

## Education, opportunities draw Asians to Dallas-Fort Worth

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**CARROLLTON** — To gauge the explosive growth of the Asian population in North Texas over the past 10 years — an increase of almost 145,000 people, a 75 percent jump — take a drive by the Shops at Old Denton.

Five years ago, the shopping center's largest tenant, Mervyn's department store, sat empty following the company's exit from Texas, and many of the smaller stores were barely hanging on. New shops were sprouting across Old Denton Road, in the shadow of the [Walmart](#), and shoppers barely trickled in to the older center.

And then Super H Mart arrived at the intersection of Old Denton and Trinity Mills Road, and in three years, the Shops at Old Denton has been transformed into a vibrant center of commerce where the signs glow in English and Korean and a parking place can be tough to find at 9 on a Saturday night.

A couple of miles away, another Asian shopping area — with most of the shops Vietnamese — sits across the street from a plaza catering to a mostly Hispanic clientele, the two groups that demographers say will fuel U.S. growth in coming decades.

Across the region, retail enclaves serve Pakistani patrons, Asian Indians, Chinese, Filipinos and many of the smaller groups — Cambodians and Laotians, Bhutanese, Hmongs and Bengalis from [Bangladesh](#). The ethnic diversity is dazzling.

"We have businesses everywhere — a Chinatown on Greenville, a Laotian town, a Korea town," said Galileo Jumaoas, president of the Greater Dallas Asian American Chamber of Commerce.

"Right here," he said, standing in one of the traditional centers for Asian business on Harry Hines Boulevard, "we've seen the number of Pakistani businesses increase 30 percent over the last few years."

A population boom has that kind of effect, and Asian numbers are soaring in the Dallas-Fort Worth area.

According to the 2010 census, the Asian population in Dallas County increased 35 percent over the decade, from 88,369 to almost 120,000. [Tarrant County](#) was up 60 percent, from 52,594 to 84,561. Growth was even more dramatic in the northern suburbs, with Denton County's Asian population increasing almost 150 percent, from 17,444 to 43,478, and Collin County's climbing from 34,047 to 87,752, a jump of almost 160 percent.

"We tell the people in Dallas that to build the southern sector, you need to build more colleges and universities," Jumaoas said. "Asians gravitate to that."

And even though Asian commercial centers can be almost anywhere, that doesn't mean the surrounding neighborhood is mostly Asian, he said.

Where do they live?

"Mostly in the north," Jumaoas said, "near the education centers."

He pointed to a Chinese community in Far [North Dallas](#), around the [University of Texas at Dallas](#), and to various groups that have settled near the [University of Texas at Arlington](#) and the [University of North Texas](#) in Denton.

Dr. Edward T. Rincon, a demographer in Dallas, put it succinctly.

"You don't need to live in an ethnic neighborhood to know the places to go that reinforce your sense of culture," he said.

Dr. Steve Murdock, director of the Hobby Center for the Study of Texas at [Rice University](#) and former head of the U.S. Census Bureau, said he sees three major things across the state that attract Asian settlement.

"Areas that have high tech, like Williamson County, have high Asian populations. You see it too in university counties, like with [Texas Tech](#). And you find growing populations around major medical facilities, all the way down to South Texas," Murdock said.

"There's a clear link with employment, and you see that in the big change we had in Texas over the decade, where we went from having the Vietnamese as the largest group to Asian Indians, who are very involved in high-tech fields," he said.

The experts might quibble over which of those factors comes first, but none denies the importance of each one.

[Michael Lee](#), chairman of the Greater Dallas Asian American Chamber of Commerce, points toward economic opportunity in high-tech and other technological fields but also for entrepreneurs and business owners.

Jumaoas gives the edge to education, but with jobs a very close second. Rincon echoes that.

"I would probably point more to the education institutions, which have been very aggressive in attracting people. The schools have done a pretty good job of recruiting Asian students," he said. "And the entrepreneurship around here offers a lot of opportunities."

Rincon, who surveys various ethnic communities every few years, said the 2007 numbers show more than 38,000 Asian-owned businesses in the Dallas-Fort Worth metropolitan area and estimated the number now at more than 40,000.

And a number of large Asian corporations have placed their U.S. headquarters in the Dallas area, including [Samsung](#) Telecommunications America. Hyundai Merchant Marine recently opened its North and South American headquarters in [Las Colinas](#).

Lee said he came to the United States from Korea 30 years ago for the opportunities available here. For many Asians, both in the United States and overseas, those same opportunities prove a powerful draw.

"For someone from the Korean community coming to Dallas, the cost of living is significant," Lee said. "They come and they see the kind of house they can buy, a luxury house, and they can buy a business here.

"They have opportunities. And they know Texas is a very large trade partner with both China and Korea."

With [Mike Rawlings](#), who has a strong background in business, now Dallas' mayor, Lee sees even more reasons for optimism.

"When Mike Rawlings took office, he presented his goals, which I really like," Lee said. "The first is diversity, the second opportunity and the third excellence. Those are great concepts, and we'd like to work with him on that.

"As long as he can help with the expectation of prosperity, the Asians will keep coming."

Percentage of Asian population in each county:

Collin — 11.2 percent

Dallas — 5 percent

Denton — 6.6 percent

Tarrant — 4.7 percent

State of Texas — 3.8 percent

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau