

3 • COMMUNITY PROFILE

This chapter provides an overview of socio-economic conditions in Firebaugh. Understanding these conditions allows City policy makers and other agencies and organizations to properly fashion housing programs that will mirror the needs of residents of Firebaugh.

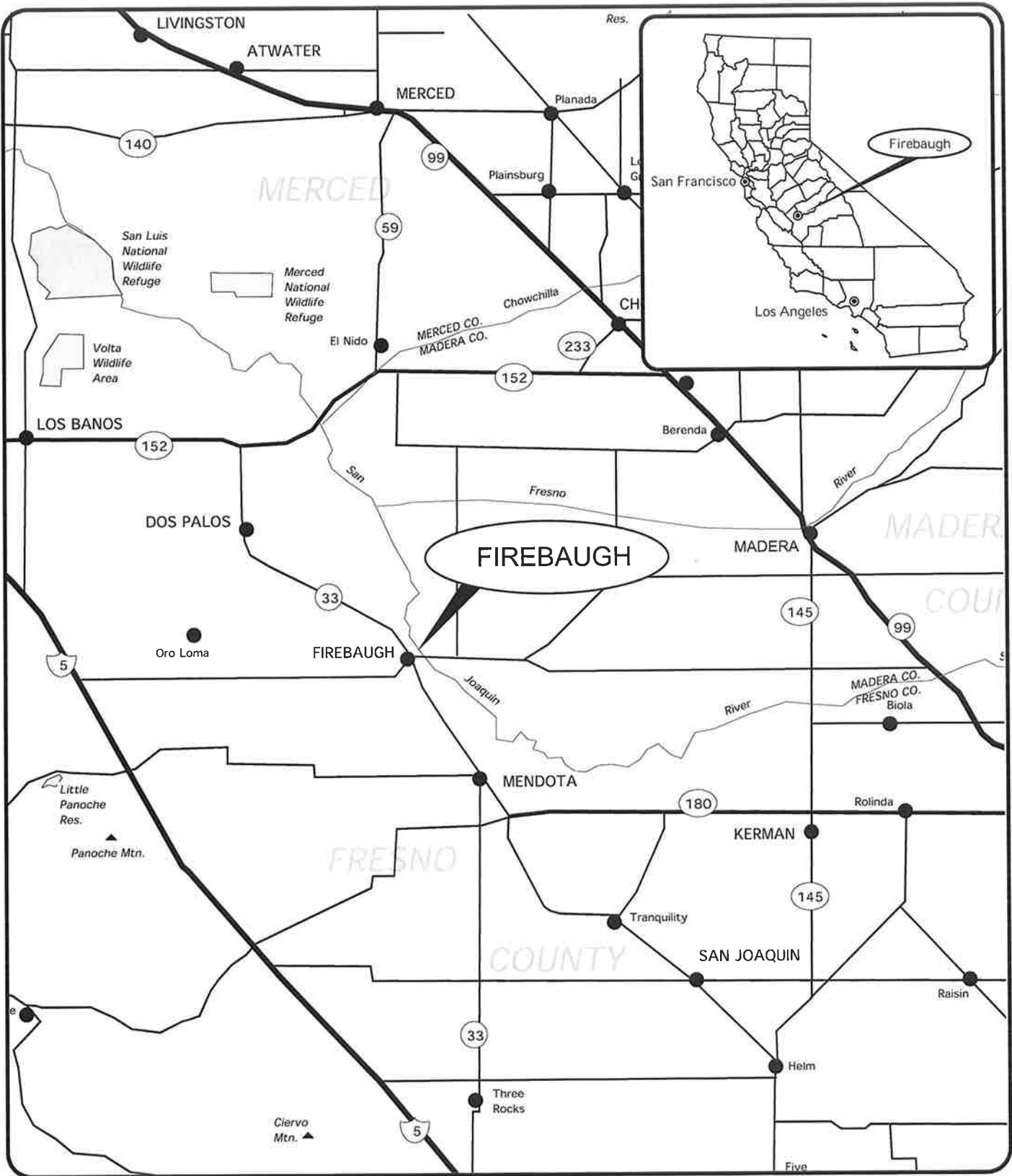
Firebaugh lies in the western side of the central San Joaquin Valley, in Fresno County, adjacent to the San Joaquin River. The foothills of the Coast Range mountains lay about twenty miles southwest of the City. It is approximately 8 miles northwest of the City of Mendota, the closest incorporated city, and about 35 miles northwest of Fresno, the County seat (see Map 3-1).

Firebaugh started as a crossing point for the San Joaquin River, then as a shipping point for the bountiful agricultural fields covering thousands of acres in the surrounding countryside. Agriculture continues to be the dominant industry – according to the 2000 U.S. Census, approximately 26% of the city’s workforce was employed in that sector. Other leading employment sectors include:

- “Wholesale” (16%)
- “Education/Health/Social Services” (16%)
- “Manufacturing” (10%)

In recent years, the local agriculture industry has faced significant challenges, including overseas markets, labor supply and especially water supply. The nearby Westlands Water District has suffered severe cutbacks to water supplies, necessitating the fallowing of thousands of acres of crops. In addition, the seasonal nature of agricultural employment makes it difficult for some households to survive. In 2007 the City’s unemployment rate was 17.3%. A comparison with some neighboring cities is as follows:

Firebaugh:	17.3%
Mendota:	27.3%
San Joaquin:	24.1%
Kerman:	12.5%
Dos Palos:	15.9%
Fresno County	9.7%



CITY OF FIREBAUGH

Regional
Location

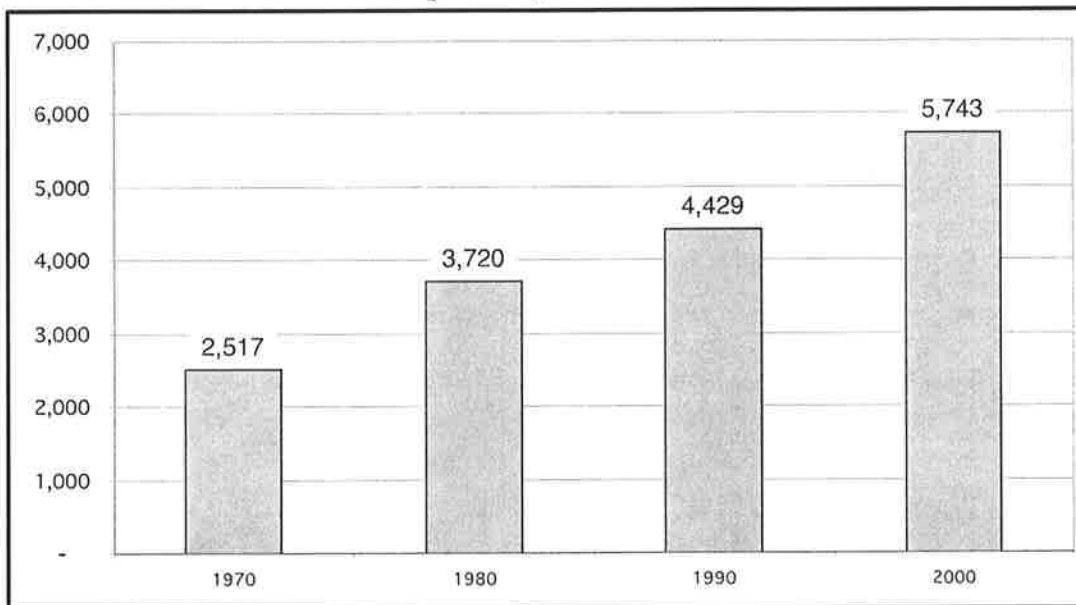
map 3-1

Firebaugh has a lower unemployment rate than some neighboring cities but is significantly higher than Fresno County as a whole.

Population

Firebaugh's population has shown a steady increase during the last 30 years. Chart 3-1 shows population growth since 1970. The population has increased 128% since 1970. Average annual growth from 1970 through 2000 has been 2.8% per year. Information provided by the State of California, Department of Finance indicates that the population has increased to 6,812 in 2008. This indicates a growth rate of 2.2% per year.

