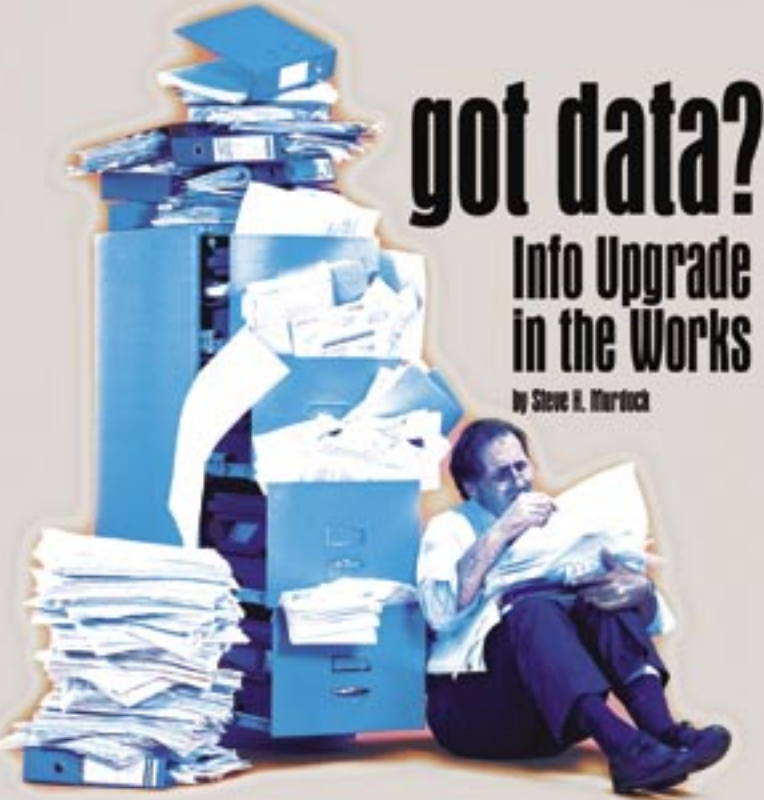


A Reprint from *Tierra Grande*

got data?

Info Upgrade in the Works

by Steve H. Marduck



Real estate analysts and other users of census data often complain that these data quickly become dated. The problem is many items on a decennial census have relevance for only a few years. Although data are collected in years between censuses, statistically valid data is limited to the largest population areas.

The rich body of data from the 2000 Census of Housing, which detailed units, their characteristics, household income and other factors for geographic areas as small as individual blocks, is already dated. Population estimates and simple observation suggest that things have changed in the post-2000 period in many Texas market areas, but there are few sources to track such changes.

Fortunately, help is available, and more is on the way thanks to the American Community Survey (ACS). The ACS is a comprehensive effort by the U.S. Bureau of the Census to replace the long form administered to one in seven people during the decennial census with data from an annual large-sample survey. When fully implemented, the ACS sample will include more than three million households per year.

The ACS will provide annualized data for all areas with 65,000 or more persons, annual data based on three-year averages for areas with between 20,000 and 65,000, and annual data based on five-year averages for areas as small as individual census tracts. Data for tract levels will not be available until 2010 but will be available annually each year thereafter.

**Data less than a year old
will be available for all types
of marketing, investment and
other forms of analysis.**

Right now, however, data are available that provide substantial detail on what has happened in a number of market areas of the state since 2000. Earlier this year, 2003 data for 16 counties (Bexar, Cameron, Collin, Dallas, Denton, El Paso, Fort Bend, Galveston, Harris, Hidalgo, Lubbock, Montgomery, Nueces, Tarrant, Travis and Williamson) and related metropolitan areas were released. Data are based on a combined sample of more than 22,000 Texas households.

These results show substantial post-2000 changes and differences among metropolitan areas for key housing variables. For example, they show the number of housing units increasing by 6.1 percent in the state from 2000 to 2003. The increase was 12.6 percent in Austin, 7.8 percent in Dallas, 7.1 percent in Fort-Worth Arlington, 7.4 percent in Houston and 6.1 percent in San Antonio.

The data further show that the median value of owner-occupied housing (all existing housing as reported from homeowners' estimates of the value of their homes) increased 18.6 percent from 2000 to 2003 for the state as a whole. Values increased 18.8 percent in Austin-San Marcos, 22.3 percent in Dallas, 23 percent in Fort Worth-Arlington, 27.9 percent in Dallas and 14.8 percent in San Antonio.

Median monthly mortgage payments increased 19.1 percent statewide between 2000 and 2003. Meanwhile, payments increased 16 percent in Austin, 14.7 percent in Dallas, 23 percent in Fort Worth-Arlington, 22.3 percent in Houston and 14.6 percent in San Antonio. Absolute dollar values of monthly mortgage payments in 2003 varied from \$1,422 in Austin-San Marcos to \$1,385 in Dallas. Values were \$1,294 in Houston, \$1,262 in Fort Worth-Arlington and \$1,043 in San Antonio. The statewide average was \$1,166.

Such data suggest that housing in areas where there were signs of a slowing economy in the early 2000s, such as the Austin area, did not respond immediately to the slowdown. A substantial number of units continued to be built, and relatively high property values were retained.

The data indicate a continuing trend toward larger, more expensive units. Statewide, all housing units with fewer than seven rooms either declined or increased less than 10 percent from 2000 to 2003. At the same time, units with eight rooms increased by 12.7 percent, and those

with nine or more rooms increased by 15.4 percent.

The number of owner-occupied units valued less than \$150,000 increased by less than 30 percent while units in all categories valued more than \$150,000 increased by at least 44 percent.

These increases are not a result of larger families needing larger houses; demographic data show a decline in average household size. In addition, data from the ACS show the number of units with more than 1.5 occupants per room decreased

21 percent from 2000 to 2003. Housing units with 1.01 to 1.5 occupants per room increased only 0.2 percent, and the number with one or fewer occupants per room increased nearly 5 percent.

The examples of 2003 data presented here are just a sampling of the wealth of data that will eventually be available. Data less than a year old will be available on an ongoing basis for all types of marketing, investment and other forms of analysis.

This will represent a quantum leap in data availability for real estate analysts and others wishing to establish current trends for periods between censuses. ➤

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