Living Off Campus
Macalester Students in the Neighborhood

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Living Off Campus
Macalester Students in the Neighborhood

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Macalester College and its surrounding neighborhoods are located in western St. Paul. The neighborhoods in our study area are bounded by University Avenue to the north, Hamline Avenue and the shortline railroad to the east, Randolph Avenue to the south, and the Mississippi River to the west.

Macalester College's campus is in the Mac-Groveland neighborhood, but its northern edge forms the southern edge of the Merriam Park and Snelling-Hamline neighborhoods. Most off-campus students live in these three neighborhoods.
Chapter One

The Neighborhoods
Chapter One

The Neighborhoods

- Population Trends
- Age and Household Type
- Race
- Housing
- Land Use

Macalester College is located on the western edge of St. Paul, about three and a half miles from downtown St. Paul and seven miles from downtown Minneapolis. It enjoys a central location in the metropolitan area with good bus access and is surrounded by pleasant, middle and upper-class residential neighborhoods. Historic Summit Avenue forms the northern edge of the campus and the Mississippi River, a mile to the west, provides abundant recreational land.

Existing as it does in the middle of a residential area, Macalester affects and is affected by the three neighborhoods that surround it: Macalester-Groveland, Snelling-Hamline, and Merriam Park. The college campus is in Mac-Groveland, but many off-campus students also live in Merriam Park, directly north and west of campus, and Snelling-Hamline, to the northeast. In this chapter, we will examine some of the dynamics taking place in the three neighborhoods and try to determine how off campus students fit into the larger community.

Population Trends

Macalester-Groveland is by far the largest of the three neighborhoods in terms of population and housing units. Bounded by Randolph Avenue to the south, the Mississippi River to the west, Summit Avenue to the north, and the railroad and Interstate 35E to the east, it encompasses Macalester College and borders the College of St. Catherine to the south. Merriam Park is notably smaller than Mac-Groveland, and Snelling-Hamline is only about one-tenth its size. Both neighborhoods extend from Summit Avenue north over Interstate 94 to University Avenue. Merriam Park is bounded by the Mississippi River to the west and Snelling Avenue to the east, and includes the University of St. Thomas with its large resident and off-campus student population. Snelling-Hamline includes the area east of Merriam Park to Hamline Avenue and Ayd Mill Road.

Population in the area is
Chapter One: The Neighborhoods
Total Population Change
1990-2000 by Block

Population Change
-118 - -35
-34 - 0
1 - 34
35 - 120
121 - 510

Residential Colleges
Nonresidential Land

Macalester College Geography
Department Action Research Team
Source: Census 2000

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concentrated at and around the
colleges and east of the
Snelling-Hamline neighborhood
in the Skyline Towers housing
project. Smaller concentrations
exist in the apartment buildings
along Grand Avenue and in the
eyoung housing on the eastern
eight of Mac-Groveland. The
St. Thomas and Macalester
College dormitory populations
show up particularly strongly on
the map, highlighting the sheer
number of residents that live on
the college campuses. Aside
from the colleges, the neighbor-
hoods have relatively low
population densities, giving the
area a suburban feel.

Most blocks did not
experience drastic changes in
population between 1990 and
2000, reflecting the general
stability of the neighborhoods.
Major population gains and
losses are generally associated
with the colleges (for example,
the building of George Draper
Dayton Hall at Macalester
shifted population from one
block to another), and Skyline
Towers. Between Cleveland and
Fairview north of the interstate,
population increased due to the
construction of elderly housing.
Elsewhere, there does not appear
to be a dominant pattern of
population gain or loss, and most
changes were small.

None of the neighbor-
hoods grew as quickly as St.
Paul as a whole, reflecting the
area's smaller household sizes,
lower density, and lack of
immigrant population. Merriam
Park grew slightly in population
between 1990 and 2000 while
Snelling-Hamline remained
about the same and Mac-
Groveland declined slightly.
However, such small fluctua-
tions may be largely due to
changing student populations at
the colleges.

Age and
Household Type

To what extent does the
abundance of colleges in the
neighborhoods influence their
age distributions? In all three
neighborhoods, the number of
residents aged 20-24 outnumber
all other cohorts. Population
pyramids show the unbal-
anced nature of the age distribu-
tion, with a small base suddenly
widening upon reaching the
young adult cohort, and then
again thinning into older co-
HORTS. This may not be due
solely to the college population,
and the pattern is more drastic in
some neighborhoods than in
others. But the colleges undeni-
ablely have an impact. Most
Macalester students, for ex-
ample, live either on campus or
in its immediate vicinity, throw-
ing 1700 extra young adult
bodies into the neighborhoods.

