

2.0 DEMOGRAPHIC AND COMMUNITY PROFILE

The characteristics of a population affect how the community's needs are identified and defined. A critical component of drafting a comprehensive plan that will appropriately address a community's future needs, is to first define and understand the characteristics of the people that live in that community. When planning for land use, housing, economic development—and all the other topics within a comprehensive plan—a fundamental understanding of the community, and who is it made up of, is necessary. This chapter provides information on recent and historic community characteristics that inform the goals and policies contained within each of the elements of the plan.

Many of the tables contained within this chapter are intended to provide baseline data that is relevant to multiple elements of the comprehensive plan. This baseline information includes data on population and population projections, race, ethnicity, education, income, and age.

2.1 Demographic Profile

The characteristics of a population affect how the community's needs are identified and defined. A critical component of drafting a comprehensive plan that will appropriately address a community's future needs, is to first define and understand the characteristics of the people that live in that community. When planning for land use, housing, economic development—and all the other topics within a comprehensive plan—a fundamental understanding of the community, and who is it made up of, is necessary. This chapter provides information on recent and historic community characteristics that inform the goals and policies contained within each of the elements of the plan.

Many of the figures contained within this chapter are intended to provide baseline data that is relevant to multiple elements of the comprehensive plan. This baseline information includes data on population and population projections, race, ethnicity, education, income, and age.

Table 3-1 below indicates that Cranston's population has grown relatively steadily since 1910 up until around 1970, where the growth rate slowed, and the population declined in 1980. The growth resumed in 1990 but at a much slower rate than previously experienced. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Cranston's estimated 2023 population is 82,635 residents¹. This represents a slight decline in population since 2020, estimating only a .4% decrease in population since 2020.

The Rhode Island Division of Planning provides population projections for each community in Rhode Island. Table 3-2 presents the population projections for 2020 through 2040 for the City of Cranston. The projections provide for a much slower growth rate than experienced during a majority of the previous century, but the actual population of the City have exceeded expected population numbers. Table 3-2 shows a projected population of 82,162 people by the year 2030 and Figure 3-1 represents that number was surpassed (at 82,934) in 2020. So while the City is exceeding population projection numbers, its growth rate fluctuates between receding and a very moderate growth rate over the last 50 years.

¹ <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/cranstoncityrhodeisland>

