

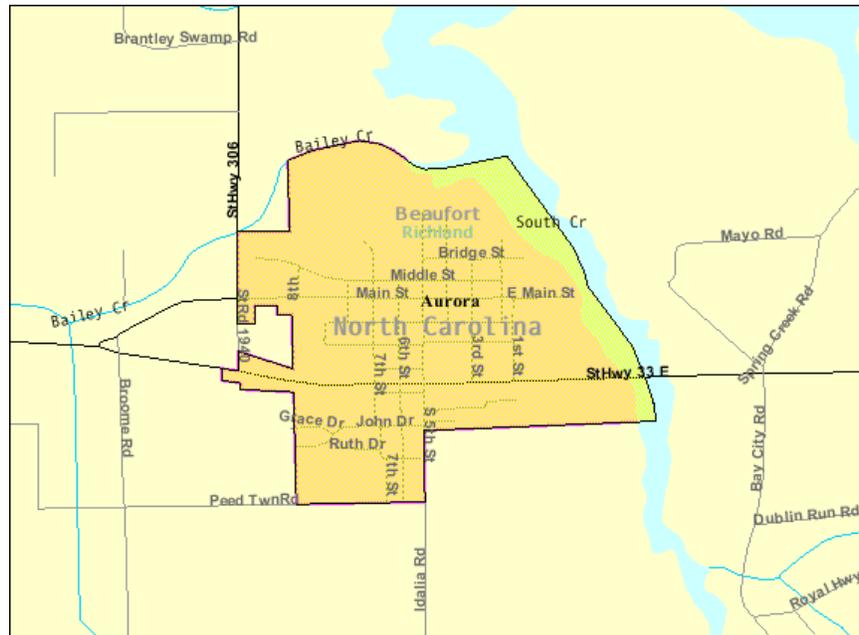
AURORA, NC¹

Community Profile²

PEOPLE AND PLACES

Regional orientation

Aurora (35.31° N, 76.79° W) is located in Beaufort County, North Carolina (Map 1) (USGS 2008). The town is situated south of the Pamlico River. (*Note: This community was included in the profiling process because of its role in the seafood processing industry, rather than the importance of harvesting activities to the community.*)



Map 1. Location of Aurora, NC (US Census Bureau 2000)

Historical/Background

In 1663, North Carolina was granted to political friends of King Charles II. These men were known as the Lords Proprietors of Carolina and they promoted the settlement of this state. Settlers from Virginia began migrating to the Albemarle region of eastern Carolina. As this area became inhabited, settlers began to move farther south. By the 1690's settlers began to live on the Pamlico River. In 1696 the county of Bath was established and in 1705 the present Beaufort County was established as Pampticough precinct (Mason 2007). After migration from the Virginia Colony began, North Carolina was divided into three major precincts: Albemarle, Bath, and Old Clarendon. Eventually, each precinct or county was divided and sub-divided. Bath

¹ These community profiles have been created to serve as port descriptions in Environmental Impact Statements (EISs) for fisheries management actions. They also provide baseline information from which to begin research for Social Impact Assessments (SIAs). Further, they provide information relevant to general community impacts for National Standard 8 of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) and information on minorities and low income populations for Executive Order (E.O.) 12898 on Environmental Justice.

² For purposes of citation please use the following template: "Community Profile of *Town, ST*. Prepared under the auspices of the National Marine Fisheries Service, Northeast Fisheries Science Center. For further information contact Lisa.L.Colburn@noaa.gov."

County was originally formed in 1696, and was then broken down into Pitt County. In 1712, another division resulted in Beaufort County. The lands west of the original Beaufort County, which later included Pitt, were largely unexplored as late as 1729 (Ross 1997). Aurora was named after a local newspaper, the *Aurora Borealis*; previous to that it was called Betty Town. [Beaufort County](#) calls itself the waterfront capital of North Carolina.

Demographics³

According to Census 2000 data, Aurora, North Carolina had a total population of 583, down 10.8% from a reported population of 654 in 1990 (US Census Bureau 1990). Of this 2000 total, 48.0% were males and 52.0% were females. The median age was 42.9 years and 73.9% of the population was 21 years or older while 25.4% were 62 or older.

Like many small communities, Aurora (Figure 1) experienced a drop in the population of residents between 20-29 years old, who are likely to leave in search of jobs or to go to college. Interestingly, Aurora had a large number of males in the 10-19 age category. Aurora may also have a slightly aging population, with consistently high percentages of residents in the 60-69, 70-79, and 80+ age groups.

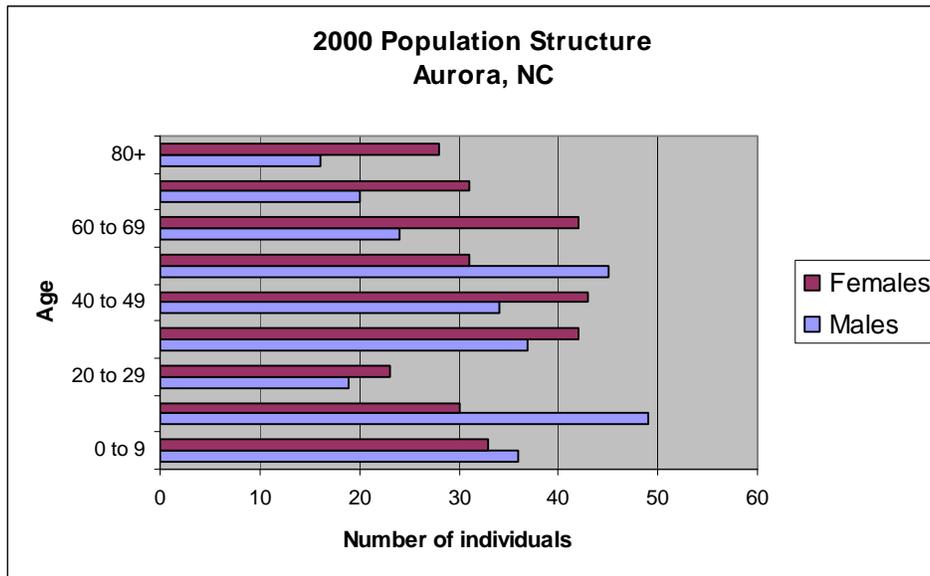


Figure 1. Aurora's population structure by sex in 2000 (US Census Bureau 2000)

The majority of the population was white (51.6%), with 47.3% of residents Black or African American, 0.2% Native American, no residents Asian, and no residents Pacific Islander or Hawaiian (Figure 2). Only 1.4% of residents identified themselves as Hispanic/Latino (Figure 3). Residents traced their backgrounds to a number of different ancestries including: English (7.4%), Irish (3.9%), and "other ancestries" (38.6%). With regard to region of birth, 75.7% were born in North Carolina, 21.1% were born in a different state and 2.1% were born outside of the U.S. (including 0.9% who were not United States citizens).

³ While mid-term estimates are available for some larger communities, data from the 2000 Census are the only data universally available for the communities being profiled in the Northeast. Thus for cross-comparability we have used 2000 data even though these data may have changed significantly since 2000 for at least some communities.

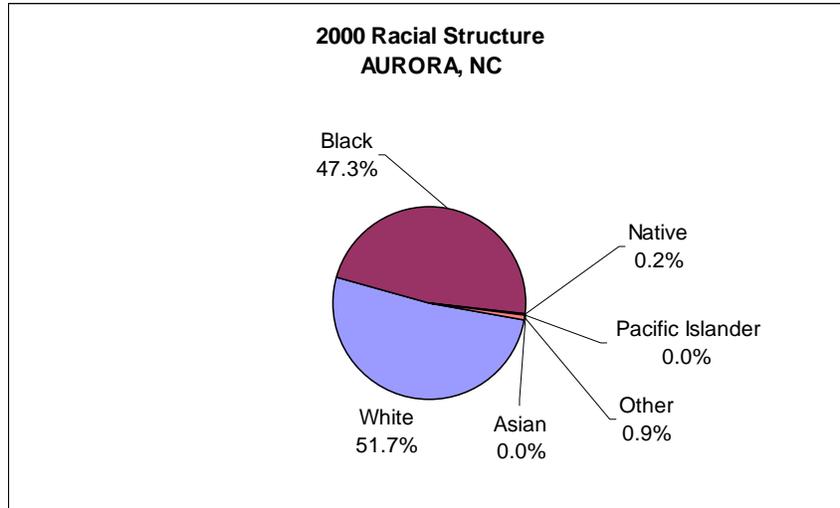


Figure 2. Racial Structure in 2000 (US Census Bureau 2000)

