



ENGLEWOOD U.S. CENSUS NEWS

## Englewood's population, housing stock plummets, 2020 census data shows

Though Chicago's population grew 2% from 2010 to 2020, Englewood's fell more than 20%, according to Census Bureau data, and West Englewood's population fell 16%. Those areas had the largest percentage losses in the city.

By Manny Ramos | Sept 26, 2021, 2:06pm CDT



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Vacant lots in the 6400 block of South Wood Street in Chicago's Englewood neighborhood. | Ashlee Rezin/Sun-Times

Census figures show Chicago has slightly grown and become more diverse over the past 10 years, but an examination of neighborhood-level data from the 2020 census shows that while some neighborhoods boomed in the aftermath of the Great Recession, others never did.

Nowhere is this more evident than in Englewood and West Englewood, where the loss of residents coincides with a decline in the number of housing units during the 2010s.

As the city saw **its population grow by 2% between 2010 and 2020**, Englewood's population fell by more than 20% — dropping from 30,654 to 24,369 residents, according to a Sun-Times analysis of Census Bureau data released in August.

West Englewood's population fell from 35,505 in 2010 to 29,647 in 2020, a 16% drop. The two community areas — often grouped together by residents, who call it “greater Englewood” — had the largest percentage loss in the city.

Between 2010 and 2020 Greater Englewood lost 2,856 housing units — the largest loss of any community area in the city, and a figure that towers over Roseland, in third place, which lost just 494 units.



In all, 14 of the city's 77 community areas lost housing units, but the losses were concentrated in 10 South Side areas, which had a combined decline of 4,622 housing units. Of the other four



community areas that lost units, one was on the West Side, two were on the Northwest Side and one on the North Side.

The five community areas with the largest increases, bunched together in the central city, combined to add 25,182 housing units. Those areas were the Near North Side, the Loop, the Near West Side, West Town and the Near South Side.

Asiaha Butler, co-founder of the Resident Association of Greater Englewood, said the significant drop in population and housing units was predictable and is the result of government neglect, noting that **16 public schools have shuttered in Englewood since 2001**.

But the housing crisis also devastated the community.

Predatory lending resulted in an average of 500 foreclosure filings per year from 2007 to 2012 in Englewood, according to the Institute for Housing Studies at DePaul University. Englewood also was a destination for **straw buyer purchasers** committing mortgage fraud.



Asiaha Butler, executive director of the Resident Association of Greater Englewood, shown in June next to a mural at Englewood Market & Resource Days, 6608 S. Halsted St. in Englewood. | Anthony Vazquez/Sun-Times

Those foreclosed houses were left to deteriorate, and in an effort to combat blight, the city began

tearing them down — **creating blocks with vast stretches of vacant lots.**

“It happened personally on my block where homes just vanished,” Butler said. “In particular, it seems like there was aggressive demolitions happening in 2012. It was like waking up and seeing a new wrecking crew every day.”

In 2012, the city approved 199 demolitions in Englewood and 163 demolitions in West Englewood — more than any other community areas that year, according to city data.

Then there was the city's decision in 2013 to **sell off 105 city-owned lots for \$1.1 million** to Norfolk Southern Railway, which wanted to expand its rail facility in Englewood — though that expansion still hasn't been completed. This sale put into motion Norfolk Southern's aggressive tactic of **buying up the homes that weren't vacant.**

“Our local government played a huge role in the destruction of legacy homes that had families living in them since 1948,” Butler said. “These were actual homes that had the homeowners living in them, and our government had no problem in helping push those people out and for what?”

“This project, which still hasn't come to fruition, did not bring jobs, investment or anything else — just destruction,” Butler said.

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Norfolk Southern has demolished more than 100 homes since it began its expansion project.

Geoff Smith, executive director of the Institute for Housing Studies at DePaul University, said the reduction in housing units usually comes in one or two ways. It happens through the de-conversion of single-family homes or with demolitions.

“Englewood and West Englewood, which already had a history of disinvestment, were among the hardest-hit during the housing crisis which led much of its housing stock to fall into foreclosure,” Smith said. “This then moves into abandonment, deterioration of the building and finally demolitions.”







A vacant lot in the 6400 block of South Honore Street in Englewood. According to the 2020 census, among all community areas in Chicago, Englewood and West Englewood community areas suffered the largest drop in population. | Ashlee Rezin/Sun-Times

Smith doesn't believe the decimation of the housing stock and the drop in population was inevitable. In the future, he said, a strategy is needed to stabilize the housing stock in Greater Englewood.

The city has made efforts to increase housing in the area in recent years. That includes the new Montclare Senior Residence of Englewood, 6332 S. Green St., and Hope Manor Village Veterans Housing, 6002 S. Halsted St.

Hope Manor replaced 16 vacant lots, donated by the city, with 12 two-flat and four three-flat buildings. **The award-winning buildings** offer 36 affordable units for families; each comes fully furnished. The city also helped fund the project.

In September, the City Council also approved the sale of 35-city-owned lots for \$1 each to Englewood Phase One. Plans call for a five-story building with 56 rental units — 33 one-bedroom units and, 23 with two bedrooms. And 40 will be reserved for households earning between 30% to 60% of area median income levels, while 14 will receive Section 8 rental assistance.



Greater Englewood also is one of the areas that Mayor Lori Lightfoot's Invest South/West initiative is intended to help.

The idea behind that effort is “to marshal the resources of multiple city departments, community organizations, and corporate and philanthropic partners toward 10 communities on Chicago's South and West sides,” said Eugenia Orr, a spokeswoman for the city's Department of Housing. “As investment returns to the community along with increased resources, it is expected that the community to thrive and grow.”



Vacant lots in the 6400 block of South Honore Street in Chicago's Englewood neighborhood. | Ashlee Rezin/Sun-Times

The Department of Housing also manages several programs that can help homeowners stay in their homes by **helping ease the burden of costly repairs**. The agency said it is also working to increase neighborhood stability in Greater Englewood through its **Micro-Market Recovery Program**, which encourages reinvestment in vacant buildings and supports homeownership — even providing up to \$15,000 in down payment assistance to eligible buyers, as long as they plan to live in the home.

Butler said it's a good program, but the city should promote it more; a program that's not being



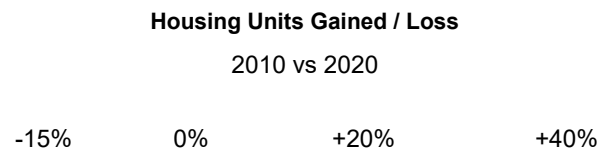
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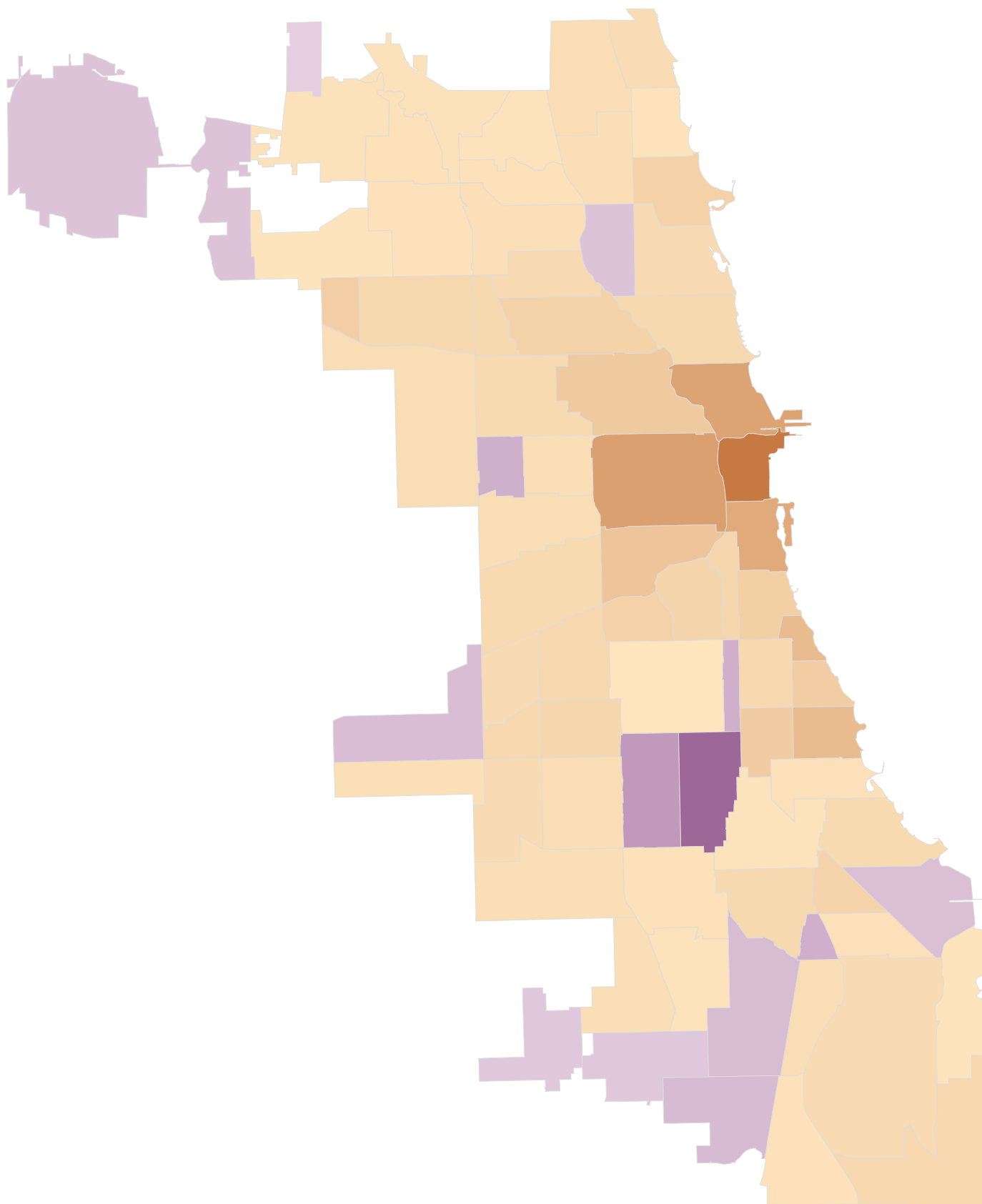
Just as local government has had a hand in the disinvestment of Greater Englewood, Butler said, it also must have a hand in lifting up the community. But she's skeptical that it can.

Even the housing projects sprouting up in the community won't bring the change everyone is hoping for, she said.

The most important thing to do in Englewood is support homeownership by discouraging investors who swallow up vacant buildings but have no plans to move to the neighborhood.

"We need to increase the number of owner-occupy folks here because that is where change is going to come on the block level," Butler said. "I'm living proof if you show you care and turn your home around, then other neighbors will fall in line. But someone owning a building just collecting rent doesn't have an interest in seeing this community thrive."





Source: A Sun-Times analysis of 2020 U.S. Census data

Graphic by Jesse Howe | Sun-Times