

Study: Atlanta lures more youngest and brightest than any U.S. city

No American metro area attracts more of the most-sought demographic of young professionals than metro Atlanta, according to Portland, Ore., economist Joe Cortright of Impresa Consulting.

The study, which was released Nov. 20 by the Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce, shows Atlanta leads the nation in luring highly educated 25- to 34-year-olds, a group demographers call the "Young and Restless." From 1990 to 2000, the metro area increased its young adult population 46 percent, which was faster than any of the top 25 most populous metro areas in the United States. And while the number of young adults dropped 9 percent nationally, the number of young adults increased

20 percent in Atlanta.



7% of the "Young and Restless" who come to Atlanta are from New York. Four other markets, including Miami, account for another 12 %

"The Young and Restless are the most sought-after talent in the country," said Sam A. Williams, president of the Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce. "Cities want them for

their economic future. Companies want their knowledge and talent. And Atlanta is leading the nation in attracting them."

Although bigger cities such as New York, Los Angeles and Chicago still have greater total numbers of college-educated 25- to 34-year-olds, Atlanta has disproportionately outpaced those cities in growing its percentage of the prized demographic. For example, from 1990 to 2000, New York City -- with a Young and Restless population nearly five times the size of Atlanta -- only grew its Young and Restless population by about 35,000, while Atlanta grew its number by more than 80,000.

Most college-educated 25- to 34-year-olds relocate to Atlanta from Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, Miami or Washington, D.C. The largest single contributor of the demographic to Atlanta is New York, accounting for 7 percent of Atlanta's in-migration. Washington-Baltimore, Los Angeles, Miami and Chicago each account for about 3 percent.

Young adults in Atlanta are also better educated, on average, than those in other metro areas -- 36 percent compared with 30 percent with four-year college degrees. The number of 25- to 34-year-olds with a four-year degree increased 46 percent in Atlanta over the past decade, more than four times faster than the nation as a whole.

Atlanta has also been a prime destination for young, highly educated African-American adults. While the African-American young adult population declined nationally in the 1990s by about 6 percent, Atlanta had a 36 percent surge.

Focus groups said they were attracted to Atlanta's affordable housing, cultural opportunities, jobs and Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport.