

The Color of Job Growth: Race, Geography and Labor Market Opportunity in the Metropolitan Area

By Dr. Paul Street
Vice President of Research & Planning
Chicago Urban League

In the Chicago area as throughout most of the United States, the 1990s were a period of significant overall employment expansion. Between 1991 and 2000, according to the Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES), the number of jobs covered by unemployment insurance (UI) in the six-county Chicago area rose by 16 percent. The Chicago region added nearly half a million such jobs. Beneath the overall expansion, however, whites enjoyed considerably greater proximity to expanding labor market opportunities than did Blacks in and around Chicago.

Between 1990 and 2000, the longstanding tendency of job growth to move out of Chicago, home to the great majority of the area's African Americans and to the predominantly white suburbs, continued. Fully 98 percent of the metropolitan area's job growth measured by IDES occurred outside Chicago. Just 2 percent occurred within the city, which is 37 percent Black and home to more than two-thirds (68 percent) of the area's African Americans.

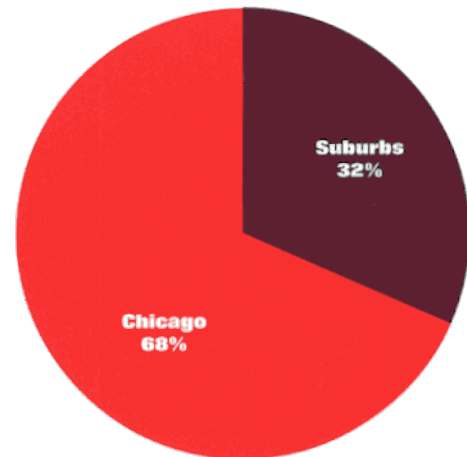
While it is true that Blacks' share of the Chicago area's suburban population rose during the 1990s (from 7.4 percent in 1990 to 9.4 percent in 2000), African Americans are not found in large numbers in the suburbs that experienced the most dynamic job growth as measured by IDES. Of the area's leading 10 municipalities outside Chicago ranked by absolute job growth among the 104 Chicago-area communities for which IDES provides complete job growth data, only No. 10 (Waukegan) has a Black population percentage higher than average for the

suburban metropolitan area (9.4 percent). More than 95 percent of the region's job growth outside Chicago took place in communities with Black percentages smaller than the suburban average.

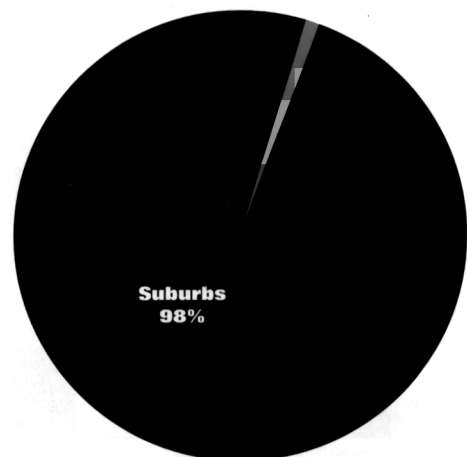
Among the 20 IDES communities with Black population percentages higher than the average for the suburban metropolitan area, more than a third lost jobs between 1991 and 2000. Of the region's 10 biggest job losers, four communities (Maywood, Evanston, Zion and Harvey) have a black percentage higher than the suburban metropolitan average. Of the five communities that are more than three-fourths Black (Riverdale, Maywood, Dolton, Bellwood and Harvey) and for which IDES data exists, all but one (Bellwood) lost jobs and Bellwood's gains were very modest.

Consistent with these patterns, communities that became significantly more Black during the 1990s tended to experience weak and even negative growth in UI-covered jobs. Of the 10 communities for which IDES data exists and that saw their Black percentage rise by 10 percent or more, five lost jobs between 1991 and 2000. Only one Chicago area community (Broadview) combined significant job growth with a

Distribution of African Americans in the Chicago Metropolitan Area, 2000



Job Growth in the Chicago Metropolitan Area, 1991-2000



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significant increase in Black population percentage. Conversely, among the weakest 20 communities for job creation (all experienced negative employment expansion between 1991 and 2000), no less than 8 or (40 percent) are disproportionately Black for the metropolitan area beyond Chicago.

It is true that Chicago added nearly 10,000 jobs covered by unemployment insurance between 1991 and 2000 while possessing a Black population percentage three times the national average. The story becomes far less positive, from a Black perspective, however, when it is added that Chicago lost Black population (both absolutely and relatively) during the 1990s and that Chicago's percentage job growth was less than 1 percent -- 94th out of the 104 IDES communities when ranked by percentage increase.

Most telling of all, job growth was very unevenly distributed throughout the city by race. Of Chicago's 56 zip

codes, exactly one half (28) experienced an increase in the number of jobs recorded

by IDES between 1991 and 2000 and one half experienced a decrease. Among the 26 zip codes that saw an increase and for which relevant racial and demographic data exists by zip code, nearly three-fourths - 73 percent (19) - possessed a proportionate white population in excess of the citywide white percentage (37.9) at the time of the last census for which racial data is available by zip code (1990). Twenty two of those 26 zip codes (84.6 percent) possess a Black population percentage below African Americans' citywide share (38.6 percent).

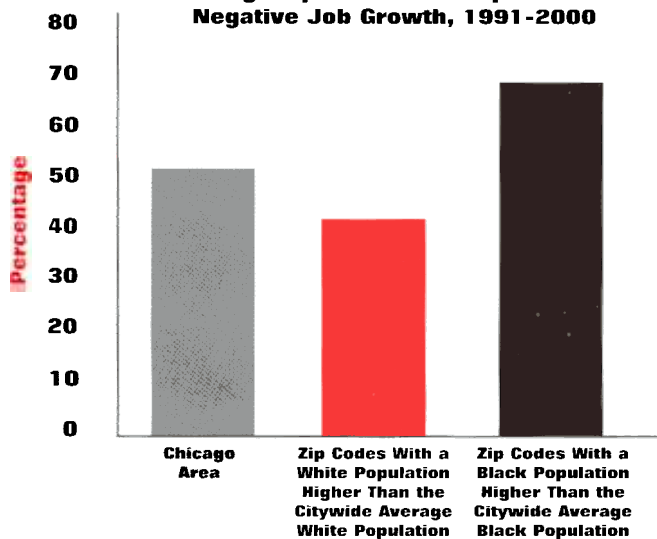
Among the 10 top job-growth zip codes, all are disproportionately white for Chicago and six of those 10 are more than 60 percent white. Overall, the city's 19 disproportionately Black zip codes lost 18,080 IDES-recorded jobs between 1991 and 2000. By contrast, the city's 15 zip codes that were 75 percent or more white in 1990 collectively gained 19,215 of those jobs during the same period. The total job gains of the seven zip codes that were 90 percent or more white was equivalent to nearly 90 of the city's overall job growth.

By relevant neighborhood identification, the most dynamic job growth zip codes are found in the following predominantly white communities:

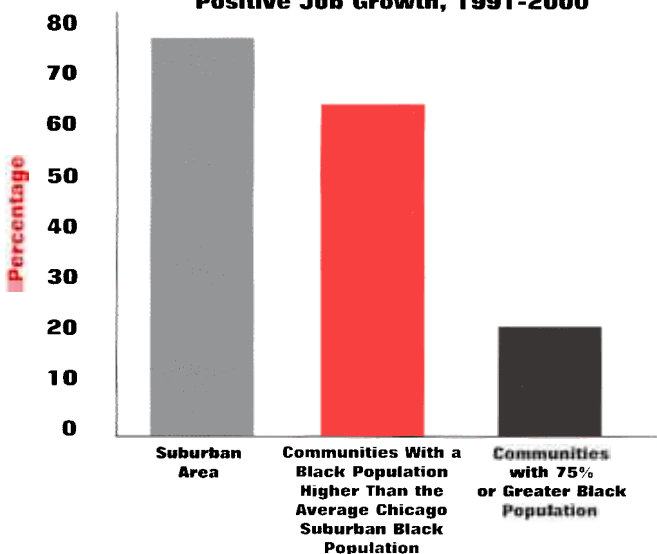
- the O'Hare area (northwest side);
- Norwood (on the far northwest side);
- Wicker Park (near north);
- the north side Gold Coast;
- the increasingly white and gentrifying South Loop;
- the increasingly Hispanic and Black and majority white Cragin area;
- and the white and Hispanic Logan Square.

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Chicago Zip Codes That Experienced Negative Job Growth, 1991-2000



Suburban Communities That Experienced Positive Job Growth, 1991-2000



In zip codes identifiably located on the predominantly Black West and South Sides, job growth was generally weak or non-existent, with numerous such zip codes experiencing actual job loss even while the city increased overall employment between 1990 and 2000.

This elementary analysis suggests the persistence of high structural barriers to equal labor market opportunity for African Americans in and around Chicago. It also suggests the considerable social and economic price paid by African Americans for the area's persistently high racial segregation.

African Americans need not have any particular desire to live next door to whites to see the desirability of living in an integrated community. They need only understand that housing markets distribute far more than housing resources. Those markets also, and perhaps more importantly, distribute relative degrees of access to educational, commercial, recreational, civic, medical and labor market opportunity.

Particularly when job growth patterns are so clearly tilted in the geographical favor of whites, the not-so old-fashioned objective of desegregating our communities should be at the top of our policy agenda.

