

# SETTING: Earth-89

Earth-89 is mostly similar to our Earth with some notable exceptions. Superpowered individuals have been publicly known since the 1930s (mostly "masked avengers") but did not enter the public consciousness until the late 1940s. The number of supers (also called "metas") is not nearly as large as in DC or Marvel Comics, but they are not rare.

Most cities have at least a local hero, and some large cities have teams of supers fighting for justice. The numbers of supers who use their powers for selfish or evil reasons seems to be greater than those that fight for justice.

Pittsburgh is less similar to its real-world state in the early 1990's. Driven by highly successful research programs at the city's universities, there was an influx in high-tech companies starting in the mid-1970s. This helped offset the decline of the steel industry and resulted in Pittsburgh becoming an eastern hub for high-tech corporations, primarily in the medical, IT and robotics fields, as well as finance and banking. Many of the corporations that left Pittsburgh in the 1980's in reality are still located there.

Some of the resulting innovations provided by academia and corporate entities slowed the steel industry decline and stabilized the region's economy. As a result of this strong economic foundation, Pittsburgh and the surrounding areas are much more populous than in reality. Pittsburgh fared much better than most other "rust belt" cities and prospered greatly through the 1980s, being referred to by some as the "Silicon Valley of the East." The city's population in 1990 is a healthy 1.6 million (4x reality, 2.4x the peak in 1950), and Allegheny county's population is around 3 million (2.5x reality). Although Pittsburgh tries to cling to the identities of its neighborhoods and sell itself as "America's biggest small city," the metropolitan area is much more densely developed and populated than in reality - with all of the benefits and disadvantages that come with that...

Like many urban areas, Pittsburgh was home to a local superhero who fought crime and protected the population from superpowered and mundane threats. The Steel Sentinel first appeared in 1961 when he foiled a bank heist downtown. He operated consistently through the late 1970's and was embraced by the city as a symbol of its tough, hardworking mentality. Though never officially sanctioned, he was never rigorously pursued by the police and was recognized by the city government a handful of times.

His reputation withstood the "super-backlash" of the mid-1970's, but his activities began to decrease near the end of the decade. Many speculated that age was a factor as his appearances grew more and more sporadic. This led to an uptick in crime and increased corruption within the city and county government, leading to accusations that the police were ineffective and pawns of the corporate fat cats. Steel Sentinel's last officially documented sighting was in late 1986 when he seemed to be seriously injured during a fight with Power Crusher and his gang. Since then, there have infrequent sightings by residents who claim to have seen him or been saved by him, but most of these reports are written off as unreliable.

## Pittsburgh Criminal Activity

**Organized Crime:** Crime has been increasing steadily over the last 10 years due to the increased population, amount of wealth in the local economy and decline of Steel Sentinel's activities. There is a significant amount of corruption within the city and county governments, including a portion of the police department.

**Viper:** Viper is an international criminal organization that typically works behind the scenes toward their unknown aims. A Viper nest has operated in or near Pittsburgh for some time, with varying levels of effectiveness. The Steel Sentinel had attempted to clean out the nest several times during his career, and their activities remain a constant thorn in the side of local law enforcement.

**Supervillain Crime:** A number of superpowered villains are known to operate in the Pittsburgh region. Of these, Power Crusher and the Crusher Gang are the most prolific.