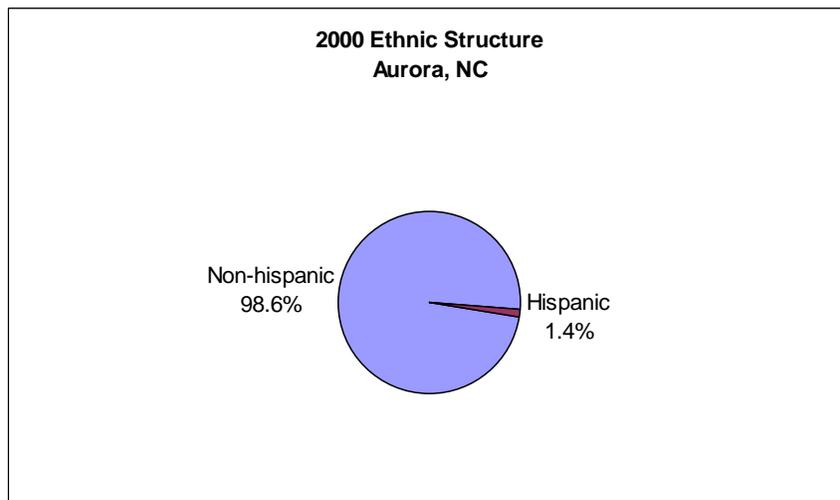


Figure 3. Ethnic Structure in 2000 (US Census Bureau 2000)

For 96.6% of the population, only English was spoken in the home, leaving 3.4% in homes where a language other than English was spoken, including 2.2% of the population who spoke English less than “very well” according to the 2000 Census.

Of the population 25 years and over, 75.4% were high school graduates or higher, and 8.6% had a bachelor’s degree or higher. Again of the population 25 years and over, 11.8% did not reach ninth grade, 12.8% attended some high school but did not graduate, 39.6% completed high school, 23.3% had some college with no degree, 4.0% received an associate’s degree, 7.0% earned a bachelor’s degree, and 1.6% received either a graduate or professional degree.

Although religious percentages are not available through U.S. Census data, according to the Association of Religion Data Archive (ARDA) in 2000, the religion with the highest number of congregations in Beaufort County is Christian Churches and Churches of Christ, with 19 congregations and 5,465. Other prominent congregations in the county were Southern Baptist Convention (13 with 3,000 adherents), United Methodist Church (13 with 3,216 adherents), Original Free Will Baptists (12 with 1,674 adherents), and Church of God (9 with 1,069

adherents). The total numbers of adherents to any religion was down 1.5% from 1990 (ARDA 2000).

Issues/Processes

According to fishermen and fish consumers in the Albemarle-Pamlico Peninsula region, increasing pollution is leading to increasing degradation of fisheries in the Albemarle and Pamlico sounds. Polluted fish are more than just a health threat; they are a threat to a major part of the region's economy. Fish constitute the livelihood for the many area residents involved in commercial fishing (Washington Daily News Staff 2006). Many in the area are also concerned about fishing stocks adversely impacted through bycatch and through habitat destruction from trawling.⁴

Crab fishermen along North Carolina's eastern coast have also seen an increase in competition from the global market, with an influx of imported crab meat from around the world. Many local Crab processors are unable to compete and are losing profit (NCSG 2002).

Cultural attributes

The [Annual Fossil Festival](#) is held in Aurora in May. The festival has activities throughout the day and ends with a street dance in the evening. The event includes exhibits by the North Carolina Fossil Club, Aurora Fossil Club, American Fossil Federation, New Jersey Paleontological Society, North Carolina Shell Club, Catawba Valley Gem and Mineral Club, and the Calvert Marine Museum Fossil Club. Representatives from the Smithsonian Institution are also in attendance. PCS Phosphate provides free bus tours of their mine and their exhibition tent. [The Aurora Fossil Museum](#) is a popular local attraction.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Current Economy

Manufacturing is the basis of the Beaufort County economy. Over 25% of the workforce is employed in manufacturing. PCS Phosphate operates a large phosphate mining operation near Aurora, and produces the phosphoric acid used in soft drinks (Beaufort County Economic Development Commission 2006). [PCS Phosphate](#) has 1,068 employees, and is the largest employer in the county. A wide variety of metalworking and fabrication operations operate here, as well as several plastic injection molding operations.

Adjacent counties also host various manufacturers, pharmaceutical industries, paper mills, and aircraft overhaul facilities. Tourism is a rapidly growing economic force in Beaufort County. The many water front communities have attracted a number of families who choose to live here but work in professional occupations in neighboring counties (Beaufort County Economic Development Commission 2006).

According to the U.S. Census 2000⁵, 56.7% (237 individuals) of the total population 16 years of age and over were in the labor force (see Figure 4), of which 1.7% were unemployed, none were in the Armed Forces, and 55.0% were employed.

⁴ Profile review comment, Tom Thompson, Executive Director, Beaufort County EDC, 705 Page Road, Washington, NC 27889, October 26, 2007

⁵ Again, Census data from 2000 are used because they are universally available and offer cross-comparability among communities. Some statistics, particularly median home price, are likely to have changed significantly since 2000.

