

Appendix A: Community Profile

Oakland, California's sixth largest city in population, is situated east of San Francisco, across San Francisco Bay (Bay). The AMCO Chemical Site (Site) is located in South Prescott, a residential neighborhood located in the portion of the City of Oakland referred to as "West Oakland." South Prescott is bounded by Peralta Street and Nelson Mandela Parkway (formerly Cypress Street) to the west and east, and 7th and 3rd Streets to the north and south, respectively. The West Oakland Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) station, located at the intersection of 7th and Mandela Parkway, is sited in the northeast corner of the neighborhood. The AMCO Chemical Site is located along the southeast border of the South Prescott neighborhood, at the corner of Mandela Parkway and 3rd Street.

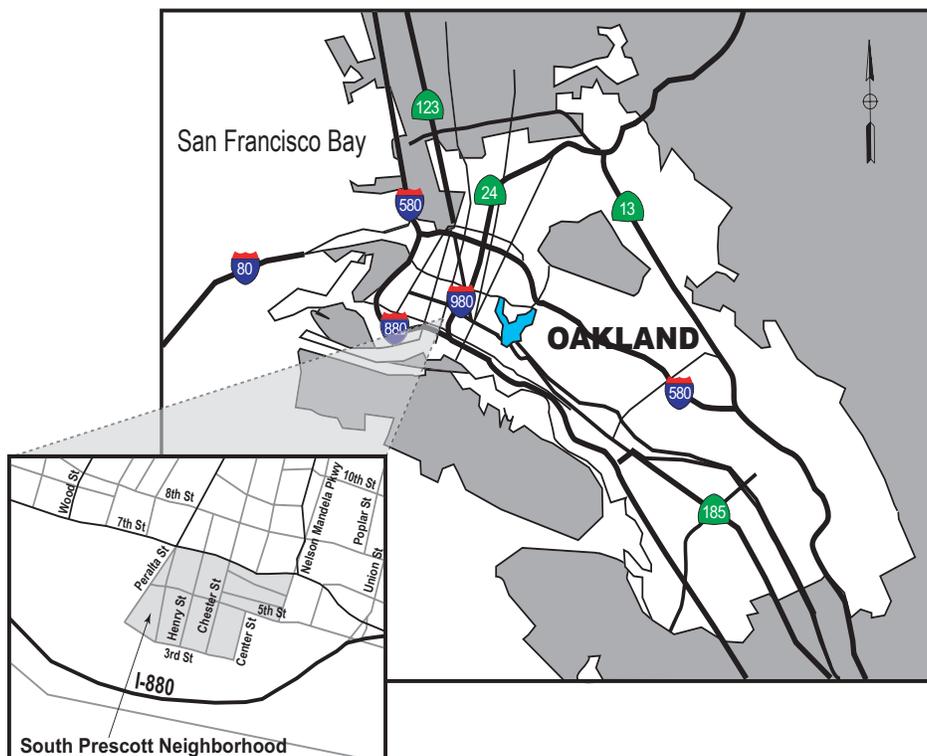
West Oakland, and there is a strong tie between the local community and the transportation sector to this day. West Oakland continues to be a center for shipping and commerce, playing host to BART lines, rail lines, shipyards, and ferries. As early as the mid to late 1880s, the expanding demand for labor that the railroads created was a key factor in the development of West Oakland and South Prescott. After the Great Depression, the shift to automobiles and trucking as a major form of transportation, and the subsequent demise of the railroad as the major conveyor of commerce, precipitated an economic decline in West Oakland. The resulting social and economic transformations over the past five decades have redefined West Oakland in such a way that many of today's neighborhoods are unrecognizable as the thriving communities they once were.

Community History

Historically, the presence of the railroad strongly influenced the development of

Late 19th Century Development

Early transportation-related development in West Oakland was stimulated by the natural attractiveness of San Francisco Bay as a focal point for western shipping. In the 19th century, West Oakland became a hub of commerce where rail lines met shipping lines. At the port in West Oakland, U.S. goods were loaded onto ships to be distributed across the world. Opportunities provided by the railroad and transcontinental shipping attracted a variety of immigrant groups with diverse skill sets to the area.