The presence of Macal-
ester students as well as a still
larger number of St. Thomas
students is reflected in Merriam
In Merriam Park, the 20-24 age cohort is at least double the size of any other age group besides the 15-19 cohort, which also includes college-aged people. As age increases, cohort size declines, and children are not particularly well represented. The large number of elderly women in the population pyramid is due to the elderly housing on University Avenue. Clearly, the colleges are influencing the demographics of the neighborhood quite dramatically. Maps of median age and population aged 18-21 show that while some clustering of younger residents is occurring, particularly near St. Thomas, they are also scattered throughout the neighborhood.

In Mac-Groveland, the age distribution is more balanced. The 20-24 cohort only slightly outnumbers middle-aged cohorts, and the larger number of children and middle-aged adults indicate the more family-oriented nature of the neighborhood. The median age in Mac-Groveland south of Grand is significantly higher than the median age north of Summit, and fewer 18 to 21-year-olds live there. The majority of young adults in the neighborhood are closely clustered near Macalester and along Grand Avenue.

Snelling-Hamline's population pyramid shows a bulge of residents between 20 and 49 years of age. Children and older adults are fewer. Young adults are particularly numerous, due in part to college students and recent alumni. Because Snelling-Hamline has a much smaller total population than either Mac-Groveland or
Median Age
2000 by Block

Chapter One: The Neighborhoods
Number Aged 18 - 21
2000 by Block

Number 18 -21
• 1 - 19
• 20 - 96
• 97 - 369
• 370 - 759
• 760 - 1543

Residential Colleges
Non Residential

Macalester College
Geography Department
Action Research Team
Source: Census 2000

Living Off Campus: Macalester Students in the Neighborhood
Percent Aged 18 - 21
2000 by Block

Source: Census 2000

Chapter One: The Neighborhoods
Merriam Park, its distribution is more easily skewed by individual buildings or groups of residents.

Although the colleges significantly influence age distributions, household types in the three neighborhoods resemble those in St. Paul as a whole. In St. Paul, married couples make up 43.3% of all households, with an essentially even split between those with children and those without. Merriam Park and Snelling-Hamline follow a similar pattern. In Mac-Groveland, however, married couples are more common, making up 52.5% of all households. The abundance of married couples in Mac-Groveland can be partially explained by its large amount of owner-occupied housing and solidly middle-class orientation.

In St. Paul as a whole, single people make up 43.1% of all households, with more females than males, probably due to the dominance of women in older age cohorts. In Merriam Park, singles make up 50.1% of all households, and in Snelling-Hamline, 46.8%, placing these neighborhoods somewhat above the city average. This is not surprising considering their large numbers of young adults. The most noticeable difference in household composition between the city as a whole and the neighborhoods around Macalester is the relative lack of single-parent families in the area. Single parent families make up 13.5% of households in St. Paul, but only 5.7% (Mac-Groveland) to 9.5% (Snelling-Hamline) of households in the neighborhoods surrounding Macalester.

Race

Unlike some parts of St. Paul, the neighborhoods surrounding Macalester are overwhelmingly white. Their racial composition is related to the relatively high incomes and high property values in the area. Residents of Mac-Groveland, Merriam Park, and Snelling-Hamline are generally well-established and the area receives few immigrants or new migrants. St. Paul's southwest sector, of which Macalester and surrounding neighborhoods are a part, is a white, high-income enclave in the central city.

Along with their large white populations, Mac-Groveland, Merriam Park, and Snelling-Hamline contain small numbers of black, Asian, and Hispanic residents. The numbers of Native Americans, Pacific Islanders, Multi-race respondents, and respondents choosing "other" for race are too small to examine meaningfully. The pattern of nonwhite residents in the area is striking, with a clear "across the tracks" phenomenon. Few minorities live south of the
railroad tracks and Interstate 94, but north of these barriers, the number of nonwhite residents increases dramatically. In these areas, property values are lower and land use is less residential and more commercial/industrial. Although these areas are technically a part of the Merriam Park and Snelling-Hamline neighborhoods, they are functionally a part of the Midway corridor which extends along University Avenue and is characterized by lower incomes, lower property values, and larger immigrant and domestic minority populations.

Black residents are the most spatially segregated group, with Asian and Hispanic residents more evenly dispersed throughout the study area. Macalester College has a higher percentage of nonwhite residents than the surrounding neighborhoods; Asians, in particular, are relatively well-represented proportionally given the College's active minority and international student recruitment policies. The Skyline Towers housing project just east of the Snelling-Hamline neighborhood also houses a large number of

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Chapter One: The Neighborhoods