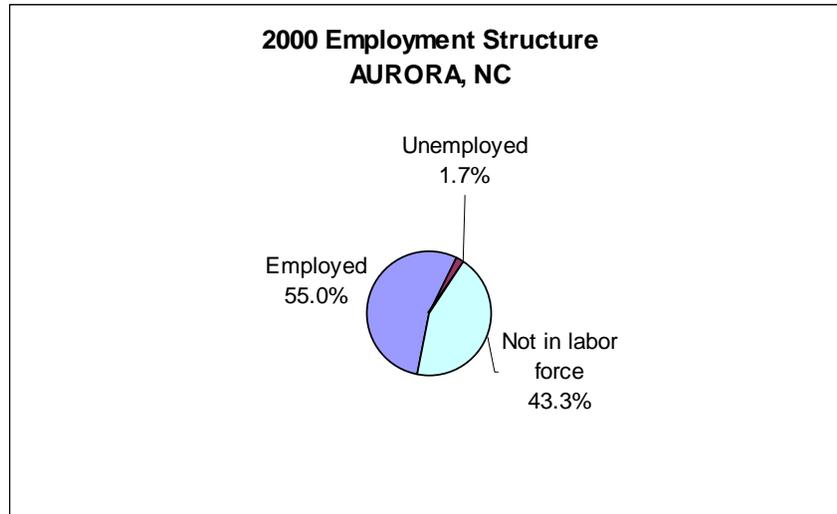


Figure 4. Employment Structure in 2000 (US Census Bureau 2000)

According to Census 2000 data, jobs in the census grouping which includes agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining accounted for 32 positions or 13.9% of all jobs. Self employed workers, a category where fishermen might be found, accounted for 24 positions or 10.4% of jobs. Manufacturing (18.7%), educational, health and social services (15.7%), retail trade (14.3%), and arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services (7.8%) were the primary industries.

Median household income in Aurora was \$25,917 (up 46.9% from \$17,639 in 1990 [US Census Bureau 1990]) and median per capita income was \$13,252. For full-time year round workers, males made approximately 67.7% more per year than females.

The average family in Aurora consisted of 2.81 persons. With respect to poverty, 15.5% of families (down from 22.6% in 1990 [US Census Bureau 1990]) and 20.9% of individuals were below the U.S. Census poverty threshold. This threshold is \$8,794 for individuals and ranges from \$11,239 through \$35,060 for families, depending on number of persons (2-9) (US Census Bureau 2000b). In 2000, 46.4% of all families (of any size) earned less than \$35,000 per year.

In 2000, Aurora had a total of 316 housing units of which 83.9% were occupied and 57.3% were detached one-unit homes. Only 12.6% of these homes were built before 1940. Mobile homes accounted for 17.8% of housing units; 95.1% of detached units had between 2 and 9 rooms. In 2000, the median cost for a home in this area was \$63,500. Of vacant housing units, 17.6% were used for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use. Of occupied units, 44.9% were renter occupied.

Government

Aurora is a municipality governed by Beaufort County. Beaufort County's government consists of seven commissioners and one county manager (Beaufort County 2006).

Fishery involvement in government

Information on fishery involvement in government in Aurora is unavailable through secondary data collection.

Institutional

Fishing associations

[The North Carolina Fisheries Association](#) has been supporting fishing families since 1952, with the goal “to celebrate and preserve commercial fishing families, heritage, and seafood” in North Carolina. This is achieved through lobbying federal, state, and local legislators and through public awareness projects.

Fishing assistance centers

The Trade Adjustment Assistance for Farmers (TAA) program has provided business education to shrimpers in the state to assist them in recent changes in the market of shrimp, and also provided some training to shrimpers to exit the business if they chose (NCSG 2005).

Other fishing related organizations

Information on other fishing related organizations in Aurora is unavailable through secondary data collection.

Physical

Aurora is located on the Pamlico River. Steamers and cargo ships no longer use the river, but it still carries hundreds of boats per year. There is also an estuary, where the river meets the sea (Beaufort County 2006a). Aurora is 89 miles west of I-40, and 78 miles west of I-95 (MapQuest 2006). The closest airports are [New Bern/Craven County Regional Airport](#) which is about 21 miles away, and the [Pitt Greenville Airport](#), which is 41 miles away. Aurora is approximately 21 miles from Vandemere, 29 miles from Washington, NC, 52 miles from Greenville, and 137 miles from Raleigh by car (MapQuest 2006). A [ferry](#) runs between Aurora and Bayview, crossing the Pamlico River. Free docking is available along the Pamlico River.

INVOLVEMENT IN FISHERIES⁶

Commercial

Beaufort Fisheries opened in 1934 in Aurora and is the oldest existing industry in the area. Beaufort Fisheries is now the only menhaden plant operating in the state, and one of only two operating along the Atlantic seaboard. Menhaden, an oily, high-protein fish, is caught by company vessels and brought to the docks along Taylors Creek to be processed into fish meal and oil. Fish meal is used as a protein component in many animal feeds. The fish oil is used in margarine, cosmetics, paints, and for human consumption. The omega-free fatty acids found in the oil help prevent heart disease and some cancers. Annual production at Beaufort Fisheries is

⁶ In reviewing the commercial landings data several factors need to be kept in mind. 1) While both federal and state landings are included, some states provide more detailed data to NMFS than others. For example, shellfish may not be included or data may be reported only by county and not by port. 2) Some communities did not have individual port codes until more recently. Before individual port codes were assigned, landings from those ports were coded at the county level or as an aggregate of two geographically close small ports. Where landings were coded at the county level they cannot be sorted to individual ports for those earlier years, e.g., prior to 2000. 3) Where aggregated codes were used, those aggregate codes may still exist and be in use alongside the new individual codes. Here the landings which are still assigned to the aggregate port code cannot be sorted into the individual ports, so port level data are only those which used the individual port code. 4) Even when individual port codes exist, especially for small ports, landings may be coded at the county level. Here again it is impossible to disaggregate these to a port level, making the port level landings incomplete. 5) In all these cases, the per port data in this profile may under report the total level of landings to the port, though all landings are accounted for in the overall NMFS database.

estimated at 10,000 tons of meal and 300,000 to 450,000 gallons of oil. Today the company has about 39 employees and operates two menhaden vessels (Insiders.com).

Also located in Aurora are the Austin Bros Fisheries, Aurora Packing Company, and Bay City Crab Company. Between the three fish processing and packaging plants in Aurora, there are 62 employees. There is not however, a commercial fishing industry in Aurora.

There were no commercial landings in Aurora from 1997-2006 since there is not a commercial fishing industry here. Generally, this was less than the value of landings for home ported vessels, indicating that some vessels landing their catch elsewhere list Aurora as their home port. The number of vessels with Aurora as their home port changed only slightly while the level of fishing for home ported vessels were much more erratic. Home port landings have generally ranged from approximately \$0.5 million to over \$1.0 million though there were no federal landings reported for home ported vessels in 2000 (see Table 1).

Vessels by Year⁷

Table 1. All columns represent vessel permits or landings value combined between 1997-2006

Year	# Vessels (home ported)	# Vessels (owner's city)	Level of fishing home port (\$)	Level of fishing landed port (\$)
1997	2	3	confidential	0
1998	2	2	confidential	0
1999	1	1	confidential	0
2000	1	2	0	0
2001	2	4	confidential	0
2002	2	3	confidential	0
2003	3	2	1,159,785	0
2004	2	2	confidential	0
2005	2	2	confidential	0
2006	2	2	confidential	0

Vessels home ported = No. of permitted vessels with location as homeport

Vessels (owner's city) = No. of permitted vessels with location as owner residence⁸

Level of fishing home port (\$) = Landed value of fisheries associated with home ported vessels

Level of fishing landed port (\$) = Landed value of fisheries landed in location

Confidential = Value information is confidential in ports with fewer than three vessels

Recreational

Aurora also offers recreational fishing. There are charter services available, including Atlantis Charters and Crystal Coast Flyfishing, as well as [Bounty Hunter Guide Service](#) and [Pamlico Sound Charters](#). This area has a vibrant catch-and-release recreational fishery for red drum; sport fishing for tarpon is also significant.⁹

⁷ Numbers of vessels by owner's city and homeport are as reported by the permit holder on permit application forms. These may not correspond to the port where a vessel lands or even spends the majority of its time when docked.

⁸ The Owner-City from the permit files is technically the address at which the owner receives mail concerning their permitted vessels, which could reflect the actual location of residence, the mailing address as distinct from residence, owner business location, or the address at which a subsidiary receives mail about the permits.

⁹ Profile review comment, Tom Thompson, Executive Director, Beaufort County EDC, 705 Page Road, Washington, NC 27889, October 26, 2007

Subsistence

Information on subsistence fishing in Aurora is either unavailable through secondary data collection or the practice does not exist.

FUTURE

There are currently plans to open a large ethanol plant in Aurora in early 2008 (Farm Press Ed Staff 2006) which will employ around 74 people. This will probably be the largest ethanol plant on the East Coast when it is completed (Cox 2005).

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