The South Prescott neighborhood has essentially the same boundaries as the historic Bay View Homestead, a 26-acre tract that was located south of the 7th Street local railway tracks, north of the 1st Street transcontinental tracks, and just east of where they converged at the Oakland Point wharf and yards. Purchased in 1869, just as the transcontinental railroad arrived in West Oakland, the Bay View Homestead was one of many West Oakland communities that literally “grew up” around the railway lines. Situated amongst the railroad yards, the Bay View Homestead became a natural place for railroad workers to settle. As the dates of the surviving neighborhood buildings show (nearly half were built between 1870 and 1879), the area developed quickly. The Oakland Tribune noted 45 new buildings during 1876, mostly “one-story frames, average price \$800” (January 1, 1877). After the tract’s rapid development in the 1870s and 1880s, further growth most often took the form of existing building renovations.

Many home buyers in what is now the South Prescott neighborhood lived in the area and developed an extra property or two, creating a community of both owner-occupied and rental houses. These new landlords included 7th Street merchants, a saloonkeeper, a piano maker, carpenters, and a few railroad employees. As railroad commerce in the area increased, shops sprang up around it, attracting immigrant merchants and laborers from Ireland, England, and Germany who rented or purchased homes. Surnames recorded in the 1880 census are nearly all Irish, English, and German. Independent tradespeople who worked in shops as printers, brewers, plumbers, and upholsterers, were primarily immigrants from the British Isles or Germany. The Irish immigrants generally worked directly for the railroad as laborers, car cleaners, car repairers, engineers, signalmen, firemen, oilmen, machinists, switchmen, carpenters, etc.

Based on the 1910 census, the ethnic proportions in West Oakland shifted from primarily Irish and German descent to Portuguese between 1880 and 1910. Portuguese immigrants had initially settled in Southern Alameda County as farmers in the 1860s, and by 1910, many of the families in South Prescott were California-born Portuguese who came to West Oakland to work on the railways. Portuguese newspapers, evening adult schools, and churches sprang up to support the nearly 4,000 Portuguese in Alameda County. In 1891, St. Joseph’s, a highly attended Portuguese Catholic church, opened its doors seven blocks east of South Prescott. Over the same period, a large African-American community also developed in South Prescott, nearly equaling the Portuguese in population. Many African-Americans rented homes, since over half the men traveled with the railroads as cooks or porters and women often worked in homes as nurses or household help. In addition to these two dominant ethnic groups, Italians and Slavonians appeared for the first time on the 1910 census, working mainly as laborers or food and produce merchants.

Southern Pacific railroad initially owned the marsh/waterfront land along the overland tracks, but later acquired land in the South Prescott neighborhood after the turn of the 20th century. Railroad



Electric trolley on 7th Street in the 1940s

Courtesy of the Anthropological Studies Center at Sonoma State University.

maintenance yards were located just outside of the western South Prescott neighborhood boundary, immediately west of Peralta Street, between 3rd Street and the tracks. Additional railroad-associated commercial activity extended west from South Prescott to the wharf. Southern Pacific freight depots also began to occupy the former marsh blocks on the eastern border of South Prescott from Cypress Street (now Nelson Mandela Parkway) to Poplar Street. A concentration of railroad-related hotels, saloons, and “female boarding houses” bordered 7th Street, which extended north. South Prescott itself remained residential, although it was effectively sandwiched between the railroad maintenance shops and commercial activities. Estimates show that 60-65 percent of males in the area worked directly for the railroad in the late 19th and early 20th century period.

The “Golden Age” Economic Prosperity

West Oakland experienced a “golden age” from approximately 1911, through World War I, to the end of the 1920s, according to Oakland historian Vernon Sappers. Oakland thrived with economic abundance during these decades, especially with the introduction of electricity to the area in 1911, which enhanced local commerce with the advent of electric railroad cars and ferryboats. World War I also prompted increased shipbuilding, which spurred a new wave of migration to West Oakland. This migration helped West Oakland evolve into a strong, ethnically diverse working class neighborhood.

The “golden age” was brought to a halt when the Great Depression swept the country. West Oakland might have recovered with the rest of the nation if the Depression had not also brought about an emphasis on bridge building, thereby increasing the domination of automobiles over rail and water transportation of goods.

World War II - The “Second Gold Rush”

The number of people employed in the shipbuilding industries rose dramatically during World War II. During the war, there was a mass migration of African-Americans from the South who came to work in the shipyards – leading the San Francisco Chronicle to refer to World War II as the “Second Gold Rush.” The ship workers were joined by newly discharged African-American servicemen who decided to remain in California rather than return to the segregated South. As a result, African-Americans became the most prominent ethnic group in West Oakland.

During this period, cultural activity, including music and entertainment,



West Oakland’s “So Different Jazz Band,” 1915

Courtesy of Ms. Gladys LeProtti, wife of bandleader Sidney LeProtti (seated third from right).

flourished in West Oakland, particularly along 7th Street. African-American-owned restaurants, nightclubs, and small businesses lined the street. Many blues, jazz, and gospel legends performed along 7th Street, and it was along 7th Street that the well-known West Oakland jazz scene had its beginnings. At one point, the number of jazz clubs and musicians in West Oakland was so great, jazz musician Horace Silver once referred to West Oakland as “the Harlem in California.”

Similarly, the Slim Jenkins Supper Club on the corner of 7th and Wood Streets was called the "Apollo of the West Coast."

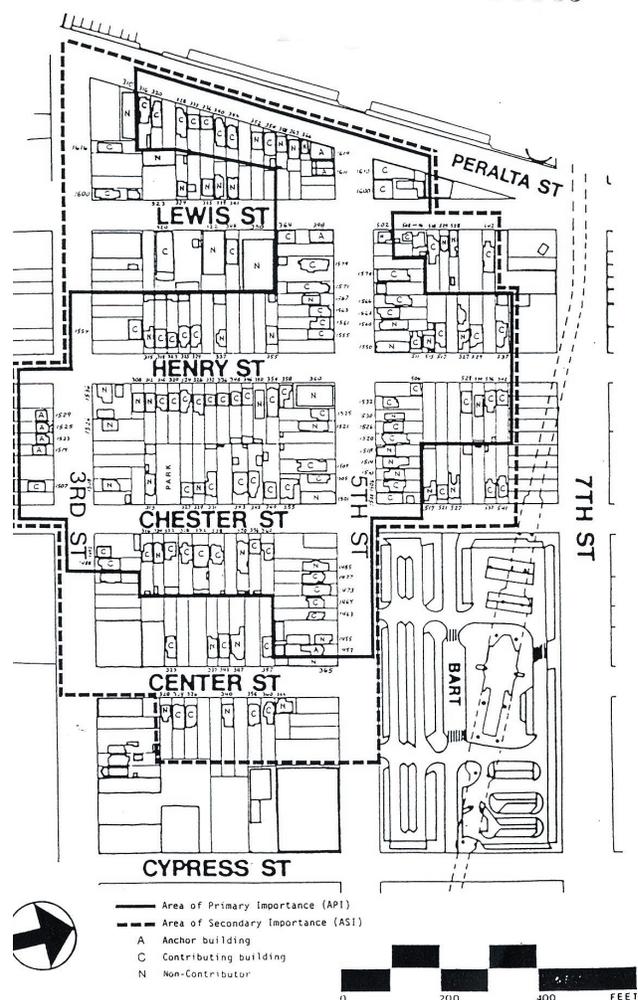
Post-War Industrialization

After World War II, there was a substantial decline in West Oakland's economy. 1945 marked the end of the shipyard boom and the termination of the rail service along 7th Street. In addition, diesel locomotives replaced the steam-powered versions of the early century, decreasing employment opportunities. As transportation technology changed, West Oakland lost its prominence in the economy and its neighborhoods became some of the poorest in the city.

During the 1950s and 1960s, a change in social planning philosophy reorganized many poorer Alameda County neighborhoods, including those located in West Oakland. "Environmental determinism" – a philosophy that if disadvantaged people are rehoused into scientifically-designed projects, they would become "socially and economically improved" – became a trend among City planners. City officials branded West Oakland a "slum" that needed to be cleared, and destroyed the area of West Oakland that stretches from the Bay to Interstate 880 (I-880), including St. Joseph's church and nearly all original residences. Oakland city officials then removed people into housing projects.

South Prescott avoided complete demolition because of the construction of the elevated Cypress Freeway (I-880), which became an arbitrary dividing line between South Prescott and the drastic clearance and redevelopment projects. South Prescott did not entirely escape the notice of social planners, however. With the clearing of neighborhoods on the other side of the freeway, planners rezoned South Prescott and adjoining areas west of Peralta Street as heavy industry. For unknown reasons, few industrial developers took advantage of

South Prescott's new zoning designation and the neighborhood remained relatively untouched. According to news stories at the time, South Prescott homes continued to survive (despite industrial designation) with a high level of owner occupancy and loyal residents. Finally in the mid-1970s, planners restored the neighborhood to residential zoning. At this point, Southern Pacific sold its remaining neighborhood holdings to residents and the South Prescott community organized to obtain rehabilitation funds from the City of Oakland. Because South Prescott remained relatively untouched during West Oakland's industrial age, South Prescott is one of the oldest surviving neighborhoods in Oakland. The



South Prescott neighborhood as defined by the California Historic Resources Inventory

most intact portion of the district, consisting of 111 properties, is considered an Area of Primary Importance (API) by the California Historic Resources Inventory.

Today, South Prescott is an active and diverse one- and two-family residential neighborhood. It is a self-contained and well-preserved enclave of 19th century working-class cottages on small lots, with scattered vacant lots, industry, and new construction. All but 12 houses were built before 1910. In 1987, there were approximately 50 vacant lots in the district, mostly where sub-standard houses had been demolished. These lots are slowly being developed, often with historically sensitive designs. Current redevelopment plans in or adjacent to the South Prescott neighborhood include mixed residential and commercial use. Projects currently under consideration include a proposed West Oakland Transit Village at 7th Street and Union and a planned 110-unit condominium community, called Mandela Village, to be built at 5th and Mandela. Other South Prescott area planned redevelopment projects include the Mandela Parkway Extension to 3rd Street, paving of the 7th Street corridor from Mandela to Market, and the 7th Street McClymonds Initiative at 7th and Mandela.

References used to compile community history:

"West Oakland Survey." City of Oakland, Department of Planning, Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey, Vol. 26, 1988.

"West Oakland – A Place to Start From." Praetzellis, Mary ed., Anthropological Studies Center, Sonoma State University Academic Foundation, Inc., Vol. 1.

"Historic Resources Inventory," South Prescott Neighborhood ASI. State of California, Department of Parks and Planning, 1988.

"Cypress Archaeology: Historical Background." State of California, Department of Transportation.

"West Oakland Community Information Book." Alameda County Public Health Department, 2001.

Information on West Oakland's jazz history courtesy of the Bay Area Blues Society.

Community Demographics

Our preliminary research into the community included looking at information



Homes on Henry Street

recorded by the U.S. Census Bureau. We found that the way census information is collected varies between years, and between households. In order for us to explain the results of our research, we first need to explain the complexities of the census process.

Method of Census Survey Research

The U.S. Census survey comes in two forms – a short version and a long version. Every household must fill out a short form that answers basic questions such as total population, race affiliation, housing status, and household size. In 2000, the results from the short form were compiled by block so we were able to determine accurate data for the South Prescott neighborhood specifically.

The long version of the survey asks additional questions such as education level, language spoken at home, household income, occupation, and further identifies racial affiliation for Hispanics/Latinos. Because this longer survey is given to a smaller number of people in an area, the results are used to *estimate* the actual numbers in an area. In 2000, South Prescott is identified as part of an area called "Tract 4019." Therefore, some of the information that we received from 2000 Census data applies to an area larger than South Prescott itself, and that information is only an estimate of actual numbers.

To view trends in housing, racial compo-

sition, etc. over the past 10 years, we also reviewed the 1990 Census data. Unfortunately, the area covered in the 1990 Census could not be divided at the block level. Therefore, we were unable to obtain any actual data for South Prescott. In addition, the boundaries of Tract 4019 in the 1990 Census were different than the boundaries in the 2000 Census, which meant that we could not compare the tracts directly. To obtain some sense of historic trends over the past 10 years, we manually selected blocks from the 2000 Census and pieced them together. The resulting area is similar to the 1990 Census Tract 4019, but not exact.

In the following section, we will present our data in three categories, based on the way we collected our data (see *box for data collection summary*). The maps along the bottoms of these pages

(Figures 1-4) indicate the areas that were surveyed in the census for each category. See the figure captions for map detail.

Results of Census Survey Research

1. South Prescott Census 2000 (Actual Data) – Population, Housing, and Ethnicity

South Prescott was defined for research purposes as the 8 city blocks bounded by 7th Street, 3rd Street, Peralta Street, and Nelson Mandela Parkway (formerly Cypress Street). See Figure 1 for detail. Census 2000 allows certain data, such as total population, gender, and race, to be compiled on a block level.

Census 2000 data show the total population of South Prescott to

How We Got Our Data

Our review of Census data falls into three categories:

1. Actual data for South Prescott from 2000 Census. (Figure 1)
2. Estimated data for Tract 4019 from 2000 Census. (Figure 2)
3. We wanted to look at changes since 1990 but the census tract lines were drawn differently from the 2000 Census. To compare data, we used estimated data from the 1990 Census Tract 4019 and then modified the map of 2000 Census estimated data to approximate the same area. (Figures 3 and 4)



Figure 1: Actual data from South Prescott neighborhood (as defined in gray), 2000 Census. Every household filled out a short form with information about population, housing, and ethnicity.

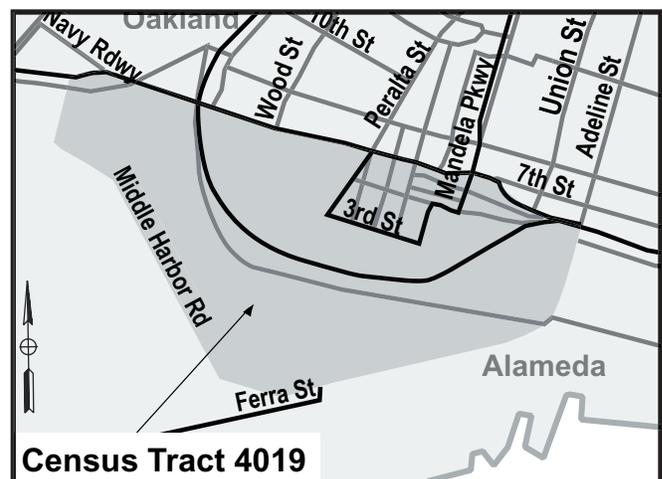


Figure 2: Tract 4019 (as defined in gray) estimated data, 2000 Census. One in every six households received a long form. Responses are estimated to be representative of the entire area.

be approximately 617 people.

The ethnic/racial composition of the South Prescott area is characterized by Census 2000 data as follows:

- Black or African American – 29%
- White – 21%
- American Indian/Alaska Native – 0%
- Asian – 9%
- Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander – 0%
- Some other race alone – 35%
- Two or more races – 7%

2. Census 2000 Tract 4019 (Estimated Data) – Languages, Income, and Employment

The majority of demographics information obtained during a census is derived by averaging responses from residents who are randomly selected to fill out a long form. Their responses are then combined to generalize about an entire census tract. Census Tract 4019 includes South Prescott as well as the area surrounding the West Oakland BART Station and the land extending westward to San Francisco Bay. See Figure 2 for detail.

The primary languages spoken at home by adults are English (46%) and Spanish (48%). Two percent of households (about

Census Clarification

On the short form, there is not a category for people who consider themselves Latino or Hispanic. Members of the local Hispanic or Latino population may have classified themselves as white, some other race alone, or two or more races.

10 adults) speak Chinese; 4 adults speak French. Twelve children are identified as speaking Arabic at home, but no adults identify Arabic as their primary language.

In the long form, the survey asks people to identify if they are Hispanic/Latino. In Census Tract 4019, 49% of respondents said they were Hispanic or Latino. This number is consistent with the percent of those who speak Spanish at home (48%).

The median household income range of Census Tract 4019 is between \$60,000 and \$75,000, and 23 percent of local households fall within this range. Thirty-two percent of households live under the poverty level (less than \$30,000). The neighborhood fares better than the greater West Oakland community, where approximately 62 percent of households

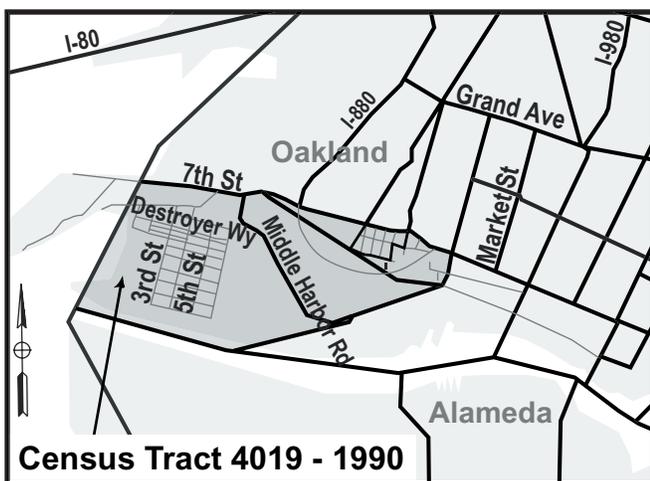


Figure 3: Tract 4019 estimated data, 1990 Census. Tract 4019 was drawn differently in 1990 than in 2000 (see Figure 2).

