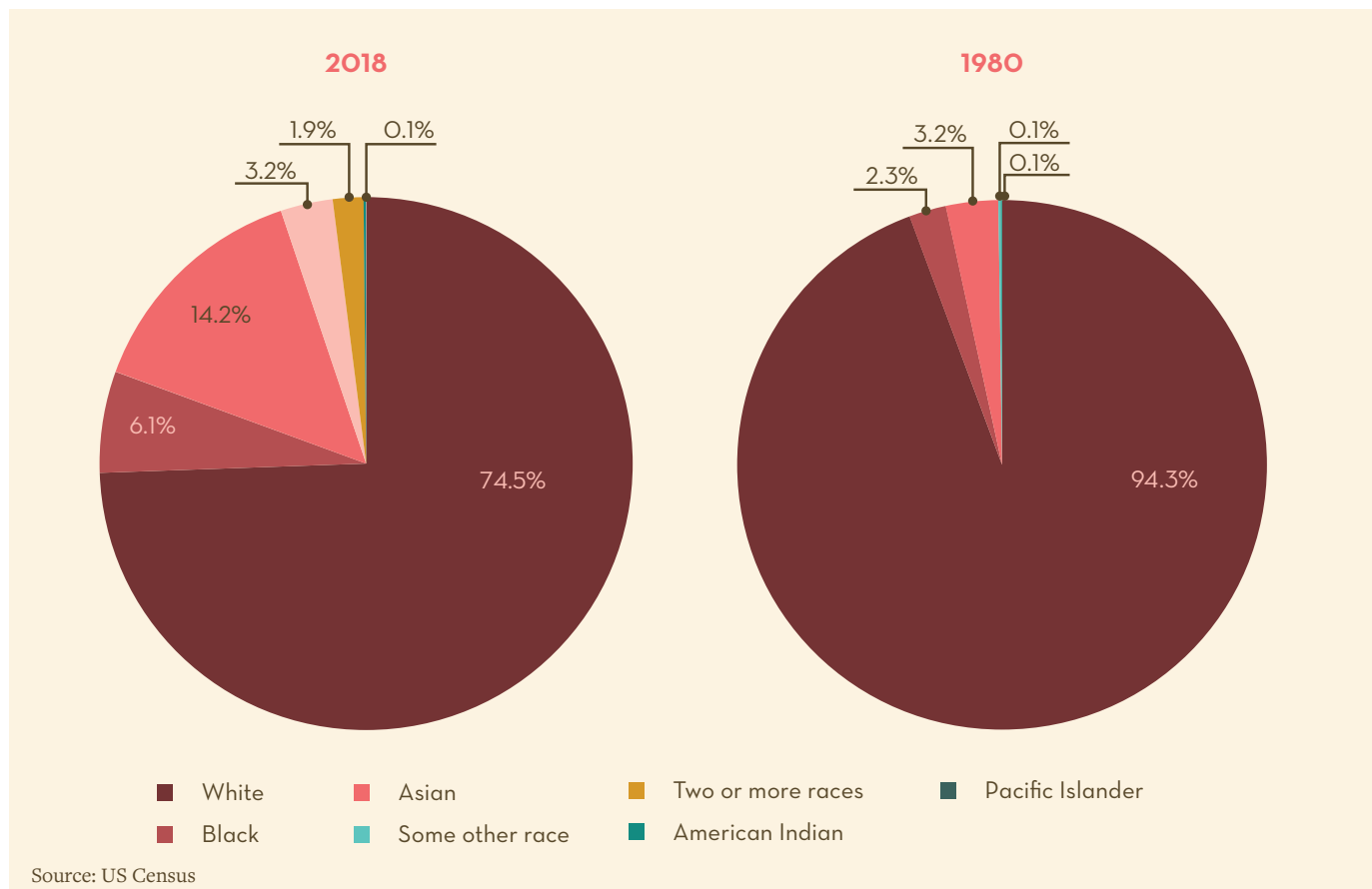
As noted above, the median age of Cherry Hill residents has increased from 29 to 42 since 1970. As the population pyramid for Cherry Hill shows ([Figure 15](#)), there are significantly more retirement age people (over the age of 60) in Cherry Hill now than there were in 1980. Moreover, there are far fewer school aged children. The only population that has stayed relatively constant is the proportion of late career adults (those between 40 and 60).

