



Kevin Harnack/Freeman Staff

Homes dot the horizon in southwestern Waukesha on Monday. Local officials said Waukesha County is segregated by economics, which contradicts a recent study indicating that communities in Wisconsin are segregated by social comfort.

WEALTH – NOT RACE –

INFLUENCES WHERE PEOPLE LIVE

IN WAUKESHA COUNTY

By **KELLY GILBERT**
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WAUKESHA – Waukesha County is a blend of races without segregation, according to David Cappon, executive director of the Waukesha Housing Authority.

“Waukesha is such a wide community,” Cappon said. “It’s hard to say that there’s any pocket of minority concentration.”

A survey released by the Public Policy Forum claims personal choice is the main reason for segregation in southeastern Wisconsin. The survey sampled 800 households in Milwaukee, Waukesha, Washington and Ozaukee counties to determine why people live where they do.

According to the 2000 census, Waukesha County’s population is 94.2 percent white, 2.6 percent Hispanic or Latino, 1.5 percent Asian and less than 1 percent black.

While participants in the study believed people chose to live by

others of the same race, Anselmo Villarreal, executive director of La Casa de Esperanza, said he believes wealth is the determining factor for where the Hispanic and Latino population live.

“I don’t believe it’s a segregation because it’s more comfortable to live with (your) own culture,” Villarreal said. “I will say that high concentrations are logical because of the economic situation.”

Carmen De LaPaz is originally from Puerto Rico and has lived in Waukesha for 36 years.

“I consider it (Waukesha) my hometown now,” De LaPaz said. “I can function in both languages, and I, myself, am very open but not everyone has those skills.”

De LaPaz is a special projects coordinator at La Casa de Esperanza and agrees with Villarreal.

“The major factor is the economic factor,” she said. “Not everyone has the financial situation where they can buy a nice

house in a nice neighborhood. Or they have to rent an apartment and it’s not the ideal apartment situation.”

De LaPaz explained that the Hispanic culture is family oriented, and often when one family member finds good opportunities in a location, other family members follow.

“Waukesha has been very, very good to us,” De LaPaz said.

While the Hispanic community is part of Waukesha, Cappon has noticed that blacks seem to shy away from the area.

“We have a high percentage of people from Milwaukee County that apply for housing assistance but only 10 percent actually move to Waukesha,” Cappon said. “We see some African Americans come out here and get our voucher and then they take it back to Milwaukee.”

Cappon believes a reason could be because blacks are not comfortable moving to an area where they would be a minority.

Racial population of Waukesha County

| | | |
|---|---------|-------|
| White | 339,995 | 94.2% |
| Hispanic or Latino | 9,503 | 2.6% |
| Asian | 5,340 | 1.5% |
| Black | 2,570 | > 1% |
| Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander | 71 | > 1% |
| Other race | 186 | > 1% |

Source: 2000 U.S. Census Bureau

“If more people felt comfortable, more people would try to move here and find jobs,” he said.

Those who do make the transition appear to be happy, Cappon said.

“What I do know is when African Americans move here, they either have a job already or get one almost immediately,” he said. “The majority stay in the community and like (it) a lot. Very few decide to return back to Milwaukee.”

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