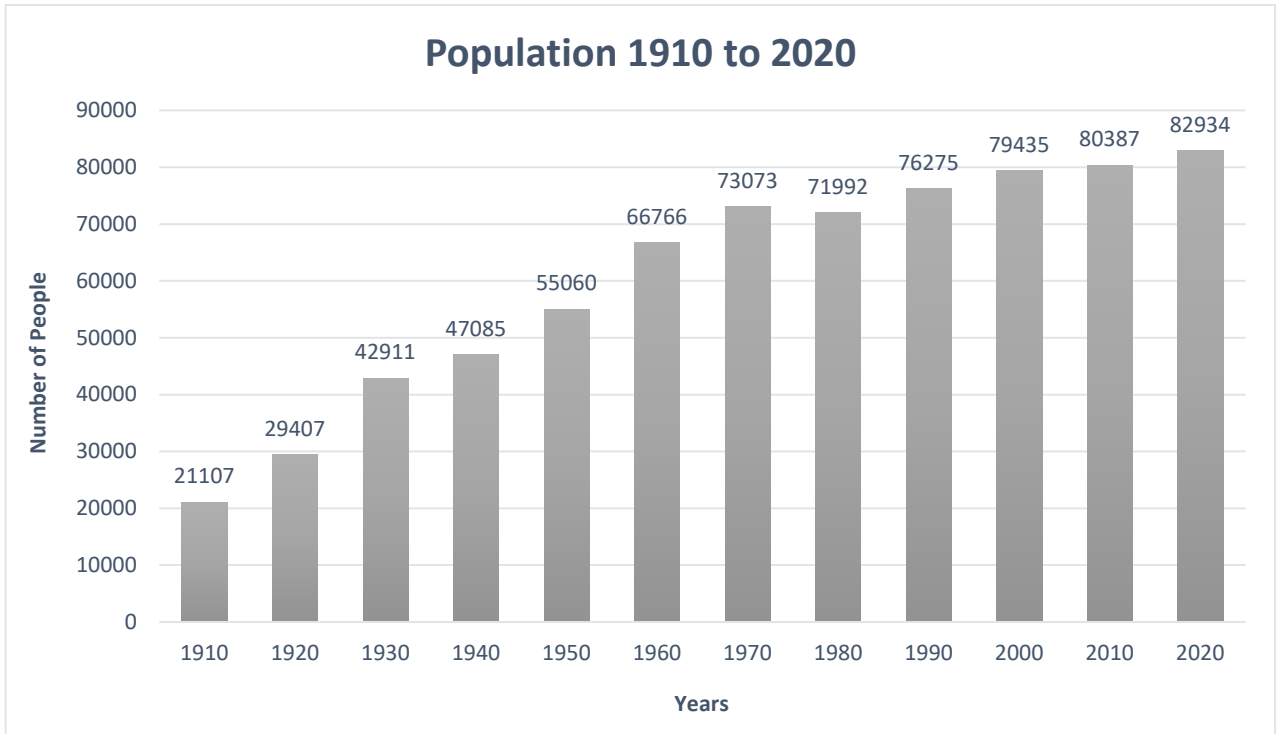


Figure 2-1: Cranston Historical Population Data
 Source: <https://usa.ipums.org/usa/voliii/tPublished.shtml>

Table 2-1: Population Projection, 2020-40				
20-Year Population Projections				
2020	2025	2030	2035	2040
80,304	81,382	82,162	82,486	82,271

Source: Population Projections | Rhode Island Division of Statewide Planning. (2020). Ri.gov.
<https://planning.ri.gov/planning-areas/data-center/ri-data-center-census-data/population-projection>

Tables 2-2 through 2-6 below provide further demographic information related to age, educational attainment, race and ethnicity, and household income.

Table 2-2: Population Age		
Age	Population	% of Population
Under 5	3888	4.7%
5 to 9 years	4197	5.1%
10 to 14 years	4646	5.6%
15 to 19 years	5186	6.3%
20 to 24 years	4971	6.0%
25 to 29 years	5517	6.7%
30 to 34 years	5848	7.1%
35 to 39 years	5794	7.0%
40 to 44 years	5123	6.2%

Table 2-2: Population Age		
Age	Population	% of Population
45 to 49 years	5096	6.1%
50 to 54 years	5685	6.9%
55 to 59 years	5897	7.1%
60 to 64	5999	7.2%
65 to 69	4939	6.0%
70 to 74	3780	4.6%
75 to 79	2578	3.1%
80 to 84	1639	2.0%
85 years and over	2151	2.6%
TOTAL	82,934	

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. "PROFILE OF GENERAL POPULATION AND HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS." Decennial Census, DEC Demographic Profile, Table DP1, 2020, https://data.census.gov/table/DECENNIALDP2020.DP1?q=demographic_profile&g=160XX00US4419180. Accessed on June 28, 2024.

Table 2-3: Population Ethnicity		
Ethnicity	Population	% of Population
Hispanic or Latino (any race)	15,067	18.2%
Not Hispanic or Latino	67,867	81.8%
TOTAL	82,934	

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. "PROFILE OF GENERAL POPULATION AND HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS." Decennial Census, DEC Demographic Profile, Table DP1, 2020, https://data.census.gov/table/DECENNIALDP2020.DP1?q=demographic_profile&g=160XX00US4419180. Accessed on June 28, 2024.

Table 2-4: Population Race		
Race	Population	% of Population
White	56,514	68.1%
Black or African American	46,83	5.6%
American Indian & Alaskan Native	485	0.6%
Asian	5,799	7%
Native Hawaiian & Other Pacific Islander	45	0.1%
Other	8,282	10%
Two or More Races	7,126	8.6%
TOTAL	82,934	

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. "PROFILE OF GENERAL POPULATION AND HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS." Decennial Census, DEC Demographic Profile, Table DP1, 2020, https://data.census.gov/table/DECENNIALDP2020.DP1?q=demographic_profile&g=160XX00US4419180. Accessed on June 28, 2024.

Table 2-5: Population Educational Attainment

	United States Percent	Rhode Island Percent	Cranston Total	Cranston Percent
Less than 9th grade	4.7%	4.8%	2814	4.7%
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	6.1%	5.8%	3127	5.2%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	26.4%	26.9%	15828	26.4%
Some college, no degree	19.7%	18.0%	11962	20.0%
Associate's degree	8.7%	8.2%	5793	9.7%
Bachelor's degree	20.9%	21.5%	11979	20.0%
Graduate or professional degree	13.4%	14.8%	8351	14.0%

Source: US Census Bureau. 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates: Educational Attainment, Population Age 25 and Over

Table 2-6 Household Income in 2022 Inflation Adjusted Dollars

	United States	Rhode Island	Cranston
Less than \$10,000	4.9%	4.6%	4.3%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	3.8%	4.6%	5.6%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	7.0%	6.8%	5.7%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	7.4%	6.5%	5.8%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	10.7%	9.4%	9.0%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	16.1%	14.7%	14.8%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	12.8%	13.0%	13.5%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	17.1%	19.2%	21.1%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	8.8%	10.0%	9.4%
\$200,000 or more	11.4%	11.3%	10.8%
Median income (2022 dollars)	75,149	81,370	83,123

Source: US Census Bureau. 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables: Household Income in the past 12 months Table B19001 and Median Household Income Table B19013 (in 2022 inflation-adjusted dollars)

2.2 Cranston's Development History

2.2.1 The Seventeenth Century

Most of the land that constitutes modern day Cranston was purchased by Roger Williams from the Narragansett Indians in 1638 as part of the Pawtuxet Purchase. The first settlers to the area built a gristmill on the Pawtuxet falls and laid out Arnold Road (modern day Broad Street) connecting it to the Pequot Trail leading to Connecticut. At this time the town was known as Pawtuxet and remained as such for decades until it was officially named Cranston by the General Assembly of Rhode Island in 1754.

2.2.2 The Eighteenth Century

During the 18th century, Cranston experienced gradual population growth and expansion of settlements as more colonists moved into the area. Agriculture became increasingly important, with farmers cultivating the land and establishing farms. Early industries also began to develop, likely

centered around the gristmill on the Pawtuxet falls and potentially including other small-scale manufacturing or processing operations. A significant milestone occurred in 1754 when the General Assembly of Rhode Island officially named the town Cranston, giving it a distinct identity separate from the earlier Pawtuxet settlement. This naming likely reflected the area's growing population and economic importance within the colony. Throughout this period, Cranston transitioned from a sparsely settled frontier area to a more established colonial town with a diversifying economy and expanding infrastructure.

2.2.3 The Nineteenth Century

Cranston experienced significant changes during the 19th century, typical of many New England towns. The City saw substantial industrialization, particularly along the Pawtuxet River, where numerous textile mills were established, including the Cranston Print Works Company founded in 1824. This industrial growth led to a marked increase in population and the expansion of residential areas. Transportation infrastructure also developed significantly, with the construction of new roads and the introduction of railways. The Providence, Hartford and Fishkill Railroad, later part of the New York and New England Railroad, began service through Cranston in 1854, further boosting economic development and population growth. By the end of the century, Cranston had transformed from a rural agricultural community to a bustling industrial town with a diverse economy and growing population.

2.2.4 The Twentieth Century

During the 20th century, Cranston experienced continued urbanization, and suburbanization, leading to the expansion of residential areas and the development of modern infrastructure and public services. This period saw significant improvements in transportation, utilities, and public amenities, which supported the growing population. Additionally, there was a notable shift in the economic focus from traditional industrial activities to more service-oriented sectors, reflecting broader economic trends and the city's adaptation to new economic realities. These developments collectively transformed Cranston into a more urbanized and economically diverse community, enhancing its appeal as a residential and commercial hub within the Providence metropolitan area.