While family size has decreased and the population ages in place, the housing stock, which is primarily 3-or-4-bedroom single family homes, has remained unchanged. For more information on the impact of changing household size see, “[Spotlight: Is housing in Cherry Hill the right size for today and tomorrow’s population?](#)”

## Race & Ethnicity

While white residents still make up the majority of Cherry Hill, *the Township has become much more diverse since 1980. Cherry Hill’s growth since 1980 has largely been sustained by an influx of foreign-born residents, many of them from Asia.* Between 1980 and 2014, the Township saw a net decrease of both white residents and native-born Americans, which was offset by new residents entering Cherry Hill. *Many of these relative newcomers are naturalized citizens, and over half of foreign-born Township residents have a bachelor’s degree or higher.*

Figure 16. Cherry Hill Racial Makeup





## IS HOUSING IN CHERRY HILL THE RIGHT SIZE FOR TODAY AND TOMORROW'S POPULATION?

Between 1950 and 1970, the population of Chery Hill increased by more than 600%. After 1970, however, population growth dwindled as Cherry Hill ran out of developable land.

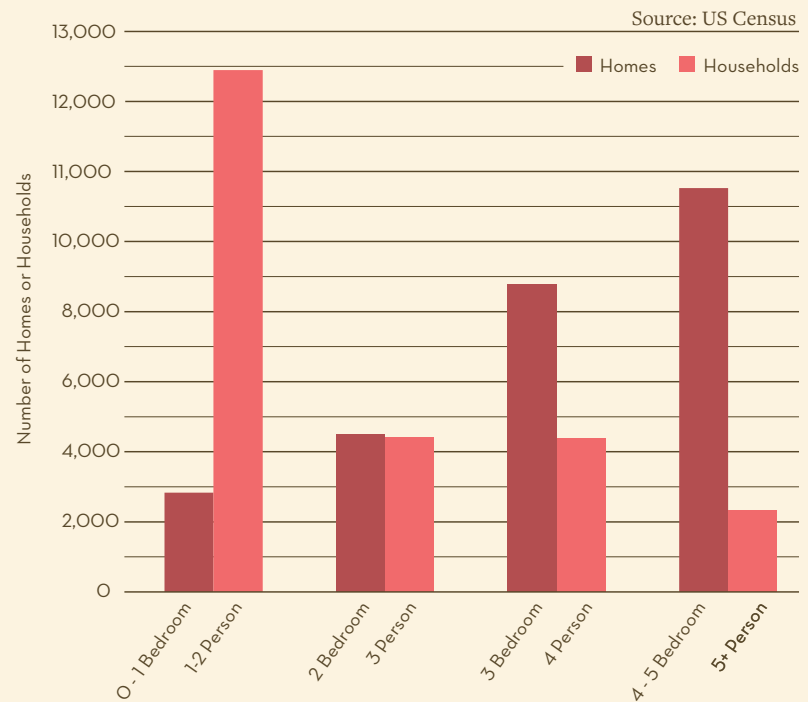
1970 was an important year for Americans. According to the Pew Research Center, between 1940 and 1970, approximately 30% of Americans felt that four children was the ideal family size and an additional 25% said that three was the ideal size. However, *by 1971, there had been a shift in attitudes: Americans' "ideal" family switched from four kids (19%) to two kids (38%), with a mean saying 2.9 kids was ideal.*<sup>1</sup>

According to Pew this was likely due to several factors, including "the wide availability of the birth control pill in the 1960s; the growth of women's participation in the workforce, which surged in the 1970s; and, of course, the increasing cost of raising a kid."

The effect of this in Cherry Hill is striking. The residential fabric of the Township was constructed in an era in which large families were expected. *Over 70% of Cherry Hill's housing units were constructed in the boom time between 1940 and 1980.* However, as the "ideal" family size shrank, there was little opportunity to "right size" the housing stock.

A comparison of household size

Figure 17. Comparison of Household Size and Bedrooms/Home



and the number of bedrooms in Cherry Hill is presented in **Figure 17**. There is no direct relationship between the number of people in a household and their need for a certain number of bedrooms. A couple may only need one bedroom whereas a single parent and child may desire two. Equally, some families may use a second (or third) bedroom for an office. Nonetheless, **Figure 17** clearly illustrates *Cherry Hill has substantially more 3- and 4-bedroom homes than it has 3- and 4-person households to fill them. Conversely, there are many more 1- and 2-person households than there are studio, one, or even two bedroom units.*

The median age of Cherry Hill residents has increased from 29 to 42 since 1970 and one quarter of the population has been living in their home for 25 years or longer. This indicates that many of these large homes are likely occupied by retirees and seniors whose children have left the home and are now living on fixed incomes.

This analysis suggests there is a significant housing and household mis-match. In this instance, it is likely that smaller households have "too much home" and therefore excessive costs associated with homeownership.

<sup>1</sup> Gao, George. "Americans' Ideal Family Size Is Smaller than It Used to Be." Pew Research Center. May 08, 2015. Accessed November 01, 2018. <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/05/08/ideal-size-of-the-american-family/>.