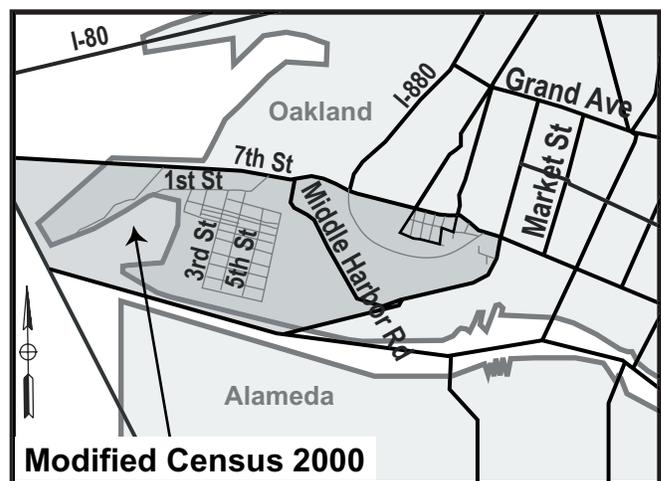


Figure 4: Modified Census Tract 4019, 2000 Census. We modified the 2000 map so it would look more like the 1990 Census Tract 4019. That way, we could look at growth and change with greater accuracy.

fall under the poverty level. The percentage of college graduates in Tract 4019 is eight percent, which is proportional to West Oakland college graduates (also eight percent).

Of the total population of Census Tract 4019, approximately 60% are employed (66% of men, 53% of women). Another 34% report as "not in labor force," i.e., those who do not wish to be employed or are not able to work because of age or disability.

The top four industries which employ South Prescott men are: construction (25%), manufacturing (20%), educational, health and social services (14%) and wholesale trade (10%). The top four industries in which South Prescott women primarily work are: arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food service (26%), educational, health and social services (20%), manufacturing (17%), and transportation and warehousing (17%). More women than men tended to work in sales and office positions.

3. Comparison of Census 1990 to Census 2000 – Population and Housing Trends

In order to estimate growth over the last decade, we compared Census 1990 data with Census 2000 data for Census Tract 4019. The following information has been included to provide a general survey of how the South Prescott neighborhood and surrounding areas have changed during the past decade, but is representative of a larger area than the 8 blocks comprising the South Prescott neighborhood. *Refer to Figures 3 and 4 for details of area boundaries for Census Tract 4019 in 1990 and 2000, respectively.*

In 1990, data for Census Tract 4019 showed 775 people and 322 housing units. When compared with Census 2000 data for the same geographic area, we find a two percent decrease in population and a 24 percent decrease in hous-

ing units over the intervening decade. By comparison, the City of Oakland as a whole has seen a 6.8 percent increase in population and a 1.7 percent increase in housing units during the same time period. The number of owner occupied homes in Oakland has decreased by 12% in the past decade, bringing even more renters into the area.

Between 1990 and 2000, the racial composition of South Prescott and the surrounding community has changed in the following ways:

- White – 9.0% increase
- African American – 38% increase
- Asian – 65% decrease
- Hispanic/Latino – 9.0% increase

Summary of Results

From our census research we learned that although 60% of the population is employed, income is below the poverty level in nearly a third of households. Nearly half of the residents in South Prescott and vicinity speak Spanish as their primary language. During the past ten years, the total population has declined only two percent, while available housing has decreased by 24 percent. Of the available housing, most homes (90%) are currently occupied. However, over the past decade, more homeowners have moved out of the area and started renting their homes.

The above community demographics information was created based on information obtained from U.S. Census Bureau information for the 2000 and 1990 Census. <http://www.census.gov/>



South Prescott homes