Immigrants, Politics and Local Response in Suburban Washington

February 26, 2009
Immigration Reform: the National Context
National context is important for understanding some of the changes in Prince William County.

No movement on federal reform after major Congressional debates in 2006 and 2007

Many new areas, with little recent history of immigration have fast growing foreign-born populations

Proliferation of state and local laws around the country as local leaders have stepped in to fill the void
Hispanic growth rates have been high in outer suburban counties around Washington and other metros.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County, State</th>
<th>Metropolitan Area, State</th>
<th>% Hispanic growth, 2000-2006</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frederick, VA</td>
<td>Winchester, VA</td>
<td>276.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paulding, GA</td>
<td>Atlanta, GA</td>
<td>228.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kendall, IL</td>
<td>Chicago, IL</td>
<td>203.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fauquier, VA</td>
<td>Washington, DC</td>
<td><strong>202.3</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spotsylvania, VA</td>
<td>Washington, DC</td>
<td>177.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry, GA</td>
<td>Atlanta, GA</td>
<td>177.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luzerne, PA</td>
<td>Scranton, PA</td>
<td>175.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newton, GA</td>
<td>Atlanta, GA</td>
<td>169.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stafford, VA</td>
<td>Washington, DC</td>
<td>166.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loudoun, VA</td>
<td>Washington, DC</td>
<td>151.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Prince William, VA</strong></td>
<td><strong>Washington, DC</strong></td>
<td><strong>146.9</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frederick, MD</td>
<td>Washington, DC</td>
<td>143.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census 2000 and ACS 2006
What happened in Prince William County?
Metropolitan Washington Immigration Trends
Home to more than 1 million immigrants, the metropolitan area is 20 percent foreign-born and ranks 7th nationally.

Data Sources: decennial censuses and ACS 2007
No one region or country of origin dominates.


Data Sources: decennial censuses and ACS 2007
Since 1970, immigrants have shifted to the outer suburbs.

Foreign born distribution by county

Source: 1970 Census and 2007 ACS
Data and Methods

Quantitative Data Sources:
• Census Bureau
• Home Mortgage Disclosure Act (HMDA)
• Metropolitan Regional Information Systems (MRIS)
• Prince William County

Qualitative Data Sources:
• County documents and presentations
• Interviews and tours
• Board of County Supervisors meetings
• Local and national media coverage
• 9500Liberty documentary
• Blogs
Demographic Change in Prince William County
Prince William County has experienced explosive growth recently.

Part of the fast-growing “outer suburbs”

Total population nearly doubled between 1980 and 2006 to 357,000

Annual population increases between 2000 and 2006 were nearly double the annual average increase during the 1990s (about 11K)
Prince William County has experienced dramatic demographic change.

Hispanics accounted for 31% of the county’s growth between 1980 and 2006 (whites and blacks accounted for 28% and 26% respectively).

Majority (63%) of Hispanic growth between 1980 and 2006 has occurred since 2000, putting it in the top twenty counties in the U.S. for recent Hispanic growth rates.

Non-Hispanic white share of the population fell from 87% in 1980 to 52% in 2006.

Change has been concentrated in certain areas of the county.
Immigration was a large part of the rapid and recent change.

Prince William experienced an immigration boom since 2000, with 78,000 foreign born as of 2006.

By 2006, 22 percent of the county population was foreign born, compared to 12 percent six years earlier.

Geographic origins of immigrants also shifted; Latin Americans made up 28 percent in 1990; by 2006, they were a majority.
### Characteristics of immigrants in Prince William compared to the region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Prince William County, VA</th>
<th>Washington Metropolitan Area</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percent of foreign-born who are from Latin America</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of immigrants who entered the U.S. between 2000 and 2006</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of immigrants who are Limited English Proficient (LEP)</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of LEP immigrants who speak Spanish</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of immigrants with no high school degree</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of immigrants estimated to be in the country illegally</td>
<td>??</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
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</table>
What drove growth in the County?

Jobs: regional decentralization and growth in Prince William

Housing: amid soaring prices, the county remained relatively affordable

Quality of life: low crime, good schools, low cost of living
Recent homeowner trends among Hispanics concentrated in Manassas & Woodbridge.

The map illustrates the distribution of owner-occupied home purchase loans to Hispanics by Census Tract, 2006. The data is sourced from 2006 HMDA data provided by DataPlace at www.dataplace.org.

* "Up-County" and "Down-County" tracts are groups of Census tracts in the jurisdiction of Prince William County identified by the authors. In 2006, they had a higher rate of owner-occupied home purchase loans to Hispanics than the county rate of 37.2 percent.
What were the challenges associated with this growth?

Traffic congestion, demand on schools, services

Homeownership among Hispanics residentially clustered

Physical/visible changes to property and perception of decline in quality of life

Rising anxiety among long-term residents
What other factors contributed to the policy changes?
What other factors contributed to the policy changes?

- Lack of federal immigration reform
- Media “buzz” around immigration, including from talk radio, cable news, blogs, and web videos
- Examples from other localities and assistance from outside legal consultants
- Local election politics
- Lack of service and advocacy infrastructure
What can we learn from the case of Prince William County?

Facts are important for effective policymaking.

Officials should communicate policy changes clearly.

Local policies should address local problems.

Elected officials set the tone.
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