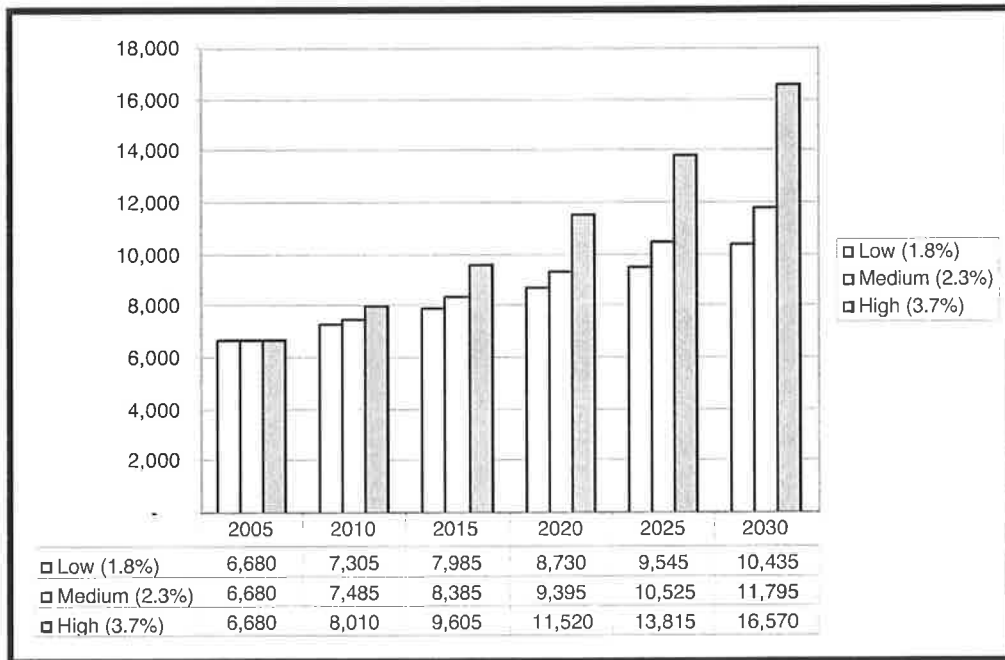
Chart 3-1
Population, 1970 - 2000



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

For the purpose of preparing Firebaugh's General Plan and Housing Element, population projections were developed representing low and high estimates for five year increments through the year 2030. These are displayed in Chart 3-2.

Chart 3-2
Population Projections 2005 - 2030



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, California Department of Finance, and Collins & Schoettler, 2002.

By the year 2010 the estimates forecast a low population of about 7,305 and a high population of 8,010 persons. By the year 2030, the estimates forecast a low population estimate of 10,435 and a high population of 16,570 persons. These estimates reflect at least a doubling of Firebaugh's population during the planning period. The population projections are displayed in Chart 3-2.

Regional Housing Needs Allocation Population Projections

Housing production goals for Firebaugh for the Housing Element planning period (2008 – 2013) are established by the Regional Housing Needs Allocation Plan (RHNA), prepared by the Fresno County Council of Governments. These housing unit goals are based on a variety of socioeconomic factors, including population projections. For the year 2013, the RHNA projects Firebaugh's population will grow to 7,674 – an increase of 862 persons over the 2008 population of 6,812.

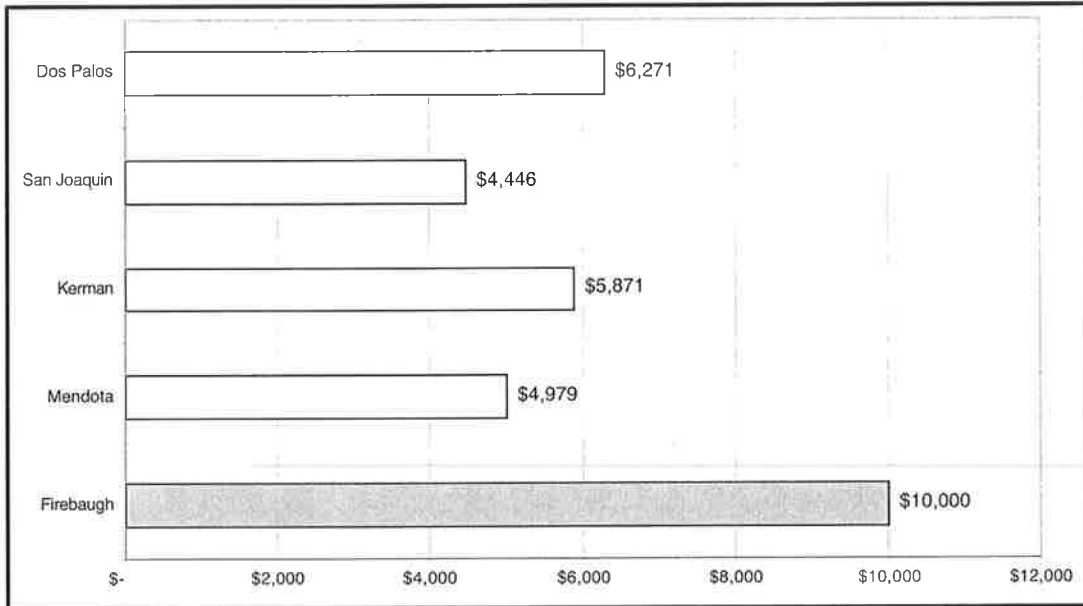
Income

The median household income Firebaugh in 2000 (the most recent year for which data was available) was \$31,533. For comparative purposes, Fresno County’s median household income in 2000 was \$34,725 and the State of California’s was \$47,493.

Retail Sales

Taxable sales are an indicator of a city’s economic vitality. A common measure is the per-capita taxable sales. This is the amount of taxable sales generated by a City, divided by its population. A city with a high per-capita taxable sales figure generally reflects a community with numerous retail and/or durable goods commercial establishments or citizens with higher purchasing power. Chart 3-3 shows per-capita taxable sales for Firebaugh and other area cities 2007. The table shows that Firebaugh’s per-capita taxable sales figure is higher than a number of surrounding communities. While this may appear positive, it also highlights that the City’s funding is vulnerable to swings in the sales of goods – particularly larger purchases such as automobiles and farm equipment. These types of purchases can be severely affected if the local agricultural economy performs poorly.

Chart 3-3
Per Capita Taxable Sales, 2007



Source: California State Board of Equalization, 2001

Employment

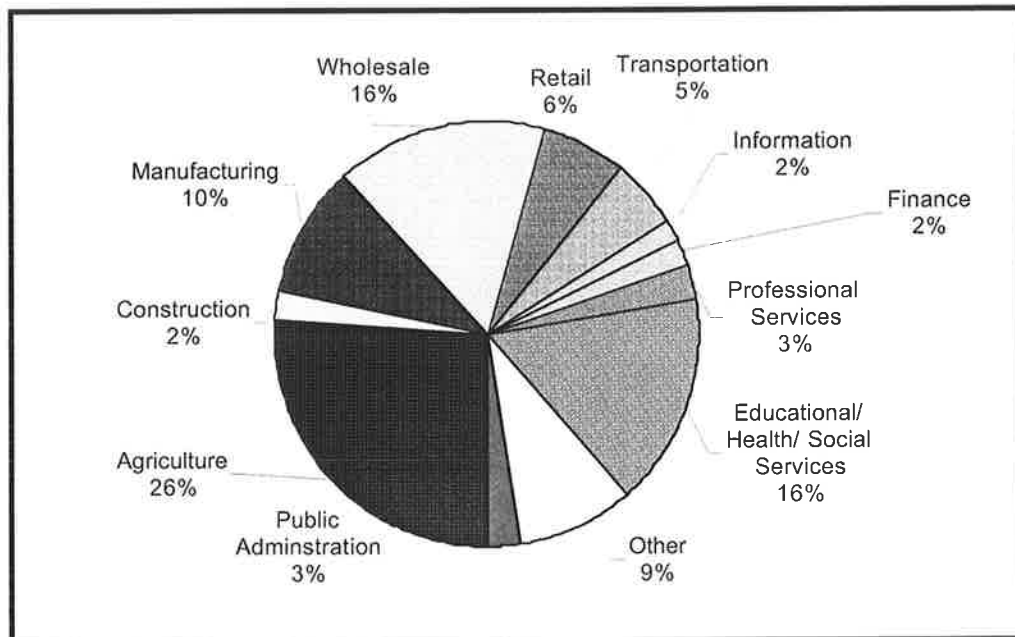
According to the 2000 U.S. Census, Firebaugh’s employment picture is dominated by agricultural-related occupations. About 26 percent of Firebaugh’s labor force was employed in various agricultural occupations. This is not surprising given the City’s location in the midst of one of the world’s most productive agricultural regions.

The next highest employment categories, according to the census, included:

- Wholesale: 16%
- Educational/Health/Social Services: 16%
- Manufacturing: 10%

In the future, Firebaugh will need to further diversify its employment base so that its citizens are not so restricted to one type of income. Agricultural employment can be somewhat volatile as it is subject to a number of external forces, such as the weather, overseas imports, price supports and federal and state agricultural policies.

Chart 3-4
Employment by Industrial Sector

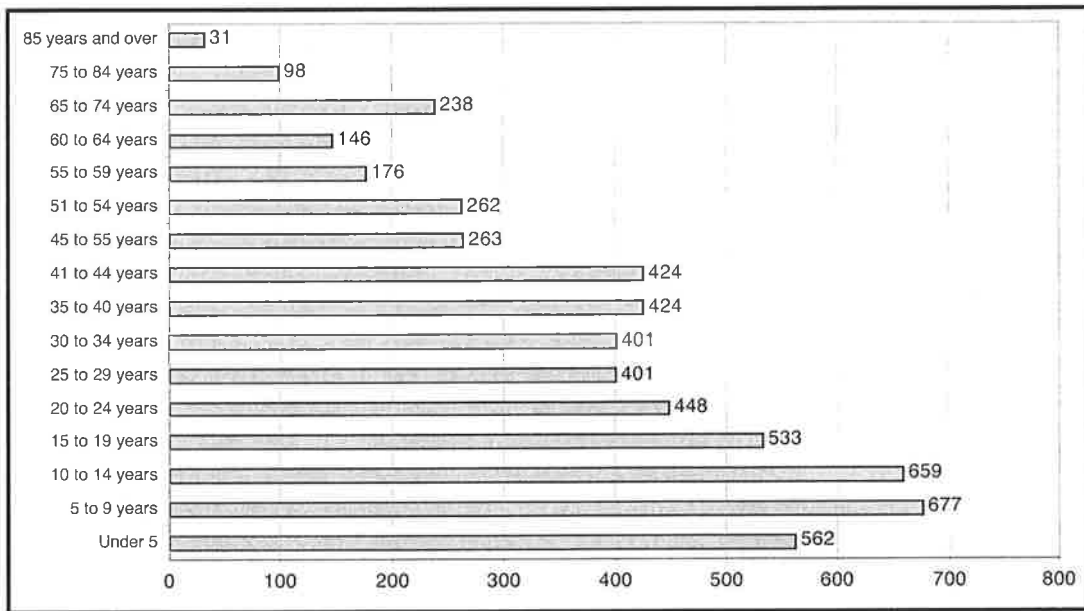


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000

Age

The median age of residents in Firebaugh is 24.9 years, according to the 2000 Census. It is expected that the median age has not changed significantly since that time. The next verification will occur with the 2010 Census. Knowledge of age is important, particularly with respect to women of children-bearing ages (typically 16 to 34). If a community has a significant component within that age range, then a population “boom” might be expected – resulting in an increased demand for housing. The information shows that Firebaugh does not have a significant “bulge” in the child-bearing population, but that a future “bulge” may be taking shape with the 5 to 14-year old age categories.

Chart 3-5
Age Structure



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000.

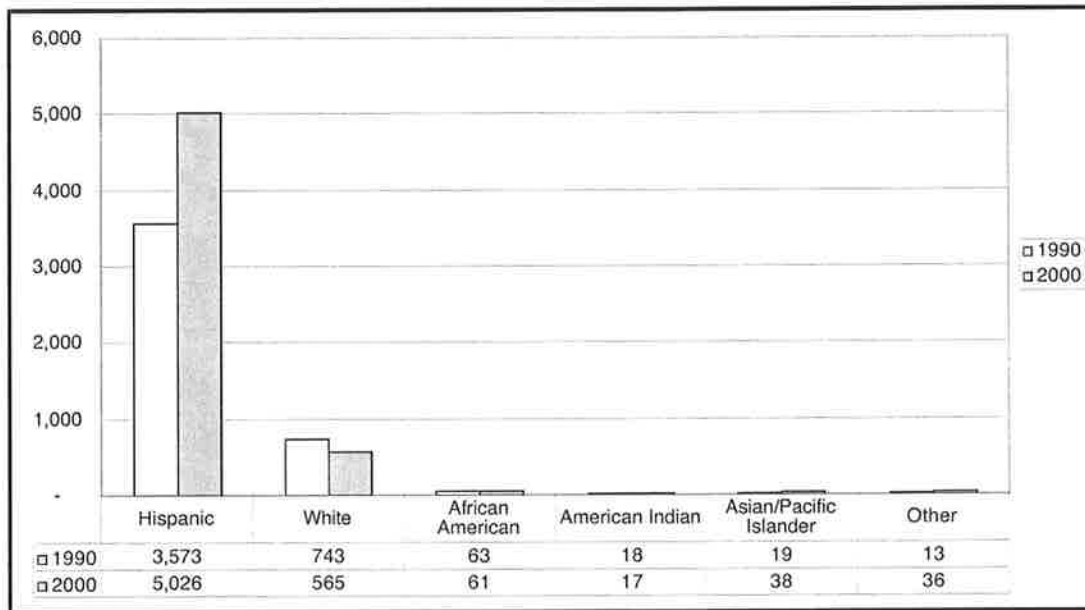
Ethnicity

Firebaugh's population is divided primarily between the Hispanic and white groups. Chart 3-5 shows the ethnic breakdown of the community's population, showing changes from 1990 to 2000 (the most recent year for which data are available).

The percentage of Firebaugh's Hispanic population has grown considerably - from 80 percent of the city's population in 1990 to over 87 percent in 2000. Correspondingly, the white population has dropped from nearly 17 percent in 1990 to about ten percent of the

population in 2000. Other ethnic groups accounted for less than three percent of Firebaugh’s population in the year 2000.

Chart 3-6
Ethnicity Trends 1990 - 2000



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